ESSAYS IN HONOR OF PROFESSOR ROBERT LYON

Editorial .......................................................................................................................... 5
Laurence W. Wood

The Deuteronomists as Loyal Opposition ................................................................. 7
Joel H. Hunt

In But Not Of the World: The Confluence of Wisdom and Torah
In the Solomon Story (1 Kings 1-11) ........................................................................ 17
Frank Anthony Spina

Loyal Opposition and the Law in the Teaching of Jesus:
The Ethics of a Restorative and Utopian Eschatology ............................................ 31
Frederick W. Schmidt

Images of the Church in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy:
An Exercise in Canonical Hermeneutics ................................................................. 45
Eugene E. Lemcio

Reasoning with Unbelievers and the Place of the Scripture
in Tertullian’s Apology ............................................................................................... 61
Paul Livermore

Charismatic Prophecy as Loyal Opposition in the Second-Century Church ........ 77
Ted A. Campbell

“The Right Use of the Appropriate Means”: The Debate Over Strategy
and Goals Among Nineteenth-Century Evangel Reformers .................................. 87
Douglas M. Strong

The Ethics of Jerusalem and the Morals of Athens:
Assessing Hans Küng’s Theological Ethics ............................................................ 101
Ken Brewer

Justice or “Just Us”? Allocating Resources in an Age of AIDS .......................... 119
John F. Kilner

Loyal Opposition and the Epistemology of Conscience ......................................... 135
William J. Abraham
THE ASBURY THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL provides a scholarly forum for thorough discussion of issues relevant to Christian thought and faith, and to the nature and mission of the Church. The Journal addresses those concerns and ideas across the curriculum which interface with Christian thought, life, and ministry.

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This issue of the Asbury Theological Journal honors one of our recently retired professors, Dr. Robert Lyon, who was a professor of New Testament Studies for more than 30 years. His influence on students has been remarkable. These essays are written by his students and admirers who have learned from him as a scholar and as a friend. Dr. Lyon has been particularly gifted in challenging students to be serious scholars, and as a result many of his students were motivated to do further studies. This collection of essays is a sampling of those whom he inspired to pursue a Ph. D. degree in some aspects of religious thought.

One of Dr. Lyon’s well-known ministries among students was the formation of a student organization in the ‘70s known as the “Loyal Opposition.” This association reflects Dr. Lyon’s vision to get students involved socially and politically in contemporary practical affairs. In Bob’s communications with them, he customarily signs off with “Peace—and Towels!” The authors of these essays pay tribute to Dr. Lyon’s success in influencing them in this regard—to be both serious scholars and community-minded believers whose primary responsibility is to be a faithful and loyal witness concerning the difference that Jesus makes for the whole world in every aspect of life.

It is with highest respect for Dr. Lyon and the cause of Christ for which he has embraced throughout the course of his long career at Asbury Theological Seminary that we offer these contributions in his honor.

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THE DEUTERONOMISTS AS LOYAL OPPOSITION

JOEL H. HUNT

I. INTRODUCTION

One could cite a plethora of Pentateuchal passages that suggest “Loyal Opposition” in the Torah. These passages counter what appear to have been commonly held ideas of the time. A narrative telling of a younger brother surpassing the eldest son, as in the case of Jacob and Esau, allows the reversal of apparently normal inheritance rights for the larger purposes of God. The traditions of Exodus, in which slaves are freed from terrible bondage and consequently formed into a nation, bespeak a view of life that centers on hope for hopeless people to find a new existence in relationship with God. Even the legal corpora of the Torah, with, for example, their emerging concern for the status of women, suggest the stirrings of basic principles of fairness by which faithful people express commitment to God and solidarity with persons.

We will narrow our purview considerably, however, and examine two related themes of the Torah: love of God and love of persons. Perhaps there is no more natural place to focus than Deuteronomy, a book that, in ways similar to the denotation of the phrase “Loyal Opposition,” uses political rhetoric to express religious obligations. If the twin ideas of love of God and love of persons are central to the identity and mission of the Church, as this symposium suggests, then it is fruitful to consider again this document as foundational for the Loyal Opposition.

The covenantal language of Deuteronomy clearly declares the correlating concepts of love of God and love of persons. Deuteronomy understands Israel’s identity as inextricably bound to the nation’s exclusive devotion to Yahweh. Deuteronomy also requires that Israel demonstrate covenantal solidarity with others. Within the expression of these companion concepts one may recognize the early stirrings of a Loyal Opposition understanding of Christian obligation, for life within the Kingdom

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of God entails both whole-hearted allegiance to God and whole-hearted affection for others.

At least two additional features of Deuteronomy suggest that this text is applicable for an understanding of Christian discipleship along the lines of Loyal Opposition. First, the rhetorical features of the Deuteronomic sermons contemporize the message for its hearers. This technique requires faithful readers of the text in any age to draw near to listen to these ancient, and yet appropriate, demands for exclusive devotion to God and for compassionate living among people. As if it is being uttered for the first time, Deuteronomy addresses “us,” “today” and “now” to respond to its demands for an unswerving love of God and an unstinting love of others.\(^2\)

As an example of this contemporizing movement, note the emphasis on “today” in Deuteronomy 5:3. The verse reads:

\[
לָא אַחֲרֵי אָבֹתֵינוּ כָּלָה יְהוָה אֶרֶםָּרְבָּךְ קֶרֶם
כִּי אַתָּנוּ אָנֵחַ אֲלֵהוּ פָּה הָיוּ כָלָּם חֵיָה.
\]

This verse may be translated rather woodenly, “Not with our ancestors did Yahweh cut this covenant, but with us, we, these ones here today, all of us alive.”\(^3\) As Patrick Miller comments in reading this verse,

The text uses seven words heaped one upon another to stress the contemporary claim of the covenant. The effect is clear. The hortatory character of the chapter and the book combines with the actualizing language of this verse to cut across all the generations and renew the covenant afresh with \textit{all} hearers of these words.\(^4\)

In addition to this contemporizing rhetoric, the development of Deuteronomy itself also suggests that there may be points of contact between Deuteronomy and a view of Christian discipleship as Opposition. The Deuteronomic writers or editors, as outlined by Weinfeld and others, stood apart within a plurality of religious expressions in their own day.\(^5\) In like manner, the contemporary Loyal Follower of God may at times stand over against both the so-called secular views of life and the prevailing, and comfortably familiar, patterns of religious thinking. Thus, we suggest that in the promulgation of the book of Deuteronomy one may see an incipient Loyal Opposition party, a group asserting the distinctive ideas of the love of Yahweh alone and of the love of others despite competing concepts. We will review briefly these twin mandates to love as they occur in Deuteronomy.\(^6\)

\section{II. Covenant Love of God in Deuteronomy}

It is well known that Deuteronomy resembles Ancient Near Eastern treaties in general and the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddōn (VTE) in particular. By means of these Vassal Treaties, dated to 672 BC, Esarhaddōn imposed loyalty oaths on his vassals to assure their continued fidelity to Esarