

A Defense of the Neglected Rhetorical Strategy (NRS)

David C. Reardon

PHILOSOPHICAL CRITICISM serves a valuable end when it helps to clarify the truth. But clarity requires precision. Precision is especially necessary when one presents the arguments of those holding the view that is the focus of one's criticisms. Where there is lack of precision, ambiguity and confusion may arise, which may in turn obscure the truth. For this reason I was deeply disturbed by the inaccurate portrayal of my work and arguments (and the parallel arguments of Frederica Mathewes-Green and Paul Swope) in a recently published paper by Francis Beckwith.ⁱ

Beckwith begins with a description of the traditional pro-life strategy, for which he has been an advocate,ⁱⁱ that is centered on the moral argument against the unjust killing of innocent humans beings. Beckwith's argument is simple: since abortion destroys an innocent human life, abortion should be prohibited. I do not contest it. Beckwith, on the other hand, does object to the reasoning and arguments of Mathewes-Green, Swope, and myself, who also seek to identify women as victims of abortion, an approach that he has labeled the "new rhetorical strategy (NRS)." The novel acronym NRS is less descriptive than the pro-woman/pro-life label that I prefer, but for the purpose of responding to Beckwith's criticisms I will employ it in this paper.

A FALSE DICHOTOMY AND A NARROW VISION

The stated purpose of Beckwith's paper is to demonstrate that NRS is based on poor reasoning, relies on weak findings of social science, and inadvertently advances moral relativism. His goal is to expose the failure of NRS to provide "an adequate ground on which to base the pro-life cause" and thereby to protect the primacy of the traditional pro-life argument from being undermined by this pretender. To this end, Beckwith declares the scope of his paper to be a critique of "the veracity

of premises, the validity of inferences as well as the coherence of conceptional claims of proponents of NRS.”

Unfortunately, Beckwith misstates our premises right out of the gate by claiming: “They maintain that the humanity of the fetus and the immorality of abortion are not really in dispute among a vast majority of the American populace...[therefore] the pro-life movement should stress the alleged harm abortion does to women, and for that reason, offer to meet the material and spiritual needs of the pregnant woman who sees abortion as an evil, though necessary, alternative. This shift, proponents believe, will result not only in making abortion rare, but also in making American culture more pro-life.... My concern in this essay is with those activists who suggest that such works replace, rather than merely supplement, moral argument and ethical justification.”

This summary of our views is incorrect on several counts, but the most egregious flaw is the claim that any NRS advocate is suggesting that our approach should “replace, rather than merely supplement” the moral argument against abortion as the unjust killing of a human life. I know of no one who supports NRS who has ever suggested that an emphasis on the harm that abortion does to women should in any way replace the moral argument against abortion. We have simply argued that the emphasis on the objective morality of abortion should not eclipse discussion of the real tragedy that abortion inflicts on women, men, and their families. Our position is that there is more than one valid argument against abortion, and anti-abortion efforts will be less effective or even ineffective if they focus *only* on building the case for the moral argument, which appears to be Beckwith’s preference.

What we are calling for is the real and rhetorical practice of advocating for *both* the woman *and* her unborn child. I have argued at length elsewhere, and indeed in the very book that Beckwith criticizes, that it is a false dichotomy to suggest that society must choose between either the woman or her child.ⁱⁱⁱ When pro-lifers such as Beckwith argue solely from the principle of objective morality, they give the impression that arguments on behalf of the unborn child’s right to life trump all concerns for the woman—end of discussion. For those who do not buy that argument, the unintended effect is to reinforce the view that anti-

abortionists are choosing for the human fetus at the expense of women. For some, this may produce a reaction: “If you are going to ignore the woman for the sake of the fetus, why shouldn’t I ignore the fetus and choose to support the woman?” To the degree that Beckwith seeks to create an argument for a polarization between the traditional pro-life argument and the pro-woman/pro-life argument, he is reinforcing this false dichotomy. By ignoring NRS advocates’ support for a parallel line of traditional pro-life arguments, Beckwith is creating a fictional challenge to the traditional pro-life strategy. Since it is evident in the full context of all the NRS sources he cites that all of us would support efforts to emphasize concern for *both* the unborn child and her mother and that all of us would agree with the moral reasoning underlying the traditional pro-life strategy, one can only conclude that Beckwith is wrestling with a strawman of his own creation.

