

2005

The Consistent Ethic of Life

Sidney Callahan Ph.D.

Bluebook Citation

Sidney Callahan, *The Consistent Ethic of Life*, 2 U. St. Thomas L.J. 272 (2005).

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by UST Research Online and the University of St. Thomas Law Journal. For more information, please contact lawjournal@stthomas.edu.

UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS LAW JOURNAL

SPRING 2005

VOLUME 2

NUMBER 2



Symposium

Can the Seamless Garment Be Sewn?
The Future of Pro-Life Progressivism

The Consistent Ethic of Life

Sidney Callahan, Ph.D.

Fides et Iustitia

ARTICLE

THE CONSISTENT ETHIC OF LIFE

SIDNEY CALLAHAN, PH.D.*

Three central questions can be addressed in regard to the consistent ethic of life. First, what is it? Second, has the consistent ethic of life borne fruit within the Church? Third, will the consistent ethic of life influence American culture?

I. WHAT IS THE CONSISTENT ETHIC OF LIFE?

In the early 1980s, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin introduced and articulated a “consistent ethic of life” in a number of speeches and addresses that were published and widely noted.¹ He spoke of this ethic as a “seamless garment.” Cardinal Bernardin gave his first lecture on the topic at Fordham University on December 6, 1983 and stated his purpose, “I am convinced that the pro-life position of the Church must be developed in terms of a comprehensive and consistent ethic of life.”² He affirmed that he was “committed to shaping a position of linkage among the life issues.”³ At the beginning of his project, Cardinal Bernardin pointed to the example of the pastoral letter of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) *The Challenge of Peace*.⁴

Cardinal Bernardin endorsed the bishops’ effort to shape public policy debates, saying they were “following the model of the Second Vatican Council which called dialogue with the world a sign of love for the world.”⁵ Cardinal Bernardin’s aim was to develop the linkage of life issues as a pastoral and public contribution. He analyzed a spectrum of life issues beyond war and abortion, and affirmed that there is a linkage between life issues such as the death penalty, euthanasia, poverty and welfare reform,

* Distinguished Scholar at the Hastings Center, Garrison, New York.

1. Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, *Consistent Ethic of Life* (Thomas G. Fuechtmann ed., Sheed & Ward 1988). Ten speeches of Cardinal Bernardin are given here along with his response to a symposium on the consistent ethic of life held at Loy. U. of Chi. on Nov. 7, 1987. Because the different speeches were to different audiences, there was a great deal of repetition of ideas.

2. *Id.* at 2.

3. *Id.*

4. *Id.* at 3-4.

5. *Id.* at 3.

health care, civil rights, and pornography. As he said, "The theological foundation of the consistent ethic [of life] . . . is [the] defense of the person."⁶

In his addresses, Cardinal Bernardin said that he wished to initiate a dialogue in the Church and within public life. He asked for responses and further development of the consistent ethic of life, with the request that arguments and differences of opinion be voiced with charity and civility. Cardinal Bernardin went on to say that "we should test everyone's logic but not question his or her motives."⁷

Historians will judge whether the responses and criticisms that Cardinal Bernardin received met his own unfailing standards of civility, humility, and charity. As he continued to explicate his vision and civilly answer objections from different sources, his thinking developed.

To meet the criticisms of those who thought that the Church should focus on abortion and not dilute this most crucial pro-life effort, Cardinal Bernardin explained that, of course, a foundational consistent ethic of life must sometimes set practical priorities and take account of distinctions between life issues.⁸ Different concrete situations and different levels of each pro-life cause exist and must be taken into account.⁹ Expertise in working toward solutions will differ when it comes to complex matters such as peacemaking, or abortion, or the welfare of the poor.¹⁰ People can rightly have different vocations in their advocacy of different life issues.¹¹ As he said, "No one is called to do everything, but each of us can do something."¹²

Cardinal Bernardin also recognized that obtaining support for an effective constituency promoting a consistent ethic of life would be difficult in America's pluralistic society.¹³ The challenge of consistent ethic adherents is "to test party platforms, public policies, and political candidates."¹⁴ The 2004 presidential election was a tutorial for the American Church on the difficulties of judging candidates and parties on the full spectrum of life issues. Catholic voters were divided, as were their bishops.

Today, after the election, advocates of a consistent ethic of life can reexamine its fundamental character and application. New moral controversies over life issues have emerged regarding justifications of pre-emptive war, stem cell research, the use of torture, and end-of-life treatment for the ill and brain-damaged. Again, it is necessary to restate Cardinal Bernar-

6. *Id.* at 89.

7. *Id.* at 10.

8. *Id.* at 15.

9. *See id.*

10. *See id.*

11. *See id.*

12. *Id.* at 15.

13. *Id.* at 10.

14. *Id.* at 18.

din's fundamental basis of the ethic as the truth that "human life is both sacred and social."¹⁵ The traditional Catholic moral principle that guides the linkage of nuclear policy and abortion in *The Challenge of Peace* pastoral letter "prohibits the directly intended taking of innocent human life."¹⁶ Civilian populations in cities cannot be targeted by nuclear weapons and fetal life cannot be directly destroyed.¹⁷

In the Catholic ethical tradition the presumption is against taking life, although in a fallen and sinful world, exceptions have been made for self-defense, just war, or capital punishment in defense of society. Cardinal Bernardin noted that these traditional exceptions have narrowed since the reforms of Vatican II.¹⁸ Pope John Paul II's teaching on the death penalty in modern conditions made it all but impermissible, and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops has taken a policy position against capital punishment.¹⁹ But on other life issues, the challenge of technology and what can now be done has produced new moral crises for society. The questions, as Cardinal Bernardin stated them, are: "In an age when we *can* do almost anything, how do we decide what we *should* do? In a time when we can do anything *technologically*, how do we decide *morally* what we should not do?"²⁰ Even in the face of a nuclear attack by an enemy, no counterattack on cities should be launched.²¹ Certain assaults on the dignity of human life in new reproductive technologies cannot be countenanced.²² A consistent ethic of life will be based on certain bedrock moral principles.²³ A Christian can never do evil to achieve good.²⁴

Today, after two decades, the consistent ethic of life articulated in the 1980s is still alive and still developing. The "seamless garment" has been inspiring and guiding peace and justice advocates through tumultuous events. The world has seen the end of the cold war, the advent of two Gulf wars, many small military engagements, and several horrendous genocides. Nuclear weapons still exist and are proliferating. In domestic affairs the question of abortion has become ever more bitterly contested, and other social conflicts have arisen over a spectrum of life issues. Those living in poverty, along with their children, have less social support and less access to health care. The provision of Social Security for the elderly is threatened

15. *Id.* at 88.

16. *Id.* at 7-8.

17. *Id.* at 8.

18. *Id.* at 5, 89.

19. *Id.* at 6.

20. *Id.* at 89.

21. *Id.* at 8.

22. *See id.* at 89.

