

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

March / April 1983

The Taking of Human Life

In the relentless effort to keep the world from squeezing me into its own mold (see Rom 12:1-2, J.B. Phillips) my mind is always making comparisons and connections and trying to test the world's reasoning by the straightedge of Scripture. Recently, when I read of the execution in Texas of Charles Brooks, Jr., by lethal injection, I made one of those connections. I remembered another news story a few months ago about an unborn twin who was quietly dispatched, while still in its mother's womb, by means of a needle in its heart. Medical science has advanced to the stage where it is possible to remove human beings from this world's scene cleanly and kindly (we tell ourselves) and without too much trauma to the executioners and the consenting public. Of the trauma to the victim we prefer not to let ourselves think too much.

One of the people I refer to, of course, was a full-grown man, convicted of murder. The other was far from full-grown. It was not even born. Nobody wanted it to be born because it happened to be not quite normal. A person, without question, but not quite a normal person. So, since the mother very much wanted the normal twin to be born, she was very glad to be able to get rid of the abnormal one in such a handy way.

In a *Time* (Dec. 20, 1982) essay about the Brooks execution, Roger Rosenblatt writes of the public's eagerness for a "gentle killing," yet its hunger also to know the details of the prisoner's

last dinner and last words, his position on the stretcher, and how the tubes were hooked up which would carry the poison into his bloodstream. Strange that there should be this fascination at a time when there is strong protest, at least in the media, against the death penalty for criminals. There is no protest in major magazines against the death penalty for unborn children and no corresponding eagerness for pictures or descriptions of just how it is done. Few people are willing to scrutinize the details of what happens to the tiny bodies who are daily, at the request of their mothers, and with the consent of the Supreme Court, being disposed of by sophisticated chemical, pharmaceutical, and mechanical techniques.

The correction facility in Texas and the abortion facilities in hospitals are equally thorough in their efforts to make sure that the method *works*. Imagine the embarrassment if Charles Brooks had managed to slip out of the straps that bound him to the gurney, or if the silent fluid had somehow been obstructed in the tubes! Nobody wants that to happen. It is a major disaster, too, when an abortion produces a living child instead of a dead one. Some awful scenes have taken place in hospital nurseries when a baby has been taken there who had been intended for the garbage can. What is wanted in the cases of both the murderer and the undesirable fetus is death, pure death, the "spectacle of life removed."

Do not misunderstand me. I believe that capital punishment is both necessary and just. I believe that abortion is murder. Both are appalling to anyone human, it seems to me. Surely, no matter what our convictions and public declarations may be, we shrink inside at the hideousness of it

all. But one is commanded by God—evil must be dealt with by public justice—and the other is forbidden. We cannot, without His express direction, take human life into our hands. Let us not imagine that we can somehow palliate the stark and shocking fact of death by making it private. Only a few people, including four reporters and Brook's girlfriend, were allowed to witness his death. An abortion is now called a *private matter*, to be decided solely by a woman and her physician. Let us not, by making it quick, easy, and clean, evade the truth that somebody is being killed.

Rosenblatt in his essay looks for the day when we may "drive out the barbarians." Is it barbaric, then, to mete out judgment in this form to a murderer, but somehow civilized to send a lethal poison into the heart of an as yet sinless child?

Paul wrote to the young minister Timothy to warn him of the sort of evil he must guard against. "Men will love nothing but money and self . . . men who put pleasure in the place of God, men who preserve the outward form of religion but are a standing denial of its reality. Keep clear of men like these. . . . These men defy the truth, they have lost the power to reason, and they cannot pass the tests of faith" (2 Tm 3:2, 5-6, 8-9, New English Bible). God help us not only to stand for the truth, but to obey it scrupulously that we may not lose the power to *think as Christians*. •

What Do You Mean by Submission?

People are always asking me this. What *is* this business of "submission" you're always talking about? We're not really very comfortable with this. Seems kind of negative. Sounds as though women are not worth as much as men. Aren't women supposed to exercise their gifts? Can't they ever open their mouths?

