



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on November 19, 2023

Dobbs-denouncing AMA Was Once a Leading Abortion Opponent

Abortion is “foul, unprovoked murder,” a “horrid crime,” and abortionists are “paid assassin[s].” A “child is alive from the moment of conception.” Allowing unchecked abortion is a “national sin.”

Those words could have come from just about any modern pro-life organization, the kind that denounced *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and supported its overturning in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* (2022). In fact, however, they came from the American Medical Association (AMA), which once opposed abortion even more vociferously than it now favors it.



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In a [lengthy, highly detailed opinion piece for LifeSiteNews](#), Fritz Baumgartner, M.D., delved into the AMA’s archives to uncover the organization’s former, long-standing stance on the issue. Baumgartner revealed that the AMA, which [called Dobbs](#) “an egregious allowance of government intrusion into the medical examination room,” for more than a century was [one of the leading backers of state laws banning abortion](#).

In 1857, just 10 years after the AMA’s founding, the group’s Committee on Criminal Abortion — by which it meant all abortions except those carried out to save the life of the mother — issued official documents laying out the AMA’s position on the matter. Those documents, noted Baumgartner, were “sent to state and federal legislators, state medical societies, and then-President James Buchanan.”

The language of these AMA appeals was strong, imploring that an “immense number of living children are annually destroyed...[with] serious injury thereby inflicted upon the public morals...”

The AMA documents state explicitly that the “moral guilt of Criminal Abortion depends entirely upon the real and essential nature of the act. It is the intentional destruction of a child within its parent; and physicians are now agreed...that the child is alive from the moment of conception.”

... The AMA’s compelling appeal was heeded, and pro-life laws flourished in the states, yielding what was described by historian James Mohr as “the most important burst of anti-abortion legislation in the nation’s history.”

In 1871, the AMA published its [Report on Criminal Abortion](#), which was even more scathing. Again, the AMA affirmed that “no other doctrine appears to be consonant with reason or physiology but that which admits the embryo to possess vitality from the very moment of conception.” Abortion, therefore, constituted a “horrid crime”: “a murder, a foul, unprovoked murder ... an enemy to the human family, as dark and as malignant as the spirit that sent it.” Abortionists were “monsters of iniquity ... men, who,



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with corrupt hearts and blood-stained hands, destroy what they cannot reinstate, corrupt souls, and destroy the fairest fabric that God has ever created.”

Moreover, contrary to the modern pro-abortion movement’s claims that unfettered abortion benefits women, the 19th-century AMA declared that by obtaining an abortion, a woman “descends from her high position, associates with these degraded characters, and becomes a participant in the destruction of her own offspring.” Meanwhile, abortionists, being “paid assassin[s],” could “have little sympathy or regard for the well-being of the mother.”

Why was the AMA so insistent that abortion was a grave evil that ought to be outlawed? Its invocation of the Deity suggests that the Christian faith that once suffused Western culture was a major impetus. Another source of inspiration, wrote Baumgartner, was “Hippocrates’ school of medicine that stood up to the vast majority of Greek medicine against abortion and euthanasia.”

Furthermore, the AMA saw clearly that the widespread acceptance of abortion would have ruinous consequences. Should America become tolerant or even supportive of abortion, “a race formerly strong and vigorous [would] soon degenerate,” declared the group’s 1871 report. “The establishment and the spread of” abortion, it cautioned, would be “the greatest curse which could befall the human family.... It becomes a national sin, and national sins merit and may receive national punishments.”

“The evil with which we have to deal ... if not checked soon, time alone can tell the extent of the ruin which must result to the human family,” warned the AMA.

The effects of the AMA’s reports were widespread and long-lasting, observed Baumgartner:

Many other state and local medical associations condemned abortion following the AMA’s recommendations. As late as 1970, a century after the AMA’s Criminal Abortion Report, the California Medical Association (CMA) editorialized in their official journal that despite the popularization of abortion, it could only be tolerated through “semantic gymnastics.” The CMA correctly said that such semantic gymnastics result in a “curious avoidance of the scientific fact which everyone really knows, that human life begins at conception and is continuous whether intra- or extra-uterine until death.”

Imagine a major medical body — especially in California — issuing such a statement today. The news-media and social-media frenzy that followed would be deafening.

“The ruin wrought upon society from medicine unhinged from its grounding roots in authentic Hippocratic ethics is astounding,” penned Baumgartner. Embryonic stem-cell research, human cloning, the sale of aborted-baby parts, and many other evils are, he maintained, direct results of the medical community’s embrace of abortion.

“In the mindset of such a great curse,” Baumgartner averred, “we are willing to accept just about any lie, no matter how absurd its violation of the laws of nature.” Case in point: the transgenderism craze and its medical enablers, who conduct experiments on children that would have been right at home in the Third Reich.

The AMA had it right to begin with. Now, having abandoned its Christian and Hippocratic roots, the organization leads the fight for the practice it once denounced as murder.



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