23. *See id.* at 78.

24. *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Modifications from the Editio Typica* Nos. 1757-61 (2d ed., U.S. Catholic Conf. 1997) [hereinafter *Catechism of the Catholic Church*].

and millions of uninsured Americans lack adequate health care. Basic education is not equally available for the poor.

Controversies over the relationship of religion and politics have taken on a new intensity. Catholic advocates of the consistent ethic of life are challenged to reexamine its religious roots in order to effectively relate to others of different beliefs in non-religious terms.²⁵ For Roman Catholics, the consistent ethic of life can be seen as an embodiment of the core commandment of Christian morality: to love one's neighbor as one's self. The Golden Rule is expressed in different ways in the Gospels but always requires treating another as you would wish to be treated. Love of neighbor commands that you must do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

The meaning of love in the Christian tradition includes broad dimensions and is never narrowed to its emotional experiential character. Love as charity includes acts of mind and heart as well as behavioral efforts. It includes just and beneficent action and goodwill toward all. Pope John Paul II stated, "By itself, justice is not enough. Indeed it can even betray itself, unless it is open to that deeper power which is love."²⁶ In the tradition of the Hebrew prophets, Christianity considers faith without works to be dead and love to be united with justice. Always Christian love presupposes and transcends justice.

Consequently, Christians in their love of neighbor will be committed

1. to do no harm;
2. to relieve human suffering of every kind by appropriate works of mercy;
3. to affirm the equal moral value and dignity of each human life regardless of race, gender, class, health, wealth, power, or moral condition;
4. to strive for the development and flourishing of the human community to achieve a "civilization of love" and "a culture of life" as proclaimed in Church social doctrine.²⁷

In addition, the Catholic moral vision of equal justice and charity for all assumes that there can be no body-self dualism and that no human life exists that is not interdependent with others.²⁸ Catholics have affirmed that all goods, like all persons, are interdependent, since all human beings are related to one another as members of God's family. What harms one, di-

25. Bernardin, *supra* n. 1, at 10.

26. Pontifical Council for Just. & Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* No. 203, 90 (U.S. Conf. of Catholic Bishops 2005).

27. *Id.* at No. 103, 46; Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* Nos. 27-28 (available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html#top) (accessed Jan. 23, 2006).

28. Patrick Lee & Robert P. George, *Dualistic Delusions*, 150 *First Things* 5-7 (Feb. 2005) (available at <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0502/opinion/george.htm>); Pontifical Council for Just. & Peace, *supra* n. 26, at No. 149, 65.

minishes all, and all are equally valuable. Human groups will flourish together as a whole, and specific evils will weaken the well-being of the whole community. Moreover, in working for the common good and the coming of God's kingdom on earth, human persons must use only moral means.²⁹

Can all of the above Christian beliefs and moral commitments be included and integrated in the consistent ethic of life? The answer, I think, is yes. Love and the dimensions of just compassion for one's neighbor constitute the different issues on the spectrum of life, bound together in a unity. Roman Catholics can see the different and distinct life concerns of the spectrum as indications of the width, depth, and breadth of Christ's love for the world, which is unfailing and ever present. In Christ all things created are held together in love, justice, and truth.

In the Christian vision of a consistent ethic of life, more meaning is present than can be conveyed by abstract principles. The ethic, which is founded on love and justice, also can be seen as an imaginative framing metaphor that synthesizes many convergent strands and elements of Christian truth. The work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson on the power of metaphor to frame thought and action applies to Christian ethics and morality.³⁰ Metaphors used in human thinking and imagination give meaning to life. Feelings as well as behavior are implicitly present in metaphors, which condense and integrate different elements and shape the way the world is perceived. Human beings live and die by metaphors.

In the realm of ethics and morality, moral commitments always consist of many elements beyond rational principled argument. Humans possess many characteristic operating capacities that complement logical reasoning, such as emotion, imagination, memory, and innate and learned behavioral predispositions. Moral reflection and decision making integrate abstract reasoning and adherence to principle with other forms of experiential knowledge infused with emotional feelings.³¹ Moral decisions are made in response to what has been called "ethical pull," and moral obligations are felt to be overriding in their demands.³² What one ought to do is driven by the internal force of conscience, the unique capacity of humans.

In sum, the consistent ethic of life condenses and frames the Christian love commandment as well as reason's requirement of logical consistency in the application of principle. One assents to the moral reasoning with the mind, experiences it in the heart, and is pulled into action.

29. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *supra* n. 24, at Nos. 1905-10.

30. See George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think* 4-7 (2d ed., U. Chi. Press 2002); see generally George Lakoff & Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (U. Chi. Press 1980).

31. See Sidney Callahan, *In Good Conscience: Reason and Emotion in Moral Decision Making* 63-143 (HarperSanFrancisco 1991).

32. A.R. Lacey, *Robert Nozick* 88 (Princeton U. Press 2001).

An earlier subtle description of the way persons come to give assent and morally commit themselves can be found in John Henry Newman's *Grammar of Assent*.³³ Newman analyzes the way that a pattern of arguments, evidence, counterevidence, and intuitions come together to form a unified conviction.³⁴ The resultant belief and commitment can be likened to a strong rope made up of woven strands that fit together. A coherent unity is discovered to comprise a diversity of elements; a whole emerges as more than the sum of its parts. The rope can be depended upon because of the presence of varying elements that can be examined and found to be sound and pertinent. Present-day philosophers of science also understand that theories gain validity as they are supported by unified patterns of convergent and divergent evidence, comprising argument and counterargument, that hold together in an integrated whole that includes intuitive assent of the tacit dimensions of persons.³⁵

Cardinal Bernardin aimed to demonstrate the integrated coherent unity underlying all pro-life issues, even though he did not speak of framing metaphors or integrated patterns of convergent and divergent moral strands of emotionally infused reasoning. The "seamless garment" image is a metaphor that points to indivisible unity. This image may not always have had its desired public effect since so many individuals in a biblically illiterate world might not understand the scriptural reference to the seamless robe of Christ worn to his crucifixion. The Roman soldiers decided not to divide the garment but to cast lots for it.

Whether or not the scriptural image of the seamless garment resonates with persons, the concept of consistency appeals to almost all adults. In fact, according to a great deal of psychological research, there is an innate drive toward consistency in human beings; it provides motivation for changes in behavior or attitude.³⁶ On becoming aware of inconsistency or dissonance or a lack of equilibrium, persons will seek to restore internal and social consistency.³⁷ This means that rationally functioning persons can easily respond to the ideal of a coherent, comprehensive, and rational consistent ethic of life. Consequently, Cardinal Bernardin was right to address American society at large with his vision and not just the Christian faithful. In doing so he also was expressing an optimistic Catholic belief that valid moral reasoning of the natural law can persuade people of good will. The consistent ethic of life should be all the more accepted, Cardinal Bernardin

33. See generally John Henry Newman, *Grammar of Assent* (Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1955).

34. *Id.* at 253-54.