The failure of the traditional pro-life strategy is not in its moral reasoning. No NRS advocate has ever suggested that this is the problem. Our argument is simply that pro-life efforts will be more effective to the degree that we succeed in presenting a moral vision that consistently demonstrates just as much concern for women as for their unborn children. Discussion of the harm that abortion does to women and of programs to promote post-abortion healing for women who have suffered that harm do not replace advocacy for the rights of unborn children. They simply broaden the base of arguments against abortion.

It is the view of many NRS advocates that anti-abortionists will only be successful in stopping abortion when we truly become both pro-woman and pro-life. No one has ever won a marathon breathing with just one lung. Similarly, I argue that the anti-abortion movement will never win its race against abortion until it breathes with two lungs—one for the unborn and one for women. Furthermore, this advocacy for women should not arise only when women are faced with problem pregnancies, nor should it end when they have had abortions. Our advocacy for women must be consistent and unconditional both for those who are facing crisis pregnancies and for those who have had abortions.

As an advocate of the pro-woman/pro-life strategy, I have heard others like Beckwith accuse me of “abandoning the unborn child” (these

are not Beckwith's words, but the words of another critic) in preference for their mothers. This is simply not true. Broadening of our focus does not require us to "replace" (Beckwith's words) moral arguments on behalf of the child with pragmatic arguments (it increases depression,^{iv} substance abuse,^v and suicide rates^{vi}) on behalf of protecting women from abortion. Arguments on behalf of *both* the woman *and* child can and must coexist.

The argument that abortion hurts women is not new. It has been raised as an issue since even before *Roe v. Wade*. But NRS advocates would argue that this aspect of the anti-abortion argument has been seriously neglected by some pro-life advocates, like Beckwith, who prefer to hang their hat on the simple argument for objective morality: abortion involves the deliberate killing of an innocent human life; it is wrong and should be banned—period. As repeatedly stated, I do not dispute that analysis. But I do question whether or not it can ever carry the day in a fallen world where many people are more likely be guided in their choices by pragmatism than by objective morality.

The NRS argument, then, is not so much for a "new rhetorical strategy" as it is for a "neglected rhetorical strategy." We are not arguing to replace concern for the unborn child with concern for women, but simply to stop neglecting the latter.

The harm that abortion does to women is just as real as that done to the human fetus. From an objective moral sense, one could argue that the harm done to the woman is less since, unlike the aborted child, she does not generally lose her life. Alternatively, one could argue that the harm that the woman suffers is greater since her soul is damaged by abortion, while the child only suffers physical death and remains spiritually untouched. The latter would have been Aristotle's argument.^{vii}

Setting that disputable point aside, in the social and political realm it seems evident that for many people the harm that abortion causes to unborn children is seen as remote since they never see the aborted child. By contrast, they do see, know, and have relationships with women in their everyday lives. Therefore, as this segment of society comes to understand how abortion hurts women, this knowledge may seem more "real" to them than evidence regarding the harm that abortion does to

unborn children.

I would argue that information about how abortion harms women is one of the best ways of re-engaging the interest of the majority of Americans who tolerate abortion but mostly just do not want to think about it. One of the reasons they do not want to think about it is precisely *because* of their moral ambivalence. On a fundamental level they know it is wrong, but they have decided it is not a *serious* moral wrong because they believe it helps women. Many refuse to accept objective moral arguments against abortion simply because they refuse to give up the option of gaining presumed benefits that might be gained from the “necessary evil” of abortion. By helping this ambivalent majority to see that abortion hurts women, we call into question their moral thinking. If abortion does not help women, what good comes from it? By engaging them at the point on which they excuse abortion (the view that abortion helps women) we call them to reconsider their whole flawed analysis.

When pro-life advocates set aside their own egos and provide a platform for post-abortive women to say, “My baby died in that abortion,” a social connection is made to the grief of the post-abortive woman and her child that is a more powerful and real political argument than “an unborn baby’s heart begins to beat three weeks after conception.” Both are true, but the advocacy on behalf of women, both before and after they have had abortions, is a more effective bridge to the hearts of the ambivalent majority.

