



Written by [Staff](#) on June 30, 2022

Published in the July 25, 2022 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 38, No. 14

The Review

The Matter of Life: The Untold Story of Death

by Annalisa Pesek

The Matter of Life, touted as the “greatest pro-life movie ever made,” may be celebrated as an important, informative new documentary and praised for its historical accuracy as well as an ending that could be a game-changer for anyone who is on the fence or detached from the abortion issue.



Producer and director Tracy Robinson, a self-described former “pro-choice Christian,” certainly accomplishes her vision of telling the truth about abortion, beginning with the basic questions: What does it mean to “choose?” Does each and every human being have an equal right to life? Am I pro-life because I am a Christian?

Such queries are compelling for people keenly interested in the answers, many of which are contemplated in the film by prominent pro-lifers, including Scott Klusendorf, founder of Life Training Institute; Alan Shlemon, author and speaker for Stand to Reason ministry; Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life; Roland Warren, president/CEO of Care Net; and Terrisa Bukovinac, founder of Progressive Anti-Abortion Uprising (PAAU).

However, is the audience of Christians that Robinson is attempting to reach willing to be moved and engaged for an entire hour by historical evidence and shocking facts and figures, such as “four in ten women had attended church in the month they became pregnant,” “400,000 Christians get abortions each year,” and “abortion is the leading cause of death worldwide”?

Such statistics *should* rouse anyone with a pulse, but will viewers who need to hear the facts make it to the most dynamic aspects of the film — the last 40 minutes that depict the brutal and honest truth about abortion?

In a worthy beginning, the film travels through the decades, reaching all the way back to the 18th century to explain how abortion has come to be a part of the fabric of American life today.

Narrated by Tinika Wyatt (*My Sister’s Keeper*), the documentary explains that in 11 states, including California, Washington, and New York, abortion was already legal before 1973, when the landmark Supreme Court ruling *Roe v. Wade* effectively struck down nearly all first- and second-trimester abortion restrictions in all 50 states in the union.

Robinson deftly explains the paradigm shift from the earlier to later feminists, with suffragists such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who were for the vote but anti-abortion, and Betty Friedan (*The Feminine Mystique*), who did not support abortion publicly but certainly joined the greedy men who had seized the moment to recruit more women into the “pro-choice” movement in the 1970s. One may wonder why many Christians today are unaware of and do not understand this basic historical



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timeline.

Also featured is important archival footage of Planned Parenthood founder, racist, and eugenicist Margaret Sanger. The film uses her own words as she decries the existence of “defectives,” or those unfit to live owing to birth defects, their race, or because they were “diseased, delinquent, and simpleminded.” Sanger openly stated that abortion should be used as the backup for people who couldn’t use contraception.

Yet her legacy as the founder of Planned Parenthood endured until 2020, until it was finally denounced by the largest and most profitable abortion provider in the Western Hemisphere.

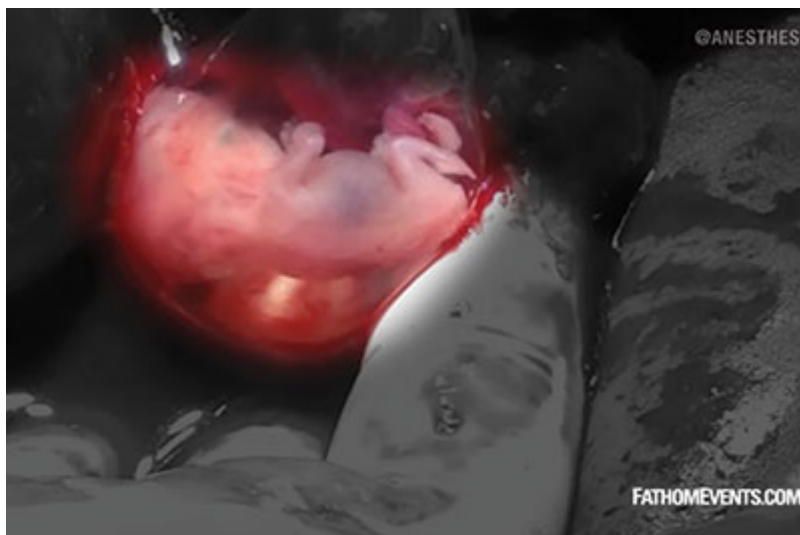
The documentary excellently covers the life of America’s most well-known abortionist — turned pro-life activist — Dr. Bernard Nathanson, a driving force in the abortion movement, performing an astonishing 75,000 abortions during his career.

Strikingly, the film documents Dr. Nathanson’s miraculous change of heart to the pro-life side, spurred by an image of a baby he captured in an ultrasound clearly trying to recoil from an instrument attempting to harm it. Robinson includes Nathanson’s 1984 film *The Silent Scream* (see review on page 43), perhaps the most important and powerful movie ever made that depicts those images and most accurately tells the truth of abortion.

Additional accomplished films on abortion in America include Nicholas Loeb’s authoritative and convincing theatrical drama *Roe v. Wade*, and married filmmakers Ann McElhinney and Phelim McAleer’s powerful *Gosnell: The Untold Story of America’s Most Prolific Serial Killer*.

Robinson’s documentary has all the facts, but for nearly an hour it moves like a college history or biology class, explaining the basic biological facts of conception and the science of embryology to emphasize the message that life begins at conception and the reality that abortion is the killing of an innocent human being.

Viewing this part of the film is fairly mundane given the intended audience, but the narrative gains momentum as it moves to the more complicated history and development of the “pro-choice” movement in 1960s-1970s America and begins the conversation about how unborn children are not just a clump of cells through chilling images that convey the truth.