35. See Abraham Kaplan, *The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science* § 36, 311-22 (Chandler Publ. Co. 1964).

36. See generally Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stan. U. Press 1957).

37. Elliot Aronson, *The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance: A Current Perspective*, in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* vol. 4, 2-32 (Leonard Berkowitz ed., Academic Press 1969); see also Anthony G. Greenwald et al., *A Unified Theory of Implicit Attitudes, Stereotypes, Self-Esteem, and Self-Concept*, 109 *Psychol. Rev.* 3 (Jan. 2002).

thought, in an America that is itself dedicated to equal human rights and justice for all. Catholics could lead the way forward in their articulation of the life ethic.

II. HAS THE CONSISTENT ETHIC OF LIFE BORNE FRUIT WITHIN THE CHURCH?

At this point there is not enough evidence to definitively assess the influence of the consistent life ethic among Catholics. My impression is that acceptance of a coherent, linked pro-life vision is uneven. I would guess that greater awareness and commitment to consistent-life thinking could be found in specialized groups of Catholic activists, intellectuals, academics, and theologians. Before turning to some positive developments in the influence of the consistent ethic of life, it is important to speculate on why there has not been more. Why not more popular response to systematically linking the different life issues?

Too often there seems to be a separation between groups in the Church that focus upon worship, devotion, and personal sanctification, and other groups committed to the social gospel teachings of the Church on peace and justice. The different sets of persons tend to operate on separate paths and are drawn to different kinds of action and advocacy. The impression can be gained that many American Catholics are unresponsive to the pro-life issues that focus upon the social gospel and the creation of a just society. Why might this be so? Certainly, all practicing Catholics readily acknowledge the core Christian belief that love of God entails love of neighbor; the Golden Rule and the linking of the vertical and horizontal in the faith has been preached consistently. But love of neighbor can be understood as referring to private individual activity rather than to any collective or public social obligation. Many of the parables in scripture used in weekly worship refer to individual acts of charity or to individual lapses and sins.

Moreover, individual actions are clearly visible to all. Persons feel that they and others can control their behavior; thus personal responsibility for private behavior is immediately understandable as an everyday experience. Moral judgments on failures of self-regulation are familiar territory. Catholics can see that the pro-life teachings on abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, and pornography concern individual moral acts of conscience and individual responsibility.

By contrast, the pro-life justice and peace issues of the consistent ethic involve assessing large systems and social institutions. These are less easy to comprehend and morally judge. Most people are not trained to think in terms of social systems or interacting structures that operate to shape their environments and limit options.³⁸ As the cliché goes, the last thing a fish

38. See Zenobia Fox, *An Unfolding Reality Affects All Systems*, <http://www.nplc.org/commonground/papers/zeni2005.htm> (accessed Sept. 16, 2005).

would discover is water. Bias and prejudice may exist in persons beneath conscious awareness.³⁹ The status quo can seem to be an inevitable reality; alternative social arrangements are hard to imagine. Actions of governments, organizations, or corporations are often hidden from scrutiny. With large institutions it is hard to see the effects of policies on the welfare of many people. Because of bureaucratic size and complexity, it is also difficult to hold leaders and institutions accountable for the effects of their actions.

Questions involving the morality of war or the state's use of the death penalty are complex issues that can require expertise to analyze and criticize effectively. A society's responsibility for the health and welfare of its citizens and its poor and vulnerable members is another complex goal that is difficult to comprehend or work toward. Racism and sexism and other issues involving bias, equal rights, and social justice present difficult problems whose solutions are unclear. The direct causes and effects of community actions and policies are hard to pin down. Even when a correct analysis can be reached, it is not always obvious what any individual citizen's moral obligation should entail. Few people possess the organizing skills necessary for confronting large operating systems. Labor unions once provided many Catholics with these tools of social action, but today Catholics have become more middle class and unions have lost much of their educational relevance. Democratic processes are further weakened by society's mobility and economic insecurity.

Morally, it is easy to observe and understand what is involved in a personal act that directly harms another person. It is far harder to discern how lack of action or apathy toward deficient public policies can harm many others. Psychological research has found that human beings automatically pay attention to the individual who moves and acts in a setting rather than to the background environment.⁴⁰ Individuals stand out as salient figures in a situation and observers tend not to notice the background, baseline information or the constraints of the environmental context.⁴¹ Consequently, when habitual social norms and practices embody injustice or bias they can be easily overlooked.⁴² In the same way, active sins of commission are more accessible to awareness and are more clearly noted than sins of omission. We don't notice what isn't there; absence, silence, and deficits do not capture attention.

39. See e.g. Timothy D. Wilson, *Strangers to Ourselves: Discovering the Adaptive Unconscious* 3, 10-12 (Harv. U. Press 2002).

40. See generally Fritz Heider, *On Perception and Event Structure, and the Psychologic Environment: Selected Papers* (Intl. U. Press 1959); Richard E. Nisbett & Lee Ross, *Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgment* (Prentice-Hall 1980).

41. See generally Heider, *supra* n. 40; Nisbett & Ross, *supra* n. 40.

42. See generally Anthony G. Greenwald et al., *A Unified Theory of Implicit Attitudes, Stereotypes, Self-Esteem, and Self-Concept*, 109 *Psychol. Rev.* 3 (Jan. 2002).

On the other hand, the inherent complexity (arising from the large number of variables and amounts of information) involved in large social problems creates noise and distraction. Confusion and overload can impede moral analyses. The uncertainty and unclear probability of outcomes make it difficult to reach moral judgments. It is also hard to determine which actions and policies will actually bring about better outcomes. Arguments over welfare policies, provisions for universal health care, marriage and family policies, and what constitutes a “just war” are examples of the way complexity and uncertainty can affect moral analysis. It is easier to know what will hurt or extinguish the life of another than what will make him safe, secure, and happy—or happy enough.

Certain critics of Cardinal Bernardin’s consistent ethic of life claimed that he was too simplistic in his use of the traditional moral teachings of the Church in prohibiting “the direct killing of the innocent.”⁴³ Such thinkers considered absolute moral prohibitions too narrow, especially against abortion.⁴⁴ The moral reasoning applied to abortion seemed to them inconsistent with the more flexible, empirical way Church teaching deals with social justice, economic questions, and just war. This criticism of the lack of consistency in ethical analyses of the different pro-life issues can be a useful caution.