ABORTION AS A SERIOUS MORAL WRONG

Beckwith says that “NRS supporters seem to be saying that the only way to persuade the general public that abortion is a serious moral wrong is for the pro-life movement to show that many women suffer...” As with many of his summaries of our positions, Beckwith does us the disservice of criticizing what we “seem to be saying” rather than what we are actually saying.

The goal of NRS is to (1) help women avoid the mistake of choosing abortion and (2) help those who have already chosen abortion discover emotional healing and spiritual conversion. In other words, we

seek to both save lives and save souls. We do not claim that our approach will save all lives or all souls, but simply that it is effective in saving some lives and some souls that would not otherwise be saved. Education about the physical, psychological, and spiritual harm that abortion causes is a key aspect of this work.

Beckwith's goal of convincing the public that abortion is a "serious moral wrong," while laudable, is a separate goal. It involves larger questions of objective truth and spiritual realities that are pursued by preachers and philosophers but that are never fully achieved in our flawed societies. To criticize our pro-woman/pro-life strategy for being unable to achieve what four thousand years of religion and philosophy have been unable to achieve is rather unfair.

I have argued and will continue to do so that educating the public about abortion-related injuries may make it easier for some (especially those whose view of ethics is limited by their own pragmatic concerns) to conclude that abortion is a "serious moral wrong." But neither I nor, I suspect, any NRS advocate would ever argue that information about the risks of abortion is *sufficient* for achieving that end or should even be the *basis* for such a moral conclusion. As will be elaborated upon later, I do not base my arguments on the belief that abortion is evil because it harms women. But I do argue that because abortion is evil, we can expect, and can even know, that it will harm those who participate in it. Nothing good comes from evil.

Beckwith has turned the NRS argument that information about abortion risks will make it *easier* for many people to adopt a pro-life perspective into a claim that such information *will* make people more pro-life. This revised claim is easily criticized, as Beckwith demonstrates, but since it is not the claim of NRS proponents, he is tilting at a windmill of his own creation.

My own views on this are well documented.^{viii} For the purpose of passing restrictive laws to protect women from unwanted and/or dangerous abortions, it does not matter if people have a pro-life view. The ambivalent majority of people who are willing to tolerate abortion in "some cases" are very likely to support informed consent legislation and abortion clinic regulations, for example, because these proposals are

consistent with their desire to protect women. In some cases, it is not even necessary to convince people of abortion's dangers. It is sufficient to simply raise enough doubts about abortion that they will refuse to actively oppose the proposed anti-abortion initiative. In other words, if we can convince many of those who do not see abortion to be a "serious moral evil" that they should support anti-abortion policies that protect women and reduce abortion rates, that is a sufficiently good end to justify NRS efforts. Converting these people to a pro-life view, where they respect life rather than simply fear abortion, is a second step. The latter is another good goal, but it is not necessary to the accomplishment of other good goals, such as the passage of laws that protect women from dangerous abortions and thereby dramatically reduce abortion rates.

Unfortunately, Beckwith does not engage my arguments. Instead, he latches onto an article by Paul Swope which was constructed to promote the Caring Foundation's pro-life advertising campaigns.^{ix} Beckwith goes to great lengths to criticize Swope's interpretation of the Caring Foundation's research, which reveals a shift in public opinion in a "pro-life direction" among those who have seen the ads. Beckwith argues that since the Caring Foundation ads do not emphasize the moral arguments against abortion, the results of their survey may not actually be measuring a true advance in the belief that abortion is objectively a serious moral evil. Instead, those who are shifting their opinions against abortion may be doing so simply because they have a lower preference for it but would still accept it in certain circumstances. It is on the basis of this criticism that Beckwith asserts that NRS supporters "hastily interpret the public's 'moral' condemnation of abortion as consistent with objective morality and a pro-life view of the fetus."

While all of the above involves one of Beckwith's longest criticisms, I believe that his argument is fundamentally flawed in that he is applying a different definition to Swope's use of the term "pro-life" than Swope intended. To Beckwith, to be pro-life means to have a moral belief in the absolute right to life of all human beings. By contrast, Swope's article was built around surveys and promotional literature intended to sway pro-lifers to donate to the Caring Foundation's advertising campaign. To that end, Swope used terminology that equates

any movement away from support for abortion to a movement in favor of “pro-life sentiment.” There are obviously many shades of difference between reservations about abortion and solid conviction on pro-life principles, and it is these shades of difference which Beckwith exploits to criticize Swope’s generalizations about the success of their television ads.

