
Profile: Dr. Joseph Fletcher

A man who thinks infanticide 'humane'

by Linda C. Everett

Dr. Joseph Fletcher, S.T.D., D.D., Litt.D., is president emeritus of the Society for the Right to Die and outspoken promoter of active and passive euthanasia (with or without the patient's request and knowledge) and the use of IQ quotient for determination of who is human. Born in 1905, he was educated at Yale and London University. Fletcher is an ordained Episcopalian minister, a leading member of Planned Parenthood, the Paddock Fund, and the Human Betterment Association of America (through the practice of race science or eugenics).

One wonders what "human betterment" Fletcher was up to when he was made a brave in the Clan of the Mohawk Indians, a group which has been viciously manipulated by anthropologists since the late 1840s and is being pressured by mobsters to establish casinos on their lands.

Fletcher's pivotal role in the Right to Die movement, stems from the days when the Right to Die and the Concern for Dying were called the Euthanasia Educational Council. He was an advisory board member and a regular contributor to their annual conferences.

He served as a dean of the Graduate School of Applied Religion in Cincinnati; professor of theology and Christian ethics at the Episcopal Theological School at Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Eli Lilly visiting professor at International Christian University in Tokyo.

The Christian ethics Fletcher supposedly taught had nothing to do with Christianity, for he was a major formulator of "situational ethics." Under this rubric, there exists no absolute good: No act is too evil or unacceptable, including the slaughter of the elderly and the handicapped—which he promotes, if the right time or "appropriate" circumstance presents itself.

He has written on this with Harvey Cox, a fellow lecturer and Gnostic "new religion" kook at the Harvard Divinity School.

Fletcher also signed on with the Humanist Manifesto crowd, whose pronounced aim is the elimination of traditional Judeo-Christian ethics as "a hindrance to human progress." Given that Manifesto signers also "deplore the division of mankind on nationalistic grounds," saying that we must

"transcend the limits of national sovereignty" and ban all war, it is no wonder that Fletcher has been a leading member in the Soviet-American Friendship Society and World Peace Council, both Soviet front groups.

What follows are excerpts of Fletcher's statements from a January 1982 interview:

"There is no doubt that the general trend in ethical thought is to terminate the lives of defective newborns. I wouldn't want to see termination of treatment for a child born simply with Down's syndrome, but if such a child had a demonstrably low IQ or had severe physical disabilities, then its life should be mercifully ended. The mere fact that a child is a moron, using the standard Stanford-Binet IQ classifications, doesn't necessarily suggest that it should not be allowed to live, but clearly, in the case of idiots, those with IQs of 20 or under, they are simply not human beings. . . . Why not end their lives? . . .

. . . It is absolutely imperative that society put an emphasis on the quality of life, rather than the sanctity of life. . . .

"There is no question that population growth and the right to die are connected. Overpopulation is a very serious damage whenever it occurs. Some of us, myself included, go so far as to say where you have actual famine, it is wrong to send famine relief. You merely make it possible for people to reach the level of reproduction and produce more starving bellies. . . . There's no doubt that the awareness of excess population growth and the limits to resources has led people to accept the need for the right to die. . . . The same holds for infanticide. It's a common practice in areas where there is an excess of population; it is, of course, the most ancient form of family planning, you might say, tually a very humane thing when you are dealing with misbegotten infants. We might have to encourage it under certain conditions of excess population, especially when you're dealing with defective children.

"A lot of these religiously motivated do-gooders that send aid to starving babies are making things worse. . . ."

In his 1980 article, "Ethics and Euthanasia," Fletcher says that "death control" is as imperative as birth control and that "there must be quality control in the terminating of life as in its initiating." Fletcher says it is ridiculous to give ethical approval for therapeutic abortions and not to allow the "positively ending of a sub-human life in extremis." He calls not simply for the right to destroy "a terribly defective infant" but "we are equally obliged to put an end to a patient's hopeless misery" when brain cancer occurs.

Fletcher makes it very clear that his ethics have nothing to do with the "kind of ethics which follow universal rules of conduct and absolute norms," i.e., the basis of Western values, but rather, he calls for the ethics of "humanistic medicine" which deals "practically" with the allocation of scarce resources via "triage officers" when an "incorrigible human vegetable" is "constantly eating up private or public financial resources in violation of the distributive justice owed to others."