More than a clump of cells: *The Matter of Life* dispels the myths that have allowed the abortion



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genocide to continue for generations, showing the full humanity of the unborn child from the moment of conception.

The film depicts graphic images of first- and second-trimester abortions that are gruesome and horrific. These pictures of abortion imagery and fetal development and the details of the practice of Dr. Anthony Levatino, M.D. — retired obstetrician/gynecologist who performed over 1,200 first- and second-trimester abortions — will impact any viewer’s life, whether he is pro-abortion or pro-life.

Levatino walks viewers through medication abortions, and explains that the majority of first-trimester abortions are carried out by suction dilation and curettage (D&C) to remove a baby from a woman’s uterus.

Viewers who continue watching learn that second-trimester dilation and evacuation abortions (D&E), occurring at 13-26 weeks gestation, involve instruments and procedures that cause a baby’s brain to pour out of the cervix, after a clamping down of the head. “Sometimes a little face comes back and stares at you,” Levatino admits in a chilling segment.

Overall, *The Matter of Life* is highly recommended for every American to view in order to dispel the myths that have allowed for the genocide of two generations of Americans to continue. State lawmakers should ban abortion in all states where the grisly practice is still legal, and any woman contemplating an abortion should be encouraged to receive an ultrasound and watch *The Matter of Life* before making the choice to kill her child.

The final parts of the film are the most impactful, and hopefully will change the hearts and minds of people who are either “pro-choice” or on the fence on this issue, and who are willing to look at the truth.

Post Roe, The Silent Scream Shouts as Loudly as Ever

by Selwyn Duke

How does a man go from being one of the unborn’s destroyers to their defender? In the late Dr. Bernard Nathanson’s case, it’s summed up in a single word: reality.

An ob/gyn who co-founded pro-abortion group National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (NARAL) in 1969 and was for two years director of possibly the largest Western-world prenatal infanticide clinic, Nathanson admitted being responsible for 75,000 abortions. Yet ultrasound technology’s development, enabling him to see the baby in the womb in real time for the first time, changed his heart. It also inspired him to become a pro-life activist and host the 28-minute, 1984 documentary film *The Silent Scream* (TSS), which uses that very sonogram technology to, as Nathanson put it, finally show “abortion from the victim’s vantage point.”

TSS shows a doctor inserting a suction tube into a female patient, repetitively moving it back and forth in her vaginal canal as you would a vacuum wand when sucking dirt you can’t see from under a couch. That’s the abortionist’s perspective. But Nathanson methodically describes, and then *shows*, what eludes the naked eye. This first is the invasion of a 12-week-old child’s uterine home, the puncturing of the amniotic sac, and the draining of its fluid.

There’s controversy over halal “no-stun” butchering of animals; we want livestock dispatched painlessly. Yet no such regard is afforded the unborn. Rather, a child is “dismembered, disarticulated,



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crushed, and destroyed by the unfeeling steel instruments of the abortionist,” said Nathanson. TSS shows that early on in the abortion, the baby’s mouth is open in a “silent scream.” The child’s heart rate, normally 140, increases to 200 beats per minute; sensing aggression in his sanctuary, his movements are violent. He’s shifting about, trying in vain to avoid the instrument that will end his life.

If in a horror film we saw a demonic creature reach inside a mother’s womb and tear her baby out piecemeal, rending it limb from limb, it would be the stuff of nightmares; we perhaps wouldn’t even want it portrayed. Yet this is precisely the abortion victim’s fate: “The pieces of the body are torn away one by one until finally all that remains are shards of the body and the head itself,” Nathanson said. Polyp forceps are then used to crush the head, which is likewise removed “piecemeal.”

The reality is so horrible that, Nathanson stated, the abortionist and anesthesiologist dare not even speak it; they instead euphemize, calling the baby’s head “number one.” “Is number one out yet?” may be asked. Note that Nazi concentration-camp victims were identified with numbers, too (via tattoos).

But seeing is believing and can beget a Road-to-Damascus moment. The young doctor performing the 12-week abortion in TSS had done close to 10,000 prenatal infanticide “procedures”; he also was part of the film’s editing process. He was so appalled by the reality witnessed thereby that he actually had to step away for a moment.

He did later resume editing — but *not* performing abortions.

Similarly, the woman operating TSS’s real-time ultrasound camera was a staunchly pro-abortion feminist, but was so moved by what she beheld that she never again discussed prenatal infanticide, relates Nathanson.

Abortion proponents say that criminalizing prenatal infanticide won’t save lives but cost them; women will instead seek back-alley alternatives and be at black-market butchers’ mercy. But Nathanson points out that in 1963, there were approximately 100,000 illegal abortions in the United States and precious few legal ones; in 1973, when *Roe v. Wade* was made, there were 750,000 legal abortions. There are now in the neighborhood of that many every year, with the post-’73 total being approximately 63 million.

Nathanson’s story has, in a way, a happy ending: After becoming as an atheist a pro-life activist, he converted to Catholicism 15 years before his 2011 passing. But what of today’s unborn?

TSS is powerful and explicit; even so, Nathanson’s trained eye could see detail that perhaps would elude laymen. But imagine its impact if more modern technology were used to enhance it, so the abortionists’ horror-film-like brutality were revealed with Hollywood-level vividness. What’s more, imagine if instead of LGBT propaganda being pushed on youth, TSS were shown to every freshman or sophomore high-school class. Only the sociopaths among us would be unmoved, and pro-abortion protests might come to be as frowned upon as marches by the KKK.



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