

MORAL METHODOLOGY AND PASTORAL RESPONSIVENESS: THE CASE OF ABORTION AND THE CARE OF CHILDREN

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MORAL METHODOLOGY is intimately related to pastoral practice. Though neither element can be reduced to the other, the way one construes a moral problem methodologically shapes one's response to the problem. This article will analyze the moral reasoning in three recent church documents in order to assess the implications of their modes of reasoning for the relationship between abortion and the care of children. The three documents are the "Declaration on Abortion" issued in 1974 by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and two statements by the American Catholic Bishops: "The Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Reaffirmation" (1985), and "Putting Children and Families First: A Challenge for Our Church, Nation, and World (1991)."¹

The insight that there is some connection between the issues of abortion and the care of children is not uncommon. A number of scholars make the initial observation that there is a link between the two.² But efforts to understand more fully *how* they relate have been less than satisfactory. The frustration is evident in Cardinal Bernardin's words: "There must be a connection—logical, legal and social—between our lack of moral vision in protecting unborn children and our lack of social vision in the provision of basic necessities for women and children."³ These words imply, correctly, that the inability to relate

¹ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration on Abortion* (Washington: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1976); National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Reaffirmation* (Washington: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1985 [hereafter: *A Reaffirmation*]); and "Putting Children and Families First: A Challenge for Our Church, Nation, and World," *Origins* 21 (1991) 393–404.

² See, for instance, Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Abortion, Autonomy, and Community," in Patricia Beattie Jung and Thomas A. Shannon, eds., *Abortion and Catholicism* (New York: Crossroad, 1988) 88–89, 92; Margaret Farley, "Liberation, Abortion, and Responsibility," in Stephen E. Lammers and Allen Verhey, eds., *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 434–40; Richard A. McCormick, "Abortion: The Unexplored Middle Ground," *Second Opinion* 10 (March 1989) 45.

³ Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, "The Consistent Ethic of Life after Webster," *Origins* 19 (1990) 744; see also 748 [hereafter: "After Webster"]. Bernardin also makes the link

satisfactorily the two issues has led to a failure to respond adequately to either one.

Adequate methodology is a necessary first step to a better constructive understanding of and pastoral response to the issues. All three documents affirm the prohibition against taking the life of the embryo and fetus.⁴ But the moral reasoning of each relates this prohibition to the care of children in different ways. The reasoning in the Declaration of the CDF is syllogistic and is standard in Catholic thought on abortion. It treats the care of children as an indirect implication of the prohibition against abortion. The Reaffirmation, following Cardinal Bernardin's "consistent ethic of life," attempts to make the link between the two issues more direct by bringing both under the broad rubric of "life," but the connection is fragile because it continues a methodological split between sexual and social issues found in much of official church teaching. "Putting Children and Families First" overcomes the problem of fragility by subsuming the issue of abortion under that of the care of children. This approach is more illuminating of the wider context of abortion than the syllogistic method, and it is more stable than the consistent ethic. I will suggest that this makes the approach pastorally more responsive not only to the care of children, but to the specific problem of the taking of the life of the embryo and fetus.

The methodologies in these documents are, of course, implicit rather than explicit. The task of the moral theologian is to bring them to light. Taken together, the documents suggest a trajectory of thought—the term "development" would imply a settledness and breadth of reception that has not yet occurred—which reverses the relationship between the two issues. In these three documents, the issue of the care of children in its relation to abortion moves from indirect implication, to directly related issue, to broader interpretive context. In what follows, I will trace this trajectory.

CARE OF CHILDREN ONLY INDIRECTLY IMPLIED

Charles Curran has perspicaciously delineated the methodological divergences between sexual and social ethics in official Catholic teach-

between abortion, women in poverty, and the care of children in his "Address at Seattle University," in his *Consistent Ethic of Life* (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed and Ward, 1988) 82–83 [hereafter: "Address at Seattle"]; and in "Religion and Politics: The Future Agenda," *Origins* 14 (1984) 326 [hereafter: "Religion and Politics"].

⁴ I am in agreement with the documents here. Also, I am aware of the literature on the pre-embryo. Official Catholic documents include what is described as the pre-embryo under the term "embryo." I follow this usage.

ing.⁵ According to Curran, sexual teaching evidences the worldview of classicism, while social teaching since *Gaudium et spes* exemplifies historical consciousness. The former describes reality as eternal, immutable, and unchanging. The latter emphasizes the particular, the contingent, the historical, and the individual.⁶ These worldviews include different modes of reasoning. While classicism uses a deductive mode built around the idea of the syllogism, historical consciousness is more inductive. In addition, sexual documents are characterized by a deontological, law-oriented ethical model that stresses obedience to rules. Their social counterparts in the last thirty years are of the "relationality-responsibility" approach. With this latter, one is to involve one's conscience not primarily through obedience to law, but first and foremost through the process of responsible discernment in the context of a web of relationships.⁷ One can expand Curran's analysis with two brief points. There is first of all a marked difference in the scope or focus of the two types of documents. Sexual teachings tend to limit their scope more narrowly to specific acts. Social documents, in contrast, focus from the start on broad complexes of institutional and other forces. Closely related to this difference in focus or scope is the divergence in the aim of the two types of documents. Sexual teaching, with its focus on the particular act, aims to make a specific determination about the morality of that act. In contrast, social teaching, with its broad scope, tends to aim for shaping wide fields of political, economic, and cultural behavior.

The "Declaration on Abortion"

An examination of the argument employed in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's Declaration reveals that it is deductive in form, with the juridical aim of determining the morality of a particular act.⁸ The document proceeds in five sections. The introduction sets out the basic syllogism. The major premise consists of the claim that human life is a basic value, and so entails a fundamental right to life. The minor premise is the claim that the fetus is a human person. Both are assumed from the start of the document when, in reference to public discussions of abortion, it states, "These debates would be less grave were it not a question of human life, a primordial value, which

⁵ Charles Curran, "Official Catholic Social and Sexual Teachings: A Methodological Comparison," in Curran, *Tensions in Moral Theology* (Notre Dame; Univ. of Notre Dame, 1988) 87-109.

⁶ *Ibid.* 89.

⁷ *Ibid.* 96.

⁸ *Declaration on Abortion* no. 1.

must be protected and promoted."⁹ Because the syllogism articulates "an attitude of respect for life which is at the same time human and Christian," the Congregation moves in the second and third sections to give backings for the premises, first on the basis of Scripture and tradition and then in terms of the "light of reason." Thus the first three sections of the Declaration provide a syllogism and the "Christian and human" backings for the premises, all directing the reader to the singular conclusion, "Divine law and natural reason, therefore, exclude all right to the direct killing of an innocent man."¹⁰ The fourth section consists of replies to various objections which claim mitigating circumstances; it summarizes, "The damage to moral values (that results from abortion) is always a greater evil for the common good than any disadvantage in the economic or demographic order."¹¹

It is only after the syllogism is stated and defended that the Declaration proceeds to attend to broader economic, political, and cultural issues. These are simply the implications of an already settled specific determination. The force of the replies to the objections in the fourth section is to deny that any wider consideration can alter the line of deduction. It is further noteworthy that when the document does address the implications of the syllogism in the fifth section, the first and primary emphasis is on the feasibility and necessity of laws against the specific act of abortion. This indicates that here the deductive reasoning is linked with a juridical understanding of the moral life.

One paragraph does call for policies to help families, unmarried mothers, and children, but the idea remains undeveloped and is immediately followed in the next paragraph by a call to heroism in "following one's conscience in obedience to the law of God" on the question of taking the life of the embryo and fetus. In the penultimate paragraph, the document begins again to broach the wider social context. It calls for all persons, groups and institutions, not just the state, to do what is possible for families, mothers, and children. "This is the law of charity, of which the first preoccupation must be the establishment of justice. One can never approve of abortion; but it is above all necessary to combat its causes."¹²

⁹ Ibid. More precisely, what is stated is a compression of two syllogisms. The first would state, "Life is a basic value; all persons have a right to have their basic values protected; therefore there is a right to life." The second adopts the conclusion of the first as a major premise and reads, "All human persons have a right to life; the embryo and the fetus are instances of human personhood; therefore the embryo and the fetus have a right to life."

¹⁰ Ibid. no. 13. The direct-indirect distinction, though not developed, is assumed throughout; see note 18 of the document.

¹¹ Ibid. no. 18.

¹² Ibid. no. 26.

It would be a misreading, then, to interpret the Declaration as not making a linkage at all between abortion and the care of children. The point is more qualified: the exclusive use of the deductive model of moral reasoning on abortion means that the care of children, as an implication following from the conclusion of a syllogism concerned with determining the morality of taking the life of the fetus, enters the argument only in a brief fashion at the end of the treatment and remains undeveloped. Therefore, the deductive method creates a pastoral asymmetry. It is not incidental, then, that the call for laws prohibiting taking the life of the fetus comes first and receives a much more sustained treatment in the final section of the document than the urging for help for families, mothers, and children.

Thus, analysis of the Declaration highlights the fact that although abortion is often considered to be a social issue, the mode of reasoning utilized to address it is one which discourages, except as an indirect implication, reflection on a social context wider than legal prohibitions. The question arises as to how we are to overcome the methodological split between social and sexual teachings. Doing so is the first step in adequately addressing the relationship between abortion and the care of children. As indicated at the outset, both the methodological and substantive aspects of this problem have been an ongoing concern of Cardinal Bernardin. The consistent ethic of life is his constructive proposal, and it has been taken up in the documents of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

SEPARATE BUT RELATED LIFE ISSUES

Cardinal Bernardin's consistent ethic of life grew out of an effort to draw upon the public success of "The Challenge of Peace" in order to focus attention on and gain consensus around other issues, particularly abortion.¹³ The ethic not only arises out of official teaching; it feeds back into it as well. When the bishops revised their Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities of 1975 in their Reaffirmation of 1985, they explicitly adopted the language and the vision of the consistent ethic of life.¹⁴ Bernardin's aim, and that of the pastoral plan, is to demonstrate that abortion is not the only "pro-life" issue in need of redress. The double purpose of the consistent ethic thus comes to light. It is at once an attempt to make the Catholic abortion argument plausible to a hesitant if not skeptical public and an effort to convince pro-life advo-

¹³ Bernardin, "A Consistent Ethic of Life: An American-Catholic Dialogue," in *Consistent Ethic* 4-5 [hereafter: "American-Catholic Dialogue"].

¹⁴ Bernardin, "Address at Seattle," in *Consistent Ethic* 77; see in the same volume his "Address: Consistent Ethic of Life Conference" 88.

cates that their range of concern needs to extend beyond the problem of taking the life of the fetus.

The starting point of the consistent ethic is Bernardin's reading of the "signs of the times" that there are *multiple* threats to the human person. The increasing destructiveness of all forms of warfare, the developing consensus for capital punishment, the emergence of calls for euthanasia, the rise in the incidence of abortion since *Roe v. Wade*, and the continuation of social and economic injustice all jeopardize the dignity of the human person.¹⁵ "In the face of the multiple threats in our time, spanning every phase of our existence, it is necessary to develop a moral vision which can address these several challenges in a coherent and comprehensive fashion."¹⁶ The core concept in this moral vision is that of the dignity of the human person.¹⁷ Because of this dignity, we owe respect to human life.¹⁸ Behind the dignity of the human person and the attitude of respect lies the theological claim that the person is sacred.¹⁹ Backing the claim that life is sacred is the doctrine of the *imago Dei*.²⁰

Adequate moral vision fosters the disposition, or what Bernardin calls an "attitude," of respect for human life in all of its manifestations.²¹ Given proper vision and attitude, one can discern that there is a link between the various life issues. The connection between issues is therefore less the result of detailed empirical substantiation than of a deep, informed moral intuition. Bernardin's claim is bold: "We desperately need an *attitude* or climate in society which will sustain a comprehensive, consistent defense and promotion of life."²²

The phrase "comprehensive and consistent defense and promotion of life" is crucial. The distinction between protection and promotion has been used to justify sharply divergent treatment of different issues. Bernardin's inclusion of both types of responses under the rubric of life

¹⁵ "After Webster" 743; "Religion and Politics" 324–25.

¹⁶ "Address at Seattle" 79.

¹⁷ Bernardin, "Address for National Consultation on Obscenity, Pornography, and Indecency" 28 [hereafter: "On Obscenity"]; see also "The Death Penalty in our Time" 60–61.

¹⁸ "Address at Seattle" 79.

¹⁹ "The Death Penalty in our Time" 61.

²⁰ "On Obscenity" 28–29; see also "Address at Seattle" 79.

²¹ For the use of the terms "moral vision" and "vision," see, e.g., "American-Catholic Dialogue" 10; "A Consistent Ethic of Life: Continuing the Dialogue" 13, 15–18, 24, 28, 31, 34 [hereafter: "Continuing the Dialogue"]; "Address at Seattle" 80, 84, 85; "Religion and Politics," 324–26; "After Webster" 744–47. The ocular metaphor continues when Bernardin asks his listeners to "see" particular situations as involving life issues ("Religion and Politics" 326).

²² Bernardin, "The Consistent Ethic of Life: The Challenge and the Witness of Catholic Health Care" 69 [hereafter: "Challenge and Witness"].

is an attempt to overcome the perceived imbalance in the Church's response to the multiple threats to the human person.²³ While one type of issue is a matter of the "right to life," the other concerns the "quality of life," but the two are related.²⁴ In particular, at several points Bernardin is adamant in insisting upon the link between abortion, which pertains to protecting the fetus, and support for women and children, an issue of the promotion of human life.²⁵

Bernardin's insistence that issues of promotion and protection be brought under the general rubric of a moral vision of life and an attitude of respect appears to have overcome the pastoral and political imbalance in the traditional response to these two types of issues. He is as impassioned about the care of children as he is about the prohibition against taking the life of the fetus. However, this consistency is quite fragile. This is because between the general level of ocular metaphors and the dispositions they require, on the one hand, and specific policy considerations, on the other, is the intervening level of moral methodology. The consistent ethic of life retains, in somewhat modified form, the methodological split that marks official teaching.

The split is evident precisely in the assignment of issues to the categories of "right to life" and "quality of life."²⁶ with the former requiring protection and the latter promotion or enhancement.²⁷ On the issues that require the protection of human life, including abortion, the logic is deductive. Bernardin invokes the principle, "no direct killing of innocents," as the major premise. It serves as a further specification of the right to life. The key question in the reasoning is whether the practice in question fits under the description of the killing of an innocent human person and so qualifies as the minor premise. If it does, then its moral and legal prohibition directly follows. In Bernardin's words, the "fundamental challenge" is in "deciding who fits in the circle of the legally protected human community."²⁸

²³ "A consistent ethic of life does not equate the problem of taking life (e.g. through abortion and in war) with the problem of promoting human dignity (through humane programs of nutrition, health care, and housing). But a consistent ethic identifies both the protection of life and its promotion as moral questions. It argues for a continuum of life which must be sustained in the face of diverse and distinct threats" ("Continuing the Dialogue" 15).

²⁴ See Bernardin, "The Consistent Ethic of Life and Health Care Systems" 52 [hereafter: "Health Care Systems"].

²⁵ "After Webster" 744, 748.

²⁶ For the distinction between "right to life" and "quality of life" issues, see Bernardin "Health Care Systems" 52; "Challenge and Witness" 69-70.

²⁷ For the distinction between protection and promotion or enhancement, see, "Continuing the Dialogue" 17; "Linkage and Logic of the Abortion Debate" 23; and "On Obscenity" 34.

²⁸ "After Webster" 744-45.

The difficulty is not in the use of the deductive approach *per se*, but in its relation to the reasoning on other issues.²⁹ Because the rubric of life is so general, the link between abortion and the care of children is loose; because Bernardin continues the methodological dichotomy, whatever connection is made is fragile. The danger is minimally that abortion, approached only within the deductive framework, will gain ascendancy again as *the* most important issue. If this occurs with any force and frequency, the separate but related issues of abortion and the care of children will decouple once more. If this occurs, then the two will no longer be equal issues under the rubric of "life." The care of children will become simply an indirect implication rather than a concern from the start.

The fragility of the connection between abortion and the care of children is evident in an exchange with John Finnis. When Finnis argues that a candidate's position on abortion can serve as a litmus test for fitness for office, Bernardin's reply does not flow from the intrinsic structure of the consistent ethic, but from a concern about relevance in the public debate.

To insist that the only person a Catholic may vote for must pass a litmus test based on how a person has or presumably would vote on a particular issue apart from an evaluation of the overall political process and the position of the candidate on other pro-life issues could eliminate us as a political reality in our society. What we must find is a way, without compromising our fundamental convictions and, in particular, our commitment to the life of the unborn, that we can credibly remain as participants in the development and transformation of public policy.³⁰

This last line suggests that the driving force of the consistent ethic is to make the Catholic position on abortion plausible to a hesitant and even skeptical American public.³¹ Now public plausibility is indeed a legitimate concern. But the point here is that the consistency of the

²⁹ It is noteworthy that when Richard McCormick observes that the consistent ethic of life exhibits the methodological dichotomy, Bernardin acknowledges that this is the case (McCormick, "The Consistent Ethic of Life: Is There an Historical Soft Underbelly?" in *Consistent Ethic* 103-4; Bernardin, "The Consistent Ethic of Life: Stage Two," in *Consistent Ethic* 251).

³⁰ *Ibid.* 253.

³¹ See Bernardin, "After Webster" 747-48. Lisa Sowle Cahill concurs that the concern for the plausibility of the abortion position moves the consistent ethic: "Certainly the centerpiece of the Catholic debate has been the inclusion of abortion in the 'seamless garment' metaphor of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin's 'consistent ethic of life.' In fact, the metaphor might best be understood as directed toward a convincing presentation of the Church's abortion teaching" (Cahill, "The 'Seamless Garment': Life in Its Beginnings," *TS* 46 [1985] 64-65).

ethic on the policy level flows not from its internal logic but from this latter consideration. The question arises whether the impetus for consistency would have the same force if our society had a consensus against abortion but none on the support for women and children. Elsewhere Bernardin argues, "The Catholic moral tradition anchors its ethic of life in its teaching on abortion."³² In response to Finnis, he grants that, while abortion is not the only issue of import, "priority . . . should be given to candidates' positions on matters pertaining to the life of the unborn."³³ Already the other issues lose urgency. Aiding and joining women in the care of children is again much closer to becoming simply the indirect implication of a syllogism's conclusion, if not an issue decoupled from the question of abortion altogether. When such decoupling occurs, there is a pastoral imbalance. Emphasis is largely on legal prohibitions. This is because, as Curran points out, the juridical metaphor shapes the mode of reasoning from the start in the deductive model. The moral life is understood in terms of obedience to laws. Any prohibition which follows from a syllogism should therefore be translated into civil law, regardless of whether there exists a public consensus on the matter. This is evident in the Declaration of the CDF.³⁴

Cardinal Bernardin's consistent ethic of life displays two opposing tendencies. On the one hand, there is some hesitation to translate moral law directly and immediately into civil law. Bernardin is careful here to distinguish the two kinds of law, to recognize a legitimate plurality of political and pastoral strategies, and to encourage conversation and consensus formation on what combination of responses is most prudential.³⁵ On the other hand, Bernardin elsewhere places a strong emphasis on the link between moral and civil law. At these points, the desirability of dialogue gives way to the obligation to protect human life. Law does not need to await full consensus. Law can *shape* consensus.³⁶ The source of this opposition with regard to the role of law in limiting abortion lies in the methodological difficulties of the consistent ethic itself. Again, these difficulties are first evident when the ethic distinguishes sharply between the right to life, which requires protection, and the quality of life, which calls for promotion. The

³² Bernardin, "Religion and Politics" 325.

³³ "The Consistent Ethic of Life: Stage Two" 252.

³⁴ *Declaration on Abortion* no. 20.

³⁵ Bernardin, "Religion and Politics" 327.

³⁶ Bernardin, "Address: Consistent Ethic of Life Conference" 93; "After Webster" 746. Perhaps Bernardin's strongest call for legal measures against abortion was made at a rally in Chicago's Bismarck Hotel (see *The Chicago Tribune*, 23 Jan., 1992, 7).

deductive approach determines which cases qualify as issues of right to life, including the case of abortion. The conclusion that the life in question requires protection translates into law. Bernardin states:

When should the civil law incorporate key moral concerns? When the issue at stake poses a threat to the public order of society. But at the very heart of public order is the protection of human life and basic human rights. A society which failed in either or both of these functions is rightfully judged morally defective.³⁷

The Pastoral Plan (1975) and Its Reaffirmation (1985)

The problem of the pastoral imbalance of the consistent ethic is evident in its embodiment in the National Council of Catholic Bishops' "Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities" in 1975 and its "Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Reaffirmation" in 1985. These two documents when viewed together, are especially helpful for analyzing the impact of the consistent ethic of life on official thought and practice. Long stretches of the later document repeat, virtually verbatim, the earlier one. But Cardinal Bernardin became chair of the NCCB Pro-Life Committee in 1983, and the later document also explicitly takes up the language of the consistent ethic.³⁸ The differences between the documents are therefore significant, and comparison provides a way to gauge the pastoral possibilities and limits of the consistent ethic.

Both documents have sections on pastoral care that specifically focus on care for women and children and precede the sections on legislative efforts to legally prohibit abortion. This in itself is significant when compared to the ordering in the Declaration of the CDF, where such care receives brief mention only after there is extended treatment on the need for laws prohibiting abortion. However, the two NCCB pastoral plans differ significantly from each other in tone in key passages. Here is where the influence of the consistent ethic is most evident. The Reaffirmation picks up the theme that a broad range of issues are related under the general rubric of "life," each one "touching on the dignity" of the person.³⁹ As with the consistent ethic articulated in Bernardin's speeches, the grouping of issues on the general level leads to a greater evenhandedness on the level of specifics. Two policy

³⁷ "After Webster" 746.

³⁸ After speaking about the need to focus on the central role of the issue of abortion, the bishops go on to state, "This focus and the Church's firm commitment to consistent ethic of life complement each other" (*A Reaffirmation* nos. 8–9; see also nos. 10–12, 49). Bernardin acknowledges the role of the consistent ethic in shaping the document ("Address at Seattle" 77).

³⁹ *A Reaffirmation* no. 10.

changes are evident in moving from the original Pastoral Plan to the Reaffirmation. First, the original Plan focuses on critical scrutiny of public officials, while the Reaffirmation has a more dialogical emphasis.⁴⁰ Second, the 1975 document places virtually exclusive emphasis on a constitutional amendment as the policy objective. The later document recognizes that there may be a plurality of legitimate policy options.⁴¹

However, the methodological split in the consistent ethic is also evident in the Reaffirmation. The deductive approach to abortion is displayed in the argument that among the life issues "abortion necessarily plays a central role," because it involves a "direct attack on innocent life."⁴² Again, "no direct killing of innocents" is the major premise of the syllogism. That aiding and joining women in the care of children is once more an indirect implication of the deduced conclusion rather than an issue that is present from the start is evident in the statement of the pastoral care section that material assistance for women does not extend beyond "the first year of life."⁴³ The focus is on assuring that life is sustained through the limited period of time from the onset of pregnancy through one year. While the consistent ethic does stress the problem of economic justice in its overall schema, it is clear that extended economic care—considered in the consistent ethic as a related but separate issue from that of abortion—has largely decoupled from the problem of abortion when the pro-life plan moves to pastoral objectives.

Because the pastoral focus is only on the first year of life, it obscures the enormity of what is required in the care of children. This results in a pastoral imbalance. The calls for legal prohibitions on abortion have an urgency that is lacking in the prescriptions for aiding women. The language used to describe what is required legally is that of "rever-

⁴⁰ The original document, stressing scrutiny of officeholders, lists among its objectives, "To convince elected officials that 'the abortion issue' will not go away and that their position on it will be subject to continuing public scrutiny," and "To maintain an informational file on the pro-life position of every elected official and potential candidate" (nos. 49, 54). The Reaffirmation, emphasizing more of a dialogical approach, softens the wording so that the objective is that of "helping pro-life citizens to organize more effectively, so that their view will be heard and taken into account by party officials and elected representatives" (no. 211).

⁴¹ For instance, an objective for parish pro-life committees in the original 1975 document stated, "Through ongoing public information programs, (to) generate public awareness of the continuing effort to obtain a constitutional amendment" (no. 39). The 1985 document modifies this to read "to foster public awareness of the need for a constitutional amendment and other laws and policies to restore legal protection for the unborn" (no. 44c).

⁴² *A Reaffirmation* no. 8.

⁴³ *Ibid.* no. 29.

sal.”⁴⁴ The cultural momentum must be turned around with all due speed. However, aiding and joining women in the care of children requires only an “extension” of efforts already in place.⁴⁵ The cultural pattern of placing the responsibility for the care of children on women—who, as Bernardin elsewhere points out, are victims of economic discrimination and represent a disproportionate percentage of the poor⁴⁶—is not fundamentally challenged. Although Bernardin’s speeches link abortion and aiding and joining women in the care of children eloquently and passionately, the connection does not survive the transition to pastoral practice as stated in the official pro-life documents. It is too fragile.

Comparing the earlier and later versions of the Pastoral Plan therefore highlights the possibilities and limits of the consistent ethic on the pastoral level. On the one hand, the tone is much more dialogical and less adversarial. On the other, the perpetuation of the methodological split leads to a pastoral imbalance. The deductive tendency to predispose pastoral responses to prescribing legal remedies, while underestimating the commitment necessary for adequately addressing other dimensions of the abortion situation, remains. A model for resolving the methodological difficulties, however, is present in the structure of “Putting Children and Families First.”

CARE OF CHILDREN AS RESPONSIBLE CONTEXT FOR ABORTION

In making his comparison between sexual and social teachings, Curran mentions in passing that the deductive and inductive approaches are not mutually exclusive.⁴⁷ However, because of the way his article is set up in terms of contrasting the methodologies associated with sexual and social teachings, it is not clear what it would mean to combine them. One possibility is to subsume both induction and deduction under a general response approach. This is what in fact occurs in “Putting Children and Families First.” In locating the issue of abortion within the context of the care of children, it follows the “relationality-responsibility” approach identified with social teaching. In Curran’s words, such an approach “sees the human person in terms of one’s multiple relationships with God, neighbor, world, and self and the call to live responsibly in the midst of these relationships.” The bishops’ document, while still stating forcefully its position on abortion, emphasizes the ongoing relationship between parent and child and between family and society.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* no. 37c.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* nos. 29 and 30.

⁴⁶ Bernardin, “The Face of Poverty Today: A Challenge for the Church” 45–47; and “Religion and Politics” 326.

⁴⁷ Curran, “Official Catholic Social and Sexual Teaching” 90.

The Influence of "The Challenge of Peace"

The moral approach and language of response and responsibility is comparatively new.⁴⁸ In Catholic social teaching, it had its inauguration with *Gaudium et spes*.⁴⁹ The American Catholic bishops explicitly base their thinking in "The Challenge of Peace" on the model of *Gaudium et spes*.⁵⁰ Because the peace pastoral exhibits the response approach not only on the level of generality, but also on that of particulars, it serves as a more complete example and is better for initial illustration than either *Gaudium et spes* or "Putting Children and Families First." What we will find is that "Putting Children and Families First" subsumes under the response approach the deductive and deontological thought that keys around the principle "no direct killing of innocents" on abortion, in precisely the way that "The Challenge of Peace" treats the same principle with regard to noncombatant immunity.

The overarching language of "The Challenge of Peace" is that of "promise," or "challenge," and "response." This is first indicated in the subtitle of the letter, "God's Promise and Our Response." The bishops unpack the meaning of this phrase when they later state, "Peace and war must always be seen in light of God's intervention in human affairs and our response to that intervention. Both are elements within the ongoing revelation of God's will for creation."⁵¹ God's intervention is simultaneously promise and challenge, and the task of the community is to respond accordingly. Thus the bishops frame the document by interpreting the nature of responsiveness in biblical terms in the first major section (nos. 27–55), and by calling the faithful to respond through their particular vocations in the last section, which is aptly titled "Pastoral Challenge and Response" (nos. 274–329). Taken together, these two sections form an *inclusio* around the moral reasoning and policy choices that form the middle parts of the letter.

In the paragraphs that open the document, the bishops initiate their moral reflection by describing the realities of the nuclear situation: "The crisis of which we speak arises from this fact: nuclear war threatens the existence of our planet; this is a more menacing threat than

⁴⁸ On the philosophical development of the term "responsibility," see Richard McKeon, "The Development and the Significance of the Concept of Responsibility," *Revue internationale de philosophie* 34 (1957) 3–32. For a treatment of the theological development of the concept, see Albert R. Jonsen, *Responsibility in Modern Religious Ethics* (Washington: Corpus, 1968).

⁴⁹ *Gaudium et spes* no. 55: "We are witnesses of the birth of a new humanism, one in which man is defined first by his responsibility toward his brothers and toward history."

⁵⁰ *Challenge of Peace* no. 7.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* no. 28; cf. also nos. 276, 331, 333.

any the world has known."⁵² Beginning with a description of the problem-situation recalls the starting point in H. Richard Niebuhr's understanding of the responsibility approach. Fundamentally, it involves a shift in the basic question of the moral life from those raised by deontology and teleology. Instead of asking "What is the law?" or "What is my *telos*?" the response approach begins with the question, "What is going on?"⁵³ In Curran's terms, "What are the relevant webs of relationship?"

After the bishops give their opening statement of "what is going on," they provide, in the first major section, a broad biblical perspective within which to interpret the nuclear debate. Here it is important to note that the bishops insist that theological language is not directly translatable into moral principles. Referring to "certain key moral principles," the bishops state that "these norms do not exhaust the gospel vision."⁵⁴ The language of "vision" and "image" shapes the theological discourse, evidencing the fact that such metaphors do not provide us with principles, but instead construe the context within which our use of principles is appropriate. In so doing, the biblically informed theological discourse provides, in the bishops' words, "an urgent direction" for the community's response.⁵⁵ All moral methodologies and principles are subsumed under the general obligation to respond to the promise and challenge of God in the problem-situations we encounter. All are brought under the activity of the community, the living tradition, as it seeks to respond to what is going on in light of the biblical vision. Practical reason is not a matter of applying one method or principle to all cases. With the response approach, the first task is to discern which combination of methods and principles is called for by a particular problem-situation.

The advantage of this approach is that it does not prematurely foreclose the methods which may be used in a community's response. "The Challenge of Peace" evidences both deductive and inductive methods. The former is most salient in the application of the principle of non-combatant immunity, which is a specification of "no direct killing of innocents" in the context of the problem-situation of war, to the case of counterpopulation bombing.⁵⁶ The principle functions to direct us to a value which requires illumination given the tendency of modern warfare to cheapen human worth. However, the principle has limited ap-

⁵² Ibid. nos. 1-3; see also nos. 13, 125 (the "signs of the times"), 126-28 (the "new moment") for more depictions of "what is going on."

⁵³ Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self* 55-68.

⁵⁴ *Challenge of Peace* nos. 17, 32-38, 44-51, 54-55.

⁵⁵ Ibid. no. 55; see also no. 29.

⁵⁶ Ibid. nos. 147-49.

plication when it fails, if used alone, to illumine other key aspects of a problem-situation. For this reason, other methods are also necessary.