I wouldn't be very comfortable with that kind of submission either. As a matter of fact, I'm not particularly comfortable with any kind, but since it was God's idea and not mine, I had better come to terms with what the Bible says about it and stop rejecting the whole thing just because it

is so often misunderstood and wrongly defined. I came across a lucid example of what it means in 1 Chronicles 11:10: "Of David's heroes these were the chief, men who lent their full strength to his government and, with all Israel, joined in making him king." There it is. The recognition, first of all, of God-given authority. Recognizing it, accepting it, they then lent their full strength to it, and did everything in their power to make him—not them—*king*.

Christians—both men and women—recognize first the authority of Christ. They pray "Thy will be done." They set about making an honest effort to cooperate with what He is doing, straightening out the kinks in their own lives according to His wishes. A Christian woman, then, in submission to *God*, recognizes the divinely assigned authority of her husband (he didn't earn it, remember, he received it by appointment). She then sets about lending her full strength to helping him do what he's supposed to do, be what he's supposed to be—her *head*. She's not always trying to get her own way. She's trying to make it easier for him to do his job. She seeks to contribute to *his* purpose, not to scheme how to accomplish her own.

If this sounds suspiciously like some worn-out traditionalist view, or (worse) like a typical Elisabeth Elliot opinion, test it with the straightedge of Scripture. What does submission to Christ mean? "Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as to the Lord." Compare and connect. •

A Little Lesson about Things Temporal and Eternal

I am upset when things are lost. Even small things. I like to know that things have places and are in them. It's much worse when something like a manuscript is lost. I had worked for a

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number of weeks on a certain piece, and when I went to do the final rewriting it was gone. It just wasn't anywhere. I looked, then Lars looked, then we both looked. In all the likely and all the unlikely places. We prayed about it, of course, together and separately, but we could not find it. At last I told the Lord that if I did not find it today I would begin again from scratch, as the deadline was closing in. That day Uncle Tom, who is eighty-nine and was staying with us, became very ill. There was no time to think of manuscripts. The next day we happened to move a piece of furniture and discovered that moths were doing their dastardly work underneath it. Lars went out and bought a can of moth spray and proceeded to fumigate every nook and cranny. The manuscript was behind a desk. It had fallen down and lodged standing up on the baseboard. If Uncle Tom had not gotten sick I would have done a day's unnecessary work on that piece that I was so worried about. If the moths had not taken it into their tiny heads to chew my carpet, we probably would not have turned up that sheaf of papers until next spring. It was not for nothing that the collect in my church that Sunday (the eighth after Pentecost) was: "O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy, that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen." ●

Recommended Reading

Vernard Eller: *The Language of Canaan and the Grammar of Feminism* (Eerdmans). "Although the feminist grammar surely is not deliberately anti-rhetorical, it is most deliberately *political* [italics his]. Its linguistic innovations (such as 'chairperson,' 'humankind,' 'God gives us God's grace,' 'he or she') are code symbols, each a little red flag bearing the letters FA [Feminist Approved]." (page 3)

"The gospel, the biblical message, *requires* the language of Canaan. . . . It must have a grammar powerful enough to enable us to think and say what the biblical languages were intent to com-

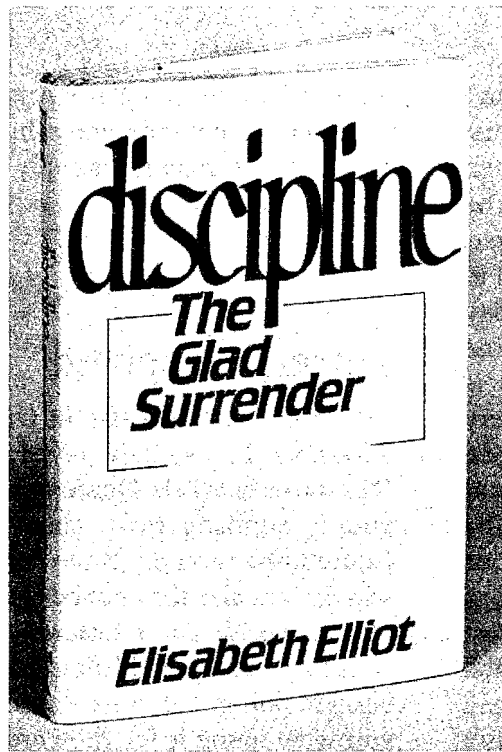
municate in the first place. And as seems clear, the grammar of contemporary humanism (whether feminist or otherwise) simply has not that capability." (page 48)