But this criticism, I believe, involves a parsing of word choices that is fundamentally unfair. I sincerely doubt that Swope ever expected his comments to be subjected to linguistic and philosophical tests for accuracy. Swope was simply trying to praise a program to a pro-life audience by using the terminology that most resonates with those who prefer to see their goals described as pro-life rather than anti-abortion.

While the Caring Foundation ads may cause some people to be more pro-life, it is certain that a large part of the effect measured is simply that some people become less favorably disposed toward abortion, even if they do not become “pro-life” as Beckwith would define it. If Swope had known that his statements would be used to accuse him of “hastily interpreting” the data, I suspect that he would have agreed that it is more accurate to say “moved public opinion into a more anti-abortion direction.” Such a simple change of terminology would have erased nearly two pages of Beckwith’s parsing criticisms.

A more serious problem is that Beckwith turns the strategy of the Caring Foundation on its head to suggest that their efforts may actually engender a more narcissistic society. Swope explains that one of the keys to dissuading women from having abortions is to help them see how abortion is not in their self-interest. Beckwith latches onto this to charge when he writes: “given his emphasis on self-interest, Swope has no principled argument against that sort of abortion [in a woman’s self-interest]. Nurturing an apparently unprincipled self-interested populace does not seem consistent with what pro-life activists would conceive as a pro-life culture, even if it results in fewer abortions.... It seems counter-intuitive for the defenders of NRS to want to provide a cultural environment hospitable to the moral primacy of self-interest.”

If one seriously adopts Beckwith’s perspective, one should no longer simply tell children not to run into the street because they might get hurt. Such irresponsible advice would simply nurture the unprinci-

pled and self-interested attitudes of children who think that their own well-being is more important than the right of way and the property rights of drivers. The accusation that NRS proponents “want” to promote “the moral primacy of self-interest” is equally ludicrous.

As will be discussed at greater length below, appeals to self-interest do not necessitate an abandonment of the fundamental moral argument against abortion. Indeed, Beckwith ignores one of the principal arguments that NRS advocates make, which is simply this: a moral judgment against abortion is written in every woman’s heart. This moral judgment can be buried by rationalizations and self-interest. NRS efforts that demonstrate that abortion is not in a woman’s self-interest will help to remove some of the clutter that obscures the moral judgment that God has written on her heart. Appeals to self-interest based on arguments about how abortion will harm a woman’s life serve to cancel out the perceived potential benefits of abortion. As the clutter is removed, a woman’s moral ambivalence comes into clearer relief. As the imagined benefits of abortion become less certain, it becomes increasingly likely that the fundamental moral question of whether it is right or wrong to have an abortion will be honestly entertained.

Telling women the truth is never wrong. It is not wrong to tell them about the humanity of their unborn children. It is not wrong to tell them about the philosophical and moral arguments against abortion. And neither is it wrong (despite Beckwith’s misgivings) to tell them that abortion is not a safety net; it is a safety hazard.

NRS advocates argue that educating women about the risks of abortion does not distract them from the serious moral issue they face. Instead, puncturing the illusion that abortion will keep their lives from changing, very likely for the worst, helps them to think more deeply about everything that abortion means. If the perceived good is offset by a realistic view of how abortion will not solve their problems but may in fact create new problems, women are more likely to engage the question of what they *ought* to do. As long as abortion appears to be the quick-fix, easy way out, many women never struggle with that deeply moral question, “What is the right thing to do?” No NRS advocate suggests that women should be shielded from this question. We simply insist that

some women will refuse to even consider this question, or may refuse to follow their own answer to this question, because they are under tremendous pressure to have an abortion, which everyone says is their “best solution” or even their “only choice.” By reducing the pressure to act against their consciences, we help women to listen to their consciences.

BEST INTERESTS VERSUS SELF-INTERESTS

Beckwith’s concern about NRS advocates promoting a narcissistic world view leads him to a confusion about the distinction between the self-interests of women and the best interests of women. In note 30 Beckwith states that I use the two terms interchangeably. That simply is not true. A word search of my book reveals that the phrase “self interests” is used in only one sentence.^x This occurs after a discussion of what is in the “best interests” of women in an objective sense.^{xi} In the context of the entire chapter, I had thought that the distinction would be clear to most readers. Apparently, I was mistaken. To clarify it for the sake of responding to Beckwith’s critique and to further my criticism of his own analysis, I will be more clear here.

I use the term “self-interest” to describe the purely subjective desires and interests of an individual, which are naturally limited by that person’s perspective. What is in the person’s “best interests,” by contrast, is objective and includes a perspective and information that lies outside the limits of that person. For example, a child may pursue his *self-interest* by seeking to play with a snake. A parent who pulls the child away from the snake because the parent recognizes that it is poisonous pursues the *best interests* of the child, despite the child’s anger and frustration at being denied his self desire.

Clearly, what is in a person’s best interests may often be in conflict with what is in his or her self-interest. Most adults recognize in our pasts decisions that at the time were made to further our self-interests but that in the long run are recognized as harmful to our best interests. If we were omniscient, our self-interests and our best interests would always be in sync with each other. In practice, they are frequently in conflict. God’s moral laws, either revealed or written in nature or on our hearts, are

simply God's way of trying to share His omniscience with us so that we can choose what is in our best interests. Whenever we follow a self-interest that is contrary to the moral truth (which leads to fulfillment of our best interests) we are foolish. All violations of morality, from an omniscient perspective, are acts of pure foolishness. When we see that option is foolish—not in our best interests—we are far less likely to choose it. When we are confused, frightened, and ignorant—as most women considering abortion are—it is easy to make a foolish choice.

Given these definitions, it should be evident that while I believe a woman may seek an abortion to satisfy her self-interest, it is never in her best interest. Even if there were no physical or psychological problems associated with abortion, it would still not be in her best spiritual interests. To paraphrase Jesus, "What does it gain a woman to win the whole world but lose her soul?" Furthermore, I would argue that the evidence of physical and psychological harm from abortion actually supports this claim of spiritual harm. What follows is my argument to this effect that Beckwith apparently found confusing:

Believers know that God's moral law is given to us not to enslave us, or even to take the fun out of life. It is given to us as a path toward true happiness. Christians rightly anticipate, then, that any advantage gained through violation of the moral law is always temporary; it will invariably be supplanted by alienation and suffering.

This insight gives us an alternative way of evangelizing. Whenever we cannot convince others to acknowledge a moral truth for the love of God, our second-best option is to appeal to their self interest. If an act is indeed against God's moral law, it will be found to be injurious to our happiness. Thus, if our faith is true, we would expect to find compelling evidence which demonstrates that such acts as abortion, fornication, and pornography lead, in the end, not to happiness and freedom, but to sorrow and enslavement. By finding this evidence, and sharing it with others, we bear witness to the protective good of God's law in a way which even unbelievers must respect.

Research and education about the dangers of abortion, then, are not just grist for political reform. They are also leaven for spiritual reform. As people become more aware of all the hardships abortion causes to women, men, siblings and society, they will begin to respect the wisdom of God's law. They will begin to think: "Maybe all these religious folk weren't so crazy after all. If they were right about this, when every other power in society said they were wrong, maybe they're right about other things, too."^{xiii}

Part of the goal of pro-lifers, I would argue, is to help women see that their self-interests *are* served by choosing life rather than abortion. This is often not readily apparent, but we should never presume, as the pro-life Beckwith does, that “many abortions do not result in gratuitous suffering or harm to the women who have them.” In fact, Beckwith is conceding an unprovable claim. While it is clearly known that some women do have serious physical and psychological complications from abortion, the counterclaim that some women are not harmed by abortion can only be verified in regard to physical complications. In contrast, psychological complications of abortion may often be repressed for years or even decades. Furthermore, post-abortive women will often act out repressed grief through substance abuse, broken relationships, self-destructive behavior and numerous other symptoms for decades without ever recognizing their abortion as an underlying cause.

Such delayed reactions preclude our ability to declare with certainty that any given woman will not suffer grief, regret, or other reactions at some later point in life, much less in the afterlife. No one can possibly claim to know with certainty that some or any particular women’s lives have been benefitted by abortion, since no one can know how their lives would have been if they had not had an abortion. Similarly, no one can know with certainty that some or any particular women’s lives have not been hurt by having an abortion.

Conversely, while I cannot prove that all women who abort experience “gratuitous suffering or harm,” it is not necessary to do so. That some women have is easily proven. That *any* women are known to suffer from physical or psychological injuries is sufficient reason to educate the public about this risk, to demand efforts to help protect women from these injuries, and to provide post-abortion recovery programs for those who are suffering from these harms. My case is easy to make. By contrast, the pro-abortionists’ task of proving that any women, much less most, experience overall benefits from abortion cannot be accomplished because the future is unknowable.

A PERFECT WORLD VERSUS A BETTER WORLD

In many respects Beckwith's argument appears to arise from a desire to see the battle against abortion won on the highest of battle grounds, a place where all are converted to an allegiance to objective truth. He makes the analogy that the act of releasing a slave because it serves the slave-owner's economic interests to do so is not morally equivalent to releasing a slave because the owner is "converted to the belief that no person by nature is property." In the same sense Beckwith would prefer that woman should choose against abortion not to avoid breast cancer but because she values the life of their unborn child.

Once again, I do not disagree with Beckwith. While it is a morally superior act to choose life for the love of life, the requirements of justice are *sufficiently* served if women choose against abortion because they do not want to face all the physical and psychological risks that it entails. While it would be better for a woman's boyfriend or parents not to coerce her into an unwanted abortion because they share with her a desire and love for her unborn child, it is *sufficient* for the sake of preserving her well-being and that of her child if they refrain from pushing for an abortion because they are fearful of how it may affect her alone. Moreover, Beckwith's analogy is weak since, unlike the release of a slave, the act of giving birth and raising an unplanned child provides many subsequent opportunities to be converted to a love of that child's life. The choice to give life, or at least to refrain from abortion, produces ongoing opportunities for conversion.

As Christians, Beckwith and I both desire to see the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. We both desire the conversion of all, including ourselves, to the point where all people would make all their decisions in accord with the highest moral principles. I cannot dispute this ideal anymore than I can dispute the argument that abortion is a serious moral wrong because it involves the destruction of an innocent human life.

But I would argue that it is self-defeating to use the yardstick of perfection to beat down every proposal that falls short of creating a perfect world. In a perfect world no one would want to see pornography. In a simply better world those who want to see pornography would be unable to find it. Similarly, in a perfect world there would never be any abortions because all people would cherish and respect life. In a simply

better world those who are tempted to abort would not, if only out of fear of suffering physical or psychological injuries. To avoid sin for love of God is perfection; to avoid sin for fear of hell is, at the very least, a step in the right direction. I cannot criticize Beckwith's desire for a perfect world. But at the same time, I do not see how he is helping to establish Christ's perfect kingdom on earth when he singles out for criticism pro-woman/pro-life efforts that can merely help to make our world better.

To mount a moral criticism of NRS tactics, it is not sufficient, or even interesting, to demonstrate that these tactics fail to produce a perfect world where abortion is banned because all believe in the existence of absolute truths, objective morality, and the serious moral wrong of abortion. No strategy, not even the traditional pro-life strategy, can pass such a test. If Beckwith wants to create a compelling philosophical or moral case against the NRS approach, it would seem incumbent upon him to show that we are either recommending evil means to a good end, or at least neutral or ineffective means that produce no good results. He has not undertaken that task. Instead, he has simply created a false conflict between advocates of the two-legged pro-woman/pro-life strategy and those who have supported the one-legged pro-life strategy.

CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, Beckwith wrongly portrays the premises and goals of "NRS" advocates. His interest is in persuading the public that abortion is a serious moral wrong. Our interest is in helping women and society to turn away from believing that abortion will solve their problems and to help women who have already had abortions find psychological and spiritual healing. He sees a bolt that needs to be removed and he says the screwdriver we have produced won't get the job done. He's right, but only because he misunderstands the purpose of the tool.

Helping protect women from the injuries that result from abortion and helping them after they have suffered those injuries are moral obligations in and of themselves. Such advocacy on the part of women is a moral duty that is separate from, but not opposed to, the duty to protect innocent human life. NRS advocates have only argued that more

emphasis on the first task may also make it easier to accomplish the second task. The screwdriver may not remove the bolt, but it may be necessary for removing the screw that blocks access to the bolt.

Beckwith is correct when he points out that “from a strictly moral point of view, abortion is not a serious moral wrong just because the woman suffers....” But it is entirely consistent with a Christian view of morality to believe that *because* abortion is morally wrong women will suffer.

Beckwith worries that an emphasis on the harm that abortion causes to women may fail to convince people of the objective injustice that abortion inflicts on the human fetus. In that too he is right. NRS is not sufficient for achieving that higher end. But it serves a good purpose in and of itself (helping women) and it may yet prove to be sufficient for the purpose of passing restrictive laws that protect both women and, indirectly, their unborn children.

On a final note, I have enjoyed many of Francis Beckwith’s written works. Perhaps I bristle too much when he turns his critical eye on my backyard. But his confusion of the premises and arguments that I have made is deeply disappointing. In part this has occurred because he did not limit his criticisms to my work alone but criticized a synthesis of arguments made by three different authors (Mathewes-Green, Swope, and myself) in which the authors have employed similar terminology to mean different things. As a result, the hybrid NRS view that he presents for criticism does not in fact exist.

Sadly, a small number of pro-life advocates have criticized our pro-woman/pro-life approach not on philosophical grounds, but simply because they believe women who abort are “murderers” who should not be helped or protected. I am deeply concerned that Beckwith’s philosophical critique of our misstated views will be used by some as an argument against “breathing with two lungs—one for the woman, one for her child.” Unfortunately, there are some people who would truly prefer to keep the abortion debate polarized between the perceived interests of the women and those of her unborn child. NRS advocates have struggled for nearly twenty years to show that these interests are not irreconcilable. It is my prayer that Beckwith’s misinterpretation of our premises,

arguments, and goals will not add to the confusion.

NOTES

i. Francis J. Beckwith, "Taking Abortion Seriously: A Philosophical Critique of the New Anti-Abortion Rhetorical Shift" *Ethics and Medicine* 17/3 (2001) 155-66.

ii. Francis J. Beckwith, *Politically Correct Death: Answering the Arguments for Abortion Rights* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).

iii. David C. Reardon, *Making Abortion Rare: A Healing Strategy for A Divided Nation* (Springfield: Acorn Books, 1996), pp. 4-12.

iv. David C. Reardon, Jesse R. Cogle. "Depression and Unintended Pregnancy in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth: A Cohort Study" in *British Medical Journal*. 324 (2002) 151-52.

v. David C. Reardon and Phillip Ney "Abortion and Subsequent Substance Abuse," *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* 26/1 (2000) 63-80.

vi. D. C. Reardon, P. G. Ney, F. J. Scheuren, J. R. Cogle, P. K. Coleman, T. Strahan, "Deaths Associated with Pregnancy Outcome: A Record Linkage Study of Low Income Women," *Southern Medical Journal*. 95/8 (2002) 834-41; M. Gissler and et. al., "Suicides after Pregnancy in Finland, 1987-94: Register Linkage Study," *British Medical Journal* 313 (1996) 431-34; C. M. Morgan et al., "Mental Health May Deteriorate as a Direct Effect of Induced Abortion," *British Medical Journal* 314 (1997) 902.

vii. See, for example, Janet Smith's analysis of how the classical Greek analysis of evil's negative effect on the character of evil doers is reflected in the negative effects of abortion on women in "Abortion and Moral Character" in *Doing and Being: Selected Readings in Moral Philosophy*, ed. Joram Graf Haber, (New York, 1993). Also: "Moral Character and Abortion," Ch. 12 in *Abortion: A New Generation of Catholic Responses*, ed. Stephen J. Heaney (Braintree: The Pope John Center, 1992).

viii. Reardon, *Making Abortion Rare*, pp. 16-36.

ix. Paul Swope, "Abortion: A Failure to Communicate," *First Things* 82 (April 1998).

x. Reardon, *Making Abortion Rare*, p. 11.

xi. *Ibid*, pp. 4-5.

xii. *Ibid*, p. 11.