The clearest use of induction in the bishops' pastoral is in the treatment of deterrence. Given the unprecedented circumstances that the situation of deterrence involves, the bishops are without specific principles that they can readily apply in order to determine policy prescriptions. Their primary guidance is from the biblical interpretation of peace set out in the first section of the document. It is a positive understanding of peace, summarized in the phrase "covenantal fidelity," as right relationship with God, neighbor, and, ultimately, all of creation. The question is how to move in a direction of right relation with one's neighbor through deterrence. The bishops reason inductively from the broad biblical context to shape the criteria that are to guide deterrence if it is to move in the "urgent direction" set out in the first section of the document. This results in the bishops' "strictly conditioned moral acceptance of deterrence."⁵⁷

"Putting Children and Families First"

Just as "The Challenge of Peace" brings the issues of noncombatant immunity and deterrence under the wider issue of peace and war, "Putting Children and Families First" draws upon the response approach to subsume the deductive reasoning on abortion, on the one hand, and, on the other, the more inductive reasoning on, for instance, health care and education, under the broader problem-situation of the care of children. Both the structure and the language, though not as well developed as in "The Challenge of Peace," evidence the understanding of the moral life in terms of challenge/invitation and response. The introduction and the first major section, titled "The Realities," describe "what is going on." The introduction, drawing upon the invitation, challenge, and response motifs, states, "We invite the Catholic community and the broader society to respond to this urgent moral challenge. . . . This message is a call for conversion and action."⁵⁸ The first major section describes the hunger, poverty, and violence that mark the lives of children both in the U.S. and elsewhere, and comments, "For far too many of our children all over the world childhood is an often dangerous and overwhelming struggle."⁵⁹ The second major section, titled "The Moral and Religious Dimension," draws from

⁵⁷ Ibid. no. 186.

⁵⁸ "Putting Children and Families First" 395. Note also the language of "challenge" in the subtitle, "A Challenge for Our Church, Nation, and World," which recalls "The Challenge of Peace."

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Scripture, Catholic teaching, and experience to set out the basic interpretive framework to assess the problem-situation and, in the bishops' words, "to shape our response to this moral challenge." The final section, "A Call to Action," addressed primarily to the Catholic community, urges a pastoral response. Like the peace pastoral, then, description and interpretation of "what is going on" on the one hand and a call for response on the other form an *inclusio* around the more detailed moral and political reasoning.

The bishops mention or address abortion at several points in the document, each time within the broader context of the overall response to the problem of the care of children and support for families.⁶⁰ In describing the threats to children, the bishops mention first the 1.6 million abortions per year in the U.S., but they immediately follow by highlighting poverty, infant mortality, teenage pregnancy, hunger, teenage suicide, physical and sexual abuse, and the lack of adequate education and health care.⁶¹ Their treatment of directions for national policy follows a similar pattern. As in the treatment of noncombatant immunity in "The Challenge of Peace," the right to life and its specification in the principle forbidding the direct killing of innocents serves to direct our vision to a value which requires illumination given the tendency of modern culture to cheapen human worth.

What is most noteworthy in these sections is that the enormity of the problems facing children overwhelms the distinction between the protection of the "right to life" and the promotion of "quality of life," that leads to the split between abortion and other issues even in Cardinal Bernardin's consistent ethic of life. In the section on national policy, the issues of abortion, abuse, neglect, and foster care all come under the rubric of "protecting the lives of children."⁶² In the subsection on healthcare, the severity of the situation mutes any distinction between those problems which lead to death and those which are disabling:

The lack of basic healthcare—and factors tied directly to poverty—have been documented in the tragic reality that poor children are twice as likely as other children to have physical or mental disabilities or other chronic health conditions that impair daily activity. Our nation's continuing failure to guarantee access to quality health care for all people exacts its most painful toll in the preventable sickness, disability and deaths of our infants and children.⁶³

The realities of the international situation especially overwhelm the right/quality distinction. For instance, after discussing the problem of Third-World debt, the bishops state that women and children "are the

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 395, 397–400, 404.

⁶² *Ibid.* 400.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 395–96.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 402.

first victims of the cuts in social services made by developing countries to 'adjust' their economies to pay their burdensome debts. As we pointed out in our statement on the external debt, children are literally dying of the consequences of that debt."⁶⁴

The immediate result of this qualification, and even overwhelming of the distinction between right to life and quality of life, is that the issue of the care of children gains the kind of urgency that previously was reserved for the narrower concern of abortion. The bishops identify addressing the needs of children and families as a "first priority" and an "urgent priority."⁶⁵ They state that the concern for children is the test of faith and guide for policy for Church, nation, and world.⁶⁶ The difference between this sense of urgency and that expressed for the care of children in the consistent ethic of life is that here it arises from the method itself and not simply from pastoral insight. It is a direct response to an interpretation of what is going on, unimpeded by an overdrawn distinction between the right to life and the quality of life. For this reason, it is free of the fragility that marks the consistent ethic. It is less driven by an overriding concern to make Catholic teaching on abortion acceptable to the public and less susceptible to changes in political climate. In short, it is a more stable way to relate abortion and the care of children.

Pastoral Advantages of the Responsibility Approach

I suggested at the beginning that, in addition to this overall stability in the relationship between abortion and the care of children, there are pastoral advantages with the responsibility approach in interpreting and responding to the issue of abortion itself. In light of the analysis above, several such advantages come to the fore. *First*, the responsibility approach, which begins with the concrete question "What is going on?" rather than with an abstract first principle, is more attentive to the moral reasoning of women who do procure abortions: they are concerned with the welfare of the child if the pregnancy should be brought to term. (A preliminary note is necessary, however, before I turn to the data. It is crucial to distinguish between recognizing the reasons women give for having abortions and claiming that those rea-

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 396. The bishops also state, "In our hearts, we know something is wrong as we watch children die on the nightly news. We need to link those heartbreaking pictures of hunger and desperation to the structures of debt and development, conflict and violence which contribute—directly or indirectly—to the death of those children" (*ibid.* 404).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 398, 402.

⁶⁶ "We seek to measure our ministry, our nation, and our world for how we protect the lives, dignity, and rights of all God's children" (*ibid.* 404). Note again the absence of any protect/promote distinction; see also 395, 398.

sons are morally legitimate. The evidence provided by the data on why women have abortions does not in itself constitute a moral argument one way or the other. Acknowledgment of and attentiveness to the reasons women give as to why they have abortions is fully compatible with a prohibition on directly taking the life of the fetus, as is evident in "Putting Children and Families First.")

Data from research into why women have abortions has been slowly accumulating over the last fifteen years.⁶⁷ The most comprehensive study to date confirms previous findings.⁶⁸ The answers of the 1,900 women surveyed were complex. Ninety-three percent of the respondents gave more than one answer. The mean number of answers was four. The women were asked, however, their most important reason for having an abortion. Of the five most frequent answers, the first, second, and fifth readily fit under the more general rubric, "I could not adequately care for the child if the pregnancy were brought to term." Twenty-one percent said that they could not economically afford the child, twenty-one percent more said that they were "unready for the responsibility," and eleven percent said that they were too young or not mature enough. If this is the case, then fifty-three percent of the women cited inability to care adequately for the child as the most important reason for having their abortion.

But these are the answers to the question about their *most important* reason for the abortion. When asked simply to list their reasons—again, the mean is four—thirty percent of the women indicate that they are not mature enough, thirty-one percent say they are unready for the responsibility, and *sixty-eight percent indicate that they cannot economically afford the child if the pregnancy is brought to term*. Since the women list more than one answer, these reasons overlap on any given questionnaire. However, even by conservative statistical estimates it is clear that at least two-thirds of the women indicate inability adequately to care for the child, particularly from an economic standpoint, among their reasons for abortion. A strictly deductive approach raises the question only indirectly, if at all.

⁶⁷ For early studies, see Sissela Bok, *Ethical Problems of Abortion*, *Hastings Center Studies* 1, no. 1 (Jan. 1974) 45; Mary K. Zimmerman, *Passage Through Abortion: The Personal and Social Reality of Women's Experiences* (New York: Praeger, 1977); Carol Gilligan, "In a Different Voice: Women's Conceptions of Self and Morality," *Harvard Educational Review* 47 (1977) 483; and Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ., 1982).

⁶⁸ Aida Torres and Jacqueline Darroch Forrest, "Why Do Women Have Abortions?" *Family Planning Perspectives* 20, no. 4 (July/August 1988) 169–76. For other recent research that confirms the findings of Torres and Forrest, see Colin Francome, *Abortion Practice in Britain and the United States* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986) 101–2.

This leads to the *second* advantage of the responsibility approach to addressing even the issue of abortion itself. Attentiveness to the reasons women give for procuring abortions illumines what is required for any community that seeks to respond to the problem-situation. As noted above, it is crucial to distinguish between recognizing the reasons women give for having abortions and claiming that those reasons are morally legitimate. Acknowledgment of the reasons women give for having abortions is fully compatible with a negative judgment on directly taking the life of the embryo and fetus. Still, the reasons why women have abortions, particularly if they identify circumstances which are beyond their immediate control, do place a great deal of pastoral pressure on any strict prohibition against abortion. The only way to relieve that pressure without granting more latitude on taking the life of the embryo and fetus is to seek to uncover and address the forces that play a role in women having abortions. The women in the study tell us directly that the care of children is a central concern.

This leads to the *third* advantage of the response approach. While the data on why women have abortions highlight the differences in persons' understanding of the status of the fetus and the morality of abortion, they also illumine a point of contact between the various parties in the debate: for both women who have abortions and those who do not, abortion is an issue of the care of children. Here is a point of contact, and the best place to start in any dialogue on abortion, between persons who sharply disagree on other aspects of the question. The responsibility approach illumines for both "pro-life" and "pro-choice" parties that, if their positions are not to degenerate into simply "anti-abortion" and "pro-abortion," they must place their arguments firmly in the context of the care of children.

The case for the care of children for someone who disagrees with official Catholic teaching on the status of the fetus is more complex and is worth delineating briefly. It is first of all more complex because, on such an understanding, the status of the embryo and fetus changes over the course of the pregnancy. Here, one might make almost no link between the embryo and the care of children, yet make a close connection between the fetus in the third trimester and children. In this instance, there is more in common between those who agree and disagree with official teaching as the pregnancy progresses. For someone who disagrees with official teaching, the second factor that adds complexity is the emphasis on women's choice. But even here, there is a connection to the issue of the care of children: if one seeks to enhance choice for women, then one ought to see to it that women have the wherewithal to bring a pregnancy to term and raise the child that results. Here the grounding of the case for the care of children may be

different, but there is a shared obligation to children. To put it in the all-too-blunt language of the wider public debate again, if one is indeed “pro-choice,” and not simply “pro-abortion,” then there seems to be a positive obligation to aid women who choose to bring a pregnancy to term. One might want to weight the obligation differently than for those who agree with the official teaching, but there seems to be an obligation nonetheless.

Cooperation on such a shared sense of obligation is precisely what is going on in Missouri and Wisconsin in the movement named “common ground.”⁶⁹ While both sides are clear that they will not change on their understanding of the status of the fetus—that aspect of the abortion debate is for the most part intractable—they are aware that they can jointly act from a shared judgment that abortion is tragic. This leads to the *fourth* advantage of the response approach. Dialogue and consensus on the care of children can lead to a decrease in the incidence of abortion. One can infer this from the data on why women have abortion. There is preliminary evidence of the truth of this point in a recent report on a St. Louis abortion clinic that also offers adoption services and counseling for women who choose to keep their newborns when the pregnancies are brought to term. The report testifies that the rate of women choosing abortion at the clinic has decreased.⁷⁰ Further efforts at instituting similar programs and further study of the results is necessary to make this point conclusive, but it merits follow-up. The point is that even these preliminary data are the result of a conscious effort at cooperation by the “common ground” movement.

Fifth, the response approach with its insistence that one place the issue of abortion in the context of the care of children contributes integrity to the Church’s practice and plausibility to its witness. It is a given among feminist scholars who address abortion that one earns one’s way into the debate by investing oneself in the larger, and more immediate, context of the issue. This is articulated most clearly in an article by Alison Jaggar.⁷¹ Two principles structure her position. First, that “the right to life, when it is claimed for a human being, means the right to a full human life and to whatever means are necessary” for this. Second, that “decisions should be made by those, and only by

⁶⁹ See, Tamar Lewin, “In Bitter Abortion Debate, Opponents Learn to Reach for Common Ground,” *New York Times* (Monday, 17 Feb. 1992) A7.

⁷⁰ ABC Nightly News, 22 Jan. 1992.

⁷¹ Alison Jaggar, “Abortion and a Woman’s Right to Decide,” in Carol C. Gould and Marx W. Wartofsky, eds., *Women and Philosophy: Toward a Theory of Liberation* (New York: Putnam’s, 1976) 347–60.

those, who are importantly affected by them."⁷² Jaggard argues that since the far greater portion of the responsibility for the care of children falls on women in our society, women have the right to decide whether or not to have an abortion. She is careful to emphasize that this does not make those choices moral.⁷³ It is rather that persons and institutions must earn their way into the discussion of the morality and legality of taking the life of the fetus by investing themselves in the web of relationships that is immediately affected by decisions to abort or not.⁷⁴

Jaggard also highlights the reverse side of her two principles. The woman's right to decide is only contingent. Deep involvement in the care of children earns one a voice in abortion decisions:

If the whole community assumes the responsibility for the welfare of mothers and children, then the application to the changed social conditions of the two principles which I used in defending the woman's right to decide surely results in the conclusion that the community as a whole should now have a share in judging whether or not a particular abortion should be performed.⁷⁵

The efforts of the U.S. Catholic Church on behalf of children is a longstanding one, and the bishops highlight this fact in "Putting Children and Families First." Under a subsection titled "The Experience of the Catholic Community," the bishops correctly claim, "No institution is more deeply involved in serving the needs of children than our community of faith."⁷⁶ The response approach has the advantage of illuminating that commitment as an integral part of what the method takes into account in examining the issue of abortion. A deductive

⁷² Ibid. 351.

⁷³ Ibid. 355-56.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 358. The fact that both pro-life and pro-choice feminists have acknowledged the major points of Jaggard's analysis is testimony to its force. Sydney Callahan, who describes herself as a pro-life feminist, writes, "The strongest argument of the prochoice position is that because a woman must bear and rear a child alone, with no guaranteed support, she alone has the right to make the decision to continue a pregnancy" (Callahan, "Commentary to Chapter 12," in Sidney Callahan and Daniel Callahan, eds., *Abortion: Understanding Differences* [New York: Plenum, 1984] 326). Even Beverly Harrison, who does argue for the right to choose, acknowledges, with much hedging, that a society which aided and joined women in the care of children might also make legitimate claims to legally restrict abortion: "In such a utopian world, where women's lives were really valued (a world, let us insist, quite unlike the one we know!), it probably would be possible to adhere to an ethic which affirmed that abortions should be resorted to only *in extremis*, to save a mother's life" (Harrison, *Our Right to Choose: Toward a New Ethic of Abortion* [Boston: Beacon, 1983] 18).

⁷⁶ "Putting Children and Families First" 398.

approach obscures this commitment by focusing on the morality of the act of abortion to the virtual exclusion, except as an indirect implication, of the social context.

This leads to the *sixth* and final advantage of the responsibility approach. While illuminating the Catholic Church's commitment to the care of children, it also discloses that commitment is not sufficient. Despite the efforts of the Catholic community, the problems of poverty, inadequate health care, poor education and violence still plague children. These situations continue to be a factor any time a woman faces an unintended pregnancy. In the absence of adequate support, women are urged by the Catholic Church to be heroic. The Declaration of the CDF states, "Following one's conscience in obedience to the law of God is not always the easy way. One must not fail to recognize the weight of the sacrifices and burdens which it can impose. Heroism is sometimes called for in order to remain faithful to the requirements of the divine law."⁷⁷ While the consistent ethic of life and, especially, "Putting Children and Families First" move away from the juridical language of obedience to law, the continued stance on abortion still implies an invitation or challenge to heroism.

Within the context of a responsibility approach and its emphasis on the care of children, the question remains open whether the Catholic Church, even with its impressive commitment to children, evidences as a community as a whole a heroism commensurate with what it asks of women. The schools, hospitals, and other institutions which the bishops recognize rightly as evidencing a deep involvement in the lives of children, were founded by that segment of the Catholic community that understood its life as heroically going beyond the norm. But the numbers of religious are decreasing, and the institutions they founded are experiencing the same social and economic pressures as their secular counterparts. This too is a part of "what is going on" in the care of children in the U.S. It raises the question whether the call to heroism must extend beyond women who are pregnant and persons who are members of religious orders. "Putting Children and Families First" is clear that its call to conversion is intended for the Catholic community—and the Catholic community as a whole—in addition to the state. But while it mentions the Church's role in addressing the problems at hand several times, these references lack the development and specificity of the directions suggested for the state. Attention to dynamics *within* the Catholic community as part of the analysis of what is going on suggests that the next point in the trajectory set by "Putting Children and Families First" must address whether and how the

⁷⁷ *Declaration on Abortion* no. 24.

Church's response to the care of children can be commensurate with its teaching on abortion. This is necessary if its response to either issue is to be adequate.

CONCLUSION

My task has been to assess the adequacy of the modes of reasoning relating abortion and the care of children in three church documents. A strictly deductive approach leaves the care of children as an indirect implication of the conclusion of a syllogism. The result is an excessive emphasis on legal prohibitions and a failure to illumine even the energy that the Catholic community is already investing in children. The consistent ethic of life, arising out of keen pastoral insight, attempts to give both issues equal standing under the rubric of "life." However wise the insight, it remains fragile because the methodological split between sexual and social ethics in official documents continues. Again, a pastoral imbalance results. Of all the options, subsuming abortion under the issue of the care of children within the context of a responsibility approach is the most stable.

Following the quote from Cardinal Bernardin at the start, I suggested that adequately relating abortion and the care of children in our moral reasoning will result in a better pastoral response to both issues. Therefore it is important to recognize that placing abortion in the context of the care of children has the potential to enhance the Catholic community's response to abortion itself. This is because the responsibility approach focuses on the reasons why women have abortions. It therefore highlights what is required of a pastoral response: the care of children. Such care can serve as a point of contact between persons who disagree in many cases on the morality of taking the life of the fetus, but who, through consensus and cooperation in the care of children, can lower the incidence of abortion. Such cooperation in the care of children would also give the Catholic Church increased credibility when it states its position on abortion in the public forum.

In the end, the responsibility approach, which places abortion in the context of the care of children, allows the official Catholic position on abortion to inform, and even set a standard for, the adequacy of its response to the care of children. The Catholic Church calls on women who are faced with pregnancy in difficult circumstances to exhibit heroism. The responsibility approach reveals that there is no intrinsic reason why this cannot be asked—indeed, required—of the rest of us.