Letters Received

FROM A YOUNG MOTHER: "In *Discipline: The Glad Surrender* I especially loved the chapter, 'The Discipline of Work.' Homemaking can sometimes entail mundane tasks that need to be done. Contending with my three small children day in and day out also may not be glamorous in the eyes of the world, but I lettered and hung up the Scripture you quoted from Colossians, 'Whatever you are doing, put your whole heart into it, as if you were doing it for the Lord and not for men.' The Lord has given me *much joy!* I am blessed with a wonderful husband who loves the Lord. He is a police officer in the New York subway system. Your chapter on 'The Discipline of Place' made me think of him and the way he treats people he comes in contact with with honor (even those the other officers call 'skells'). He has many opportunities to share Christ."

Prayer Requests

- Pray for the faithfulness of husbands and wives—to each other, to their children, to God and His word.
- Let's pray for one another, that we may do as the writer to the Hebrews tells us, "arouse others to love and active goodness, encouraging one another" (Heb 10:24-25, New English Bible).
- Pray for the mothers of young children, that they may be given eyes to see the glory of their task—a humble task, of course, but seen by angels, assigned by God, and leading to tremendous influence if these children are nurtured and admonished in the Lord.



Discipline The Glad Surrender

Elisabeth Elliot points the way to a joyous life of obedience. She explains what Christian commitment really is and how each individual can achieve that commitment. The subject is personal discipline, based on obedience to a loving and sovereign Master, touching on such practices as praying and fasting, the discipline of the mind, the feelings, the body, and of one's time, work, and possessions.

Special price to newsletter readers: \$8.00 (Publisher's retail price \$8.95)

Other Books and Tapes by Elisabeth Elliot

(To order, fill in the enclosed form)

Through Gates of Splendor—the story of how Jim Elliot and four other missionaries were killed by Auca Indians in the jungles of Ecuador. \$3.50

Love Has a Price Tag—essays based on Elisabeth Elliot's experiences as wife, mother, widow, missionary, and teacher. \$4.95

These Strange Ashes—the story of Elisabeth Elliot's first year as a missionary. Touches on the question of suffering and loss. \$4.95

The Jim Elliot Story—includes Jim's voice, telling a witch doctor story. (tape) \$5.00

Videotape

A seven-part series on denial, forgiveness, relinquishment, pruning, acceptance, exchange, guidance. Available by calling toll-free 1-800-647-2284, or writing Video Dynamics, P.O. Box 20330, Jackson, Mississippi 39209.

Recommended Reading

The Language of Canaan and the Grammar of Feminism, Vernard Eller—Examines the theological, anthropological, and philosophical bases underlying modern feminism's use of language. \$3.95

Travel Schedule: April-June 1983

April 15-17 Winning Women of the Midwest, Mrs. Peg Emmons, 309-452-0917, Holiday Inn of Decatur, Normal, Illinois.

April 19 St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

April 25 Women's Bible Society Spring Luncheon, Mrs. Hazel Bateman, 212-581-7400, ext. 288, New York City.

April 27-28 Ashland Theological Seminary, Ashland, Ohio.

April 29-30 Kirk in the Hills, Bloomfield, Michigan.

May 6-8 First Presbyterian Church Women's Retreat, Boulder, Colorado.

May 9 New Life Center Auxiliary Prayer Breakfast, Mrs. Ruby Danielson, 701-235-4453 or 235-0649, Fargo, North Dakota.

May 10 Olivet Nazarene College, Kankakee, Illinois.

May 20-22 Women's Retreat, Mrs. C.A. Tompkins, Jr., 5785 E. Camino del Celador, Tucson, Arizona.

June 3-4 Women's Retreat, Betty Jones, 605 Rosewood Cres., Thunder Bay, Ontario.

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