But the objections to using different approaches to different moral problems can be countered by noting the above-mentioned differences inherent in what is to be decided. Evaluating issues of collective responsibility versus those of individual responsibility changes the amount of complex variables to be taken into account. The presence of different amounts of uncertainty can make a difference in the use of appropriate reasoning. Yet, liberal critics of the Church’s absolute moral prohibitions might revise their leanings toward a more tentative, consequentialist approach now that American society is facing more numerous justifications for doing evil to obtain good. Today, public officials in the U.S. justify the use of torture or unilateral pre-emptive war to achieve goals.⁴⁵ Some philosophers, following Peter Singer, can advocate the infanticide of imperfect babies in the first days after birth, with the decision left to parents who may wish to replace the child with another pregnancy.⁴⁶

Arguments against a slippery slope are not logically convincing in theory, but in practice, the conditions of social life and group influence make worries about a downward slide realistic. This downward slide is brought about by the dulling of emotional sensibilities and the power of precedence,

43. Bernardin, *supra* n. 1, at 81; see also Richard A. McCormick, S.J., *The Consistent Ethic of Life: Is There an Historical Soft Underbelly?*, in Bernardin, *supra* n. 1, at 96.

44. See generally McCormick, *supra* n. 43, at 109-20.

45. See generally e.g. Michael Ignatieff, *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror* (Princeton U. Press 2004).

46. Peter Singer, *Writings on an Ethical Life* 186-93 (Fourth Estate 2000).

conformity, and habitual practice. I once heard a prominent advocate of assisted suicide, Dr. Timothy Quill, admit that he would not use the same care in his fourteenth case as he did in his first. What begins as an exception quickly becomes routine. Deviance is defined through emotional and social habituation. Bright lines of defense are breached by emotional and behavioral attitude changes, not by logical argument.

Absolute prohibitions may have an important role in a society's moral well-being. Even taboos have their uses, as in the taboo against incest. In fact, it could be argued that earlier Church accommodations to the role of state-sponsored killings and advocacy of just war theory were too flexible and should be amended. The Church's move away from capital punishment is a positive example of moving toward a more stringent prohibition against the taking of life. Of course, this change may also have been furthered by the many proven and publicized miscarriages of justice in which innocent persons have been executed. More to the point, in proclaiming a consistent ethic of life, it seems inconsistent to kill in order to stop killing. State-sanctioned violence in order to end violence is contradictory and counterproductive.

Yet until very recently, American Catholics have not been leading protests and demonstrations against war and capital punishment. Perhaps patriotism and trust in the government and its legal authority is one factor, along with the uncertainty induced by the complexity of large issues. But, beyond complexity, there lurks the question of whether an individual life is considered innocent or guilty. In justifying war or the death penalty, proponents assert that the direct attack on life is not upon the certifiably innocent. Criminals, dictators, and totalitarian regimes engage in evil aggressive acts that harm others. In abortion and other life issues, however, the lives at stake are clearly innocent. Fetal life and a brain-damaged young woman are not aggressors. Emotional sympathy is easily aroused to protect them. A positive emotional response to the fate or status of evildoers is much more difficult to muster. Love and justice for enemies who are seen as equally God's creatures comes hard.

As usual in the evolution of Church teachings, things that are implicit in the Gospel later become explicit, as processes of discernment go deeper. New meanings of God's revelation to humankind arise from increased understanding of scripture and secular knowledge. Implications and extensions of moral obligations are drawn forth from traditionally handed-down revealed sources. When more distinctions are made and corollary truths apprehended, then doctrine evolves. Catholics have faith that the Holy Spirit guides the Church toward a fuller understanding of God's will. The prayer for God's kingdom to come on earth can be seen to demand ever-new practices and obligations. With the passage of time, cultures and environments change, new discoveries and technologies appear, and the Church reads the signs of the times with new wisdom. In the Second Vatican

Council, many newly realized insights into the faith were articulated and new efforts inspired.⁴⁷

Gospel commands of Jesus to love one's enemies and his forgiveness of sinners have become more clearly appropriated. Christ's commitment to nonviolent methods of overcoming evil through love has returned to the forefront of Christian memory.⁴⁸ Belief in God's love for all human creatures made in the image of God inspires the acceptance of the equal moral dignity of all humans, including sinners and enemies. To love the sinner and treat him with justice and charity has been a difficult lesson to learn. The urge to use violence and aggression to punish offenders is a deep-seated and powerful human drive. The need to enforce rules through punishment served group survival in evolving human groups.⁴⁹

Christians, despite Christ's teachings and example, have been slow to accept that God's mercy, justice, and charity are united and that vengeance is reserved to the Lord while forbidden to human disciples. Christ as the Prince of Peace returned love for hate, refusing to take an eye for an eye. Alas, it was not too many centuries ago that the Church could call for crusades against enemies and heretics, endorse the use of torture in the Inquisition, and permit horrible executions such as burnings at the stake. While modern, developed countries have given up such practices, popular American media still glorify the heroic avenger who employs violence against evildoers. Influenced by American culture and the Church practices of the past, many Catholics will resist the consistent ethic of life's call for peacemaking and for nonviolent solutions. The development and promulgation of the social gospel is a relatively new phenomenon in the Church.

Other Catholics who have been sensitized to the way systems and social structures grind people down and create conditions of suffering are more responsive to the peace and social justice issues in the consistent ethic of life teaching. Often these are educated Catholic academics, theologians, and public intellectuals who have been exposed to the new theological understandings of "social sin."⁵⁰ Understanding the power of environmental conditioning and economic constraints can make an observer focus on the pro-life ethic's struggle for justice as a priority. Liberation theologies of justice, taking into account the poverty and inequality of the world, can show how the causes of human suffering are tied to unjust economic exploitation and oppressive class systems.⁵¹ The vulnerable, the poor, the

47. Gregory Baum, *Amazing Church: A Catholic Theologian Remembers a Half-Century of Change* 7, 10 (Orbis Books 2005).

48. See generally Ira Chernus, *American Nonviolence: The History of an Idea* (Orbis Books 2004).

49. *Evolutionary Origins of Morality: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives* 68-69 (Leonard D. Katz ed., Imprint Academic 2000).

50. Pontifical Council for Just. & Peace, *supra* n. 26, at Nos. 118-19, 53-54.

51. See generally e.g. Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., *Justice: A Global Adventure* (Orbis Books 2004).

handicapped, women and children suffer when the survival of the fittest is justified in competitive market systems.⁵² Often when observers are focused upon powerful, oppressive social systems, other pro-life concerns about abortion, euthanasia, and sexual immorality can be seen as secondary symptoms of much larger and more fundamental problems.

Prophetically, the consistent ethic of life challenges all the different groups in the Church to unite in common Christian concerns. Not coincidentally, Cardinal Bernardin also founded the Common Ground Initiative to bring together different conservative and liberal elements in the Church.⁵³ The goal of both the Initiative and the consistent ethic of life is to integrate and meld the different streams and idealism of the rich Catholic tradition. Faithful to this common heritage, the American bishops have pursued inquiry and issued statements on the whole range of different pro-life issues, from peace, to welfare rights, to health care reform, to abortion, to capital punishment and end-of-life issues. In the last election campaign the USCCB authored *Faithful Citizenship*, a statement that advocates the consistent ethic of life to serve the common good.⁵⁴ The bishops enjoined Catholics to make prudent choices of conscience.

