

Book Review: For Those Being Crushed

For Those Being Crushed: Confronting our 'Social Justice' Blind Spot

Camilla Olim

Kingdom Publishers, 117 pp, 2021, £12.99

'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed'
(Proverbs 13:8).

This is how Camilla Olim begins her book, *For those being crushed* and this verse sets the tone for the rest of what evangelist J. John has called a 'clear and challenging, passionate and persuasive, well-researched and well written' book. Olim writes primarily to Christians, and even more specifically to church leaders, giving a Scripture-soaked, Spirit-filled clarion call to confront an area of social injustice that few seem willing to confront: abortion.

The spiritual struggle

As CEO of one pro-life group in the UK, *Pregnancy Crisis Helpline*, I have been jarred by just how much of a blind spot the evangelical church has when it comes to discussing and dealing with abortion. I have seen this improve in some ways in the past five years, but there is still a tremendous amount of ignorance, indifference, or a mixture of both, in regard to abortion and how we as Christians should respond. Assuming no previous knowledge of the subject, the author begins by setting a scriptural foundation for the intrinsic value of human life from conception. Referring to passages written by David and Jeremiah in the Old Testament and the apostle Paul in the New, she writes:

Long before science confirmed it, these men of millennia past were clear that life's value is not determined by size, environment, and level of development or degree of dependency. They understood that God values life before its very conception... if the unborn child is human, as science and the Bible unequivocally demonstrate, then the unborn is our neighbour. (p.24)

Identifying the scale on which abortion occurs – around 800 every working day in the UK – Olim asks why it is so widespread. Showing connections to the ancient child sacrifice rituals condemned in the Bible, the author sees this as part of an ongoing spiritual war:

As image-bearers of God, Satan hates humanity... Professor John Wyatt put it once, he hates every human being because they remind him of the King. So, naturally, he loves abortion. He comes to steal, to kill, and destroy, and he loves to watch us willingly destroy one another and debase what God has lovingly created.

Considering objections

One of the potential reasons Christians may be reluctant to address abortion is misunderstanding the reasons a woman may seek one in the first place. There seems to be a belief that in many, if not most, cases women are left with no real choice but to terminate, and that while this is not ideal, due allowance must be made for the suffering that may be caused by continuing the pregnancy. Olim acknowledges,

...women are sometimes victims too. The suffering that may lead them to have an abortion is real – and this, I believe, is part of the reason why Christians in the UK are characteristically silent on the issue. (p50)

While urging empathy and compassion, the author exemplifies how this should not be at the expense of truth. She dispels much misunderstanding by pointing out that 98% of UK abortions having nothing to do with any identifiable physical threat to the mother, and that in 99% of the 98% of cases that are performed for mental health reasons, no identifiable or diagnosed mental health threat to the mother is recorded. This does *not* mean that for the woman going through with an unwanted pregnancy creates no suffering or anguish; but even the presence of these, Olim ably and sensitively shows, does not make abortion a legitimate solution. Highlighting some underlying sociological issues that often lead to abortion – including the responsibility of men in the matter – the author offers the solution found in the gospel which brings help, healing and wholeness (p71).

Time to speak up!

Olim convincingly backs up her claim that abortion is a major, if not the main blind spot in evangelical churches. Gleaning lessons from the historical examples of men confronting blind spots of their day – Dietrich Boenhoeffer and Martin Luther King Jr – she calls churches and their leaders to speak up. Yes, abortion is a sensitive issue, yet it must be dealt with! Francis Schaeffer said, 'Of all the subjects relating to the erosion of the sanctity of life, abortion is the keystone.' Olim asks,

If we demonstrate no value for the unborn, do our efforts towards vulnerable adults ring true? Can we truly speak on behalf of the poor, the marginalised, the disabled, and the oppressed if we will not speak for the most vulnerable of all?

I heartily commend Camilla Olim's spiritual and thought-provoking analysis of abortion as a blind spot in churches. She is right – there is more we can and should be doing.

Regan King