Also, the USCCB has created a “Respect Life” campaign built on the consistent ethic that tries to defend the value and sacredness of human life from conception to natural death.⁵⁵ The strategy is to integrate and unify the different pro-life issues by framing them in the narrative of the human life cycle from womb to tomb. The underlying unity of justice and charity for all is demonstrated by defending the dignity of persons at different periods of development under different conditions. Consistency through time is stressed. Thinking about the different needs within the life cycle can tie pro-life issues together; human interdependence is obvious when thinking about the beginning and the end of life, which is sustained by families and communities of care.

Other movements in the American Church also carry forward Cardinal Bernardin’s pro-life agenda in various ways. These different movements make various links among the pro-life issues and can be organized into four main categories.

52. *Id.*

53. See generally Joseph Cardinal Bernardin & Archbishop Oscar H. Lipscomb, *Catholic Common Ground Initiative: Foundational Documents* (Crossroad 1997); National Pastoral Life Center, *Catholic Common Ground Initiative*, <http://www.nplc.org/commonground.htm> (2005).

54. See U.S. Conf. of Catholic Bishops, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, <http://www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship/faithfulcitizenship03.pdf> (2003).

55. See generally U.S. Conf. of Catholic Bishops, *Respect Life Program*, <http://www.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/index.htm> (2005).

1. *Peace and Justice Groups*

As the U.S. has initiated more military interventions and large-scale wars, the peace and justice movements in the Church have increased in activity.⁵⁶ Groups such as Pax Christi have taken stands and protested the government's military policies and its allocation of money to defense rather than to education, health care, poverty relief, or toward forgiving third-world debt.⁵⁷ The current Iraq war has been protested along with the government's justifications of pre-emptive war and unilateral action. Demonstrations against the use of torture and unjust anti-terrorist measures have become more attended.⁵⁸ Many Catholic activists continue to be arrested and jailed in their struggle against U.S. government policies of violence.⁵⁹ Secret operations that have supported Central and South American totalitarian regimes have been publicized and deplored.⁶⁰ Other peace activists have gone on missions abroad to areas of conflict in their peacemaking efforts. Dioceses and religious orders have peace and justice offices whose members work for the social gospel in local and national campaigns. Networks of Catholic groups lobby state legislatures as well as Congress. A group such as The Catholic Peace Fellowship also seeks to encourage resistance to war in addition to providing counseling and support for conscientious objectors.⁶¹ Many Catholic universities have started programs and institutes in peace studies and peace education.⁶² Such work brings Catholics together with other religious and secular peace organizations. An example of these trends can be seen in the fact that two young American Jesuits dedicated to peacemaking have respectively served in leadership positions with the Fellowship of Reconciliation and The War Resisters League.⁶³

56. See generally Catholic Peace Fellowship, *Welcome to Catholic Peace Fellowship*, <http://www.catholicpeacefellowship.org> (2005) (the Catholic Peace Fellowship has been formed and cooperates with other groups); The Catholic Worker Movement, *Catholic Worker Movement*, <http://www.catholicworker.org> (last accessed Sept. 10, 2005) (also active in antiwar campaigns); Pax Christi USA, *Pax Christi USA*, <http://www.paxchristiusa.org/index.asp> (2005) (Pax Christi USA has sponsored many action alerts and demonstrations).

57. See Pax Christi USA, *supra* n. 56.

58. See generally e.g. James Hodge & Linda Cooper, *Disturbing the Peace: The Story of Father Roy Bourgeois and the Movement to Close the School of the Americas* (Orbis Books 2004).

59. See *id.*

60. *Id.*; see generally e.g. Daniel Berrigan, *Testimony: The Word Made Fresh* (Orbis Books 2004).

61. See Catholic Peace Fellowship, *supra* n. 56.

62. See U. of Notre Dame, *The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame*, <http://www.nd.edu/~krocinst/research/jinjaconf.html> (last updated July 16, 2004); see also e.g. The Peace and Just. Stud. Assn., *Peace and Justice Studies Association*, <http://www.peacejusticestudies.org/> (2005).

63. John Dear, S.J. served as the National Coordinator of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, <http://www.forusa.org/> (accessed Oct. 18, 2005); Simon Harak, S.J. currently is at The War Resisters League, War Resisters League, *WRL Employment*, <http://www.warresisters.org/employment.htm#simon> (last updated Sept. 9, 2005).

Catholic peace groups also move toward a consistent ethic of life by linking the cause of peace with justice. As the maxim goes: if you want peace, work for justice. Pax Christi and other Catholic peace organizations take stands on justice issues with increasingly comprehensive perspectives.⁶⁴ Concerns for ethnic groups, immigrants, and exploited workers are related to protests against the exploitative practices of global corporations. Economic issues such as third-world debt are seen as related to the injustice and exploitation of the poor that creates violence and war. Links between the violence in the media and the violence of war are analyzed and protested. Other nonviolent vigils and campaigns against capital punishment are initiated and linked to the cause of peace.

The rejection of violent means to obtain a desired end links many of the activities of the peace and justice movements. A new understanding of the link between the violence of abortion and the violence of the death penalty is emerging in the American bishops' new campaign against capital punishment.⁶⁵ Polls among Catholics seem to show that approval of the death penalty is decreasing.⁶⁶ Despite the unevenness of the acceptance of different pro-life commitments, there are signals of progress for the consistent ethic of life.

2. *Feminists and Rights Groups*

Feminists within the Church, sometimes calling themselves "gospel feminists," have taken up the cause of the consistent ethic of life by defending the equality of persons in relation to gender bias.⁶⁷ Justice and charity are consciously fused in demands for "just care" or "compassionate respect" for all.⁶⁸ The Catholic call for equal rights for all persons has motivated protests against the inequality of women in society and in decision-making roles in the Church's leadership. From its beginning, the gospel feminists' commitment to equality and flourishing of women has been linked to justice for the poor, the vulnerable, and for all those oppressed by the logic of domination.⁶⁹ Women's welfare has been directly linked to the Church's social gospel and preference for the poor and powerless, since women are so often both. The Church's preaching of the social gospel is seen as crucial to the achievement of women's and men's well-being.⁷⁰ Women need

64. Pax Christi USA, *supra* n. 56.

65. See e.g. Neela Banerjee, *Bishops Fight Death Penalty In New Drive*, N.Y. Times A19 (Mar. 22, 2005) (available at 2005 WLNR 4396192).

66. *Id.*

67. See generally e.g. Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Feminist Theology: A Review of Literature*, 56 *Theological Stud.* 327 (1995).

68. See generally Margaret A. Farley, *Compassionate Respect* (Paulist Press 2002).

69. Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* 31-32 (Crossroad 1992).

70. See generally Anne E. Patrick, *Toward Renewing "The Life and Culture of Fallen Man"*: *Gaudium et Spes as Catalyst for Catholic Feminist Theology*, in *Readings in Moral Theology No.*

access to health care, support for their children, equal economic opportunities, and support in old age. Christian feminists have recognized clearly that the welfare of women and the welfare of families are inseparable.⁷¹

Many Catholic feminists have also been active in the movement against abortion and in calling for support for nonviolent alternatives on behalf of unborn life.⁷² Catholic women have been instrumental in starting and supporting new groups such as Feminists for Life who are "Pro-Woman, Pro-Life."⁷³ The group opposes "all forms of violence, including abortion, infanticide, child abuse, domestic violence, assisted suicide, euthanasia and capital punishment."⁷⁴ They support equality and just solutions that focus on education, outreach, and advocacy for women in need. Groups such as Women Affirming Life and other volunteer groups of women work to provide pregnancy care and alternatives to women and their children.⁷⁵ Feminists have understood that life is interdependent and that power and domination oppress many sectors of the population. A group such as the Feminism and Nonviolence Studies Association tries to further the analysis underlying pro-life actions.⁷⁶ Feminists also have led the way in the just ordering of family life that counters domestic abuse.⁷⁷ In feminist analyses, power is defined as enabling power and nurturing power, not as power that coerces and dominates.⁷⁸ Power with and through others is not the same as power over others.

The values of Christian feminists are linked to the different issues in the consistent ethic of life. Women must work for peace since war destroys women, children, and all living things. Rape in war is also a feminist and peace concern.⁷⁹ So too, justice is sought by feminists for women as well as for others who suffer from prejudice and oppression, such as gay and lesbian persons. Feminists have led the way in global and ecological con-

9: *Feminist Ethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition* 483 (Charles E. Curran, Margaret A. Farley, & Richard A. McCormick, S.J. eds., Paulist Press 1996).

71. See generally Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender & Christian Ethics* (Cambridge U. Press 1996).

72. See generally e.g. Sidney Callahan, *Abortion and the Sexual Agenda: A Case for Pro-life Feminism*, 123 *Commonweal* 232 (Apr. 25, 1986).

73. Feminists for Life of Am., *Feminists for Life of America*, <http://www.feministsforlife.org> (2004).

74. Feminists for Life of Am., Brochure, *What Women Really Want* (D.C. 2000) (available at <http://www.womendeservebetter.com/cop/kits/wwwrwp.pdf>).

75. See e.g. Birthright Intl., *Birthright International*, <http://www.birthright.org> (2003); Women Affirming Life, *Women Affirming Life*, <http://www.affirmlife.com> (2005).

76. Feminism & Nonviolence Stud. Assn., Inc., *FNSA Mission*, <http://www.fnsa.org/mission.html> (last updated Oct. 22, 1999).

77. See generally Christine E. Gudorf, *Body, Sex, and Pleasure: Reconstructing Christian Sexual Ethics* 160-204 (The Pilgrim Press 1994).

78. Riane Eisler, *The Chalice & The Blade: Our History, Our Future* 192-93 (Harper & Row 1987).

79. See Mia Nussbaum, *Of Rape and War*, 4.1 *The Sign of Peace* 24 (Winter 2005).

cern for life.⁸⁰ Many feminists, identifying as “ecofeminists,” link spiritual renewal and the survival of all life on our endangered planet.⁸¹

3. *Reform Movements within the Church*

The consistent ethic of life asserts the Christian adherence to the inseparability of justice and love in a spectrum of pro-life issues. The advocacy of the social gospel stressing equality and universal human rights in international affairs has inspired reform movements for rights within the Church. The struggle, in light of these movements, has been to practice the collegiality called for by Vatican II. Consistency is sought between the Church’s preaching of universal rights in the world and rights of the laity and all the people of God within the Church. Justice through internal institutional reforms is demanded. The dreadful sexual abuse scandals that have beset the American Church are considered to be symptoms of failure to consistently uphold Gospel teaching.⁸² It is also pointed out that the Church loses credibility in its efforts to preach the protection of the unborn when it remains uncommitted to protecting children from harm.⁸³ The growing demands for institutional reforms have found expression in many different reform groups that have grown in size and influence. Here we can mention VOTF, ARCC, Future Church, Call to Action, and other Church reform groups.⁸⁴ There is an overlap between these Church reform groups and feminist and peace groups.

4. *Groups Dedicated Explicitly to Consistency*

Although small in numbers, a few groups have focused directly upon the *consistency* of the consistent ethic of life as their mission. While all the movements and groups described above have supported a spectrum of pro-life causes, groups such as Consistent Life (formerly Seamless Garment Network) have dedicated themselves to advocating the unifying commitment underlying all of them. Consistent Life describes itself as “an international network for peace, justice and life.”⁸⁵ The network includes many

80. See generally Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit* (Paulist Press 1993).

81. See Center for Women, the Earth, the Divine, *The Center for Women, the Earth, the Divine*, <http://www.cwed.org/> (last updated July 23, 2005).

82. See generally *Governance, Accountability, and the Future of the Catholic Church* (Francis Oakley & Bruce Russett eds., Continuum Intl. Publg. Group 2004).

83. See Thomas J. Reese, S.J., *The Impact of the Sexual Abuse Crisis*, in *id.* at 144.

84. See Assn. for the Rights of Catholics in the Church (ARCC), *Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church*, <http://arcc-catholic-rights.org/> (last updated May 8, 2005); Call to Action, *Call to Action USA*, <http://www.cta-usa.org/> (Sept. 2005); Future Church, *Welcome to Future Church*, <http://www.futurechurch.org/> (2005); Voice of the Faithful (VOTF), *Voice of the Faithful*, <http://www.votf.org/> (2005). All of these reform groups maintain web sites with links to other allied groups.

85. Consistent Life, *About Us, Life*, at Consistent Life, *Consistent Life – About Us*, <http://www.consistent-life.org/about.html> (last accessed Sept. 20, 2005).

groups and prominent individuals who subscribe to their vision statement, which reads:

We are committed to the protection of life, which is threatened in today's world by war, abortion, poverty, racism, the arms race, the death penalty and euthanasia. We believe that these issues are linked under a consistent ethic of life. We challenge those working on all or some of these issues to maintain a cooperative spirit of peace, reconciliation, and respect in protecting the unprotected.⁸⁶

This network of small groups pursuing this vision is a direct descendant of Cardinal Bernardin's original effort to unify the pro-life struggle. They are also the children of earlier American Catholic prophets such as Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton. So many pro-life workers have been inspired by Dorothy Day and The Catholic Worker's heroic witness and seventy-year work for peace and justice for the poor. When the history of the American Church is written, the great witness and influence of Dorothy Day will be seen as crucial for moving the Catholic community toward the consistent ethic of life.⁸⁷ Dorothy's prophetic convictions on the power of nonviolent love were in accord with Gandhi's teachings on nonviolence and the power of soul force; these teachings also influenced Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement.

Many other movements around the globe have adopted peaceful means of change. In the U.S., ecumenical groups such as Sojourners and those in the newly articulated progressive pro-life movement, described by Rev. Jim Wallis in *God's Politics*, also build on these earlier prophets working for peace and justice through nonviolent alternatives.⁸⁸ Catholics, along with others, have also drawn inspiration from the witness and teachings of Pope John Paul II as he embodied the spirit of Vatican II's call for peace and justice.

All of the above developments and groups, along with others I have surely overlooked, can be read as positive signs of the influence of the consistent ethic of life within the Church. The question of its influence outside of the Church in the secular world is another question.

86. Consistent Life, *Mission Statement of Consistent Life*, <http://www.consistent-life.org/index.html> (last accessed Sept. 20, 2005).

87. See generally *American Catholic Pacifism: The Influence of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement* (Anne Klejment & Nancy L. Roberts eds., Praeger 1996); Dorothy Day, *By Little and By Little: The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day* (Robert Ellsberg ed., Alfred A. Knopf 1983).

88. See Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (HarperSanFrancisco 2005); see also Call to Renewal: A Faith-Based Movement to Overcome Poverty, *Mission*, <http://www.calltorenewal.org/> (last accessed Sept. 20, 2005); Sojourners: Faith, Politics, Culture, *Mission Statement*, <http://www.sojo.net/> (last accessed Sept. 20, 2005).

III. WILL THE CONSISTENT ETHIC OF LIFE INFLUENCE AMERICAN CULTURE?

Can the seamless garment be sewn? Pointing to positive signs within the Church of a growing commitment to a consistent ethic of life does not answer the question of whether the general American culture is now, or will in the future, be responsive. A huge sociopolitical analysis of policies, parties, programs, popular culture, and political leaders would be needed to answer these questions. A pessimist might descend into cultural predictions to the effect that everything in America is getting worse and more so every day. Admittedly, we now live in the midst of regressive trends that bring Americans the horrors of pre-emptive war, moral justifications of imperial power and torture, unchanging abortion rights, increases in poverty, lack of health care, and pervasive defenses of selfishness and detached apathy.

On the global scene we see unchecked genocides, ongoing civil wars, ethnic cleansings, terrorism, famines, plagues, and impending environmental crises. Many among the current crop of U.S. public intellectuals explicitly argue for doing evil, or the lesser evil, in order to achieve desired ends.⁸⁹ Violence may be deplored, but is accepted as necessary to counter enemies and terrorists. Many such justifications are described as tragic choices or the inevitable "realism" necessary in the face of dangers. Tragic choice rhetoric, which is also used in abortion debates, often cuts off creative thinking about nonviolent alternatives. Great evils have been done while accompanied by expressions of reluctance. But some hope can be found in other events and developments that mark our current era. It appears to be a time when, as in the biblical phrase, the wheat and the tares are increasing together.

In the build-up to the Iraq war the world saw mass demonstrations for peace around the world. Widespread debate and discussion over the conditions for a just war grew ever more prevalent in American secular debates. The Catholic moral tradition on war entered into the discussion and engaged a government poised for attack. The U.S. declared war anyway, but efforts against the war and criticisms of its moral status have continued. Conscientious objection by members of the military is increasing and drawing more debate.⁹⁰ Damage to the troops in wounds and mutilation are noted, along with a running count of deaths among the U.S. military and Iraqi civilians. The scandal of torture of prisoners by American forces has drawn horrified condemnation.⁹¹

89. Michael Ignatieff, *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror* ch. 1 (Princeton U. Press 2004).

90. Joseph Wakelee-Lynch, *Conscientious Objection and the War in Iraq*, <http://thewitness.org/agw/wakeleelynch122204.html> (Dec. 22, 2004).

91. See generally *The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib* (Karen J. Greenberg & Joshua L. Dratel eds., Cambridge U. Press 2005).

Worry is expressed over the harmful effects of the war upon those fighting it. The physical and psychic suffering of those who kill and torture is being newly assessed.⁹² Even legal, socially approved killing by combat troops, death penalty executioners, and abortion providers can result in posttraumatic stress.⁹³ Post-abortion stress among women is also coming to be accepted as a reality.⁹⁴ The physical, psychic, and social cost of permissive abortion to women is being discussed.⁹⁵

The uncovering and distribution of information on the Internet has played a significant role in debates and resistance movements.⁹⁶ The use of the Internet for communication and peacemaking points to a paradox of our time: while certain technologies present challenges to the consistent ethic of life (particularly in warfare and reproduction research), other technological inventions help pro-life causes. The spread of sonograms that show the fetus *in utero* have had an effect on women's decisions to abort and on public opinion.⁹⁷ Publicizing depictions of what is involved in late abortions and partial-birth abortions fuels opposition to them.⁹⁸ Internet pictures of torture by U.S. troops raised an outcry of moral indignation.⁹⁹

One can sense a change in the United States pro-life debates. On the abortion question, for the first time since *Roe v. Wade*,¹⁰⁰ serious opposition to liberal abortion laws and practices has gained ground. Elite academics no longer so readily disdain and dismiss pro-life arguments—always a good sign.¹⁰¹ At the same time, consciousness of the issues of euthanasia and mercy killing at the end of life have not receded. The recent media attention to the Terri Schiavo case signals that debate over end-of-life issues of morality is vigorously pursued.¹⁰²

Television and Internet reports of violence, famines, and repressive actions by the U.S. government and others provide motivation for protests.

92. See Rachel M. MacNair, *Perpetration-Induced Traumatic Stress: The Psychological Consequences of Killing* (Praeger 2002).

93. *Id.*

94. *Id.*

95. See Elizabeth M. Shadigian, *Reviewing the Evidence, Breaking the Silence: Long-Term Physical and Psychological Health Consequences of Induced Abortion*, in *The Cost of Choice: Women Evaluate the Impact of Abortion* 63 (Erika Bachiochi ed., Encounter Books 2004) [hereinafter *The Cost of Choice*].

96. E.g. MoveOn.org, *MoveOn.org: Democracy in Action*, <http://www.moveon.org/> (last accessed Sept. 20, 2005); Truthout, *Truthout*, <http://www.truthout.org/> (last accessed Sept. 20, 2005).

97. Tony Perkins, *NARAL Calls Use of Ultrasound Machines a "Weapon"*, <http://www.lifenews.com/oped17.html> (last accessed Sept. 20, 2005).

98. Douglas Johnson, *The Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act—Misconceptions and Realities*, <http://www.nrlc.org/abortion/pba/PBAaall110403.html> (Nov. 5, 2003).

99. Mark Danner, *Abu Ghraib: The Hidden Story*, 51 N.Y. Rev. Books (Oct. 7, 2004).

100. 410 U.S. 113 (1973).

101. David Brooks, *Roe's Birth and Death*, N.Y. Times (Apr. 21, 2005); U. Faculty for Life, *UFL Mission*, <http://www.uffl.org/> (last accessed Sept. 20, 2005).

102. Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Catholicism, Death and Modern Medicine*, 292 *America* 14-17 (Apr. 25, 2005).

Communication and television pictures of mass demonstrations for political changes encourage other peaceful movements for change around the world. Impressive nonviolent movements have more than once brought down governments—from the 1989 fall of the wall to the present situation in the Ukraine and Lebanon.

An increase in research on the effectiveness of nonviolent strategies has provided guidance for many of these different movements.¹⁰³ The operation of power of different kinds has been analyzed. The power that characterizes the logic of domination, which violates the defense of the person, has inherent weaknesses. Repression depends upon the subjection and continuing suppression of people affected by the cooperation of those who carry out the coercive violence. Persuasion and the enabling power of nurturance do not require external employment of force. The lessons of many past struggles for justice, such as that of Gandhi and the American civil rights movement, have provided models and knowledge that aid struggles for peace and justice.¹⁰⁴ The historical focus upon war and violence and its glorification has blinded people to alternatives.

The consistent ethic of life maintains with Gandhi that “means are after all everything. As the means, so the end.”¹⁰⁵ Evidence builds in support of this claim. Observers and thinkers who once accepted “realistic” reliance upon American military violence to bring freedom and liberation through pre-emptive war are changing their minds. Faith in technological weaponry and violent coercion to win ideological victories is questioned.¹⁰⁶ Peacemaking groups can take heart that nonviolent solutions arising from mutually agreed-upon solutions seem to be more successful in a world that exists as a global village.¹⁰⁷ Optimists will say that if the consistent ethic of life reflects moral reality, it will be proved to be true by human experience. Abortion will be seen as harmful to women, men, children, marriage, and families as well as destroying fetal life.¹⁰⁸ Interdependence of life cannot be avoided, as new visions of the universe point to dynamically entangled matter or string theories. Already, evolutionary psychology asserts the psychic unity of humankind and the innate existence of trust, altruism, attachment, and a drive for consistency.¹⁰⁹

103. See Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Porter Sargent Publishers 1973).

104. James W. Douglass, *The Nonviolent Coming of God* xi (Orbis Books 1991).

105. Mahatma Gandhi, *The Essential Gandhi: His Life, Work, and Ideas: An Anthology* 199 (Louis Fischer ed., Random House 1962).

106. E.g. David Rieff, *At the Point of a Gun: Democratic Dreams and Armed Intervention* (Simon & Schuster 2005).

107. Jonathan Schell, *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People* 8-9 (Henry Holt and Co. 2003).

108. See *The Cost of Choice*, supra n. 95.

109. *Research on Altruism & Love: An Annotated Bibliography of Major Studies in Psychology, Sociology, Evolutionary Biology, and Theology* (Stephen G. Post, Byron Johnson, Michael E. McCullough & Jeffrey P. Schloss eds., Templeton Found. Press 2003).

Those who study the way social change comes about also have much to teach those who work for peace and justice in pro-life causes. How do ideas become accepted in a society? There exist different models of how changes proceed. One analysis of social change points to the way that systems and structures containing internal contradictions and inconsistencies break open.¹¹⁰ The strain of inconsistency produces pressure and stress that can cause breakdown and collapse, and a new system emerges. This is a discontinuous process exhibited in many revolutions that have included violence. Some apocalyptic images from scripture seem to describe a sudden cataclysmic event that initiates the coming of the kingdom.

A more pacific biological model of change takes as an example the way a new species evolves.¹¹¹ Mutations and small populations may appear and, if not attacked and destroyed, may spread. Small groups living in innovative ways can reproduce, increase, and become dominant in an environment. A better adapted and more successful way of living triumphs over the previous stasis. In the evolution of humans, the increase in brain size and the positive advantages of cooperation of bonded social groups may have furthered the spread of homo sapiens. Altruistic attachments and social bonding, ways of living that protected the vulnerable, outperformed and outlasted older ways of violent domination. Perhaps the amazing spread of small Christian communities over the ancient urban world illustrates such growth.

Teilhard de Chardin could serve as the godfather of the Christian thinkers who see evolutionary processes as an example of the progress of ever-converging and ascending Christian love.¹¹² In scripture, similar natural images of nonviolent change can be found, as in the likening of Christian influence in the world to that of the small measure of yeast which makes the bread rise. Or there is reference to the way that faith the size of a mustard seed can grow into a huge tree that shelters other living things.

An up-to-the-minute secular description of social change is provided by popular science writer Malcolm Gladwell in his best-selling book *The Tipping Point*.¹¹³ He employs the model of the spread of an epidemic and moves from epidemiology to other research investigating change. The tipping point refers to the point in a process when an idea, a disease, a technology, a book, or some other entity takes off and becomes a mass phenomenon within a population. A favorable context, environment, enthusiastic salespersons, and emotional factors play a part in the diffusion of the product (i.e., the idea, virus, or new technology). Certain conditions favor

110. Rom Harre, *Social Being: A Theory for Social Psychology* ch. 15 (Rowman & Littlefield 1980).

111. *Id.*

112. *E.g.* Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu* (Harper & Bros. 1960).

113. Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (Little, Brown & Co. 2000).

the spread to the tipping point. Unfortunately for those wishing to start an epidemic of moral reform, it is, as of now, impossible to either certainly predict or create the process that results in a tipping point.

In applying this model to the influence of the consistent ethic of life, the ethic would be the product, and it would have to be admitted that it has in no way spread to reach a tipping point. Maybe the select few have taken it up, or caught the virus, but, so far, not enough charismatic salesmen have been able to interact in a context that would facilitate its spread to the culture at large. But present failure to effect massive and widespread influence should not lead to discouragement.

For those who believe that God is our future, hope exists. The future is open to the new. Positive moral progress does take place, as in the fairly recent case of the emancipation of slaves and women. All the different models of social change may take place at once from the top, from below, from the margins, and from the center of a culture as individuals change. Many different capacities of human beings can operate, such as reason, experience, the growth of empathy, and evangelism. The witness of the few and the practice of group life in the churches can make a difference.

One irony pointed out by the astute sociologist Albert O. Hirschman is that often those who study social systems are the least open to the possibility of rapid and deep social changes.¹¹⁴ They focus their attention upon all the ways that an operating system functions and reinforces the status quo and, in doing so, become blinded by a "gloomy vision."¹¹⁵ Yet there are periods when "history 'suddenly accelerates'" and social worlds are transformed.¹¹⁶ Those persons who have a "passion for what is possible" do not wait or "rely on what has been certified as probable by factor analysis."¹¹⁷ They go out and change the world.

At this point we cannot say whether or when the consistent ethic of life will win the world, but we can hope and pray and work.

114. Albert O. Hirschman, *The Search for Paradigms as a Hindrance to Understanding*, in *Interpretative Social Science: A Reader* ch. 4 (Paul Rabinow & William M. Sullivan eds., U. of Cal. Press 1979).

115. *Id.* at 172.

116. *Id.* at 177.

117. *Id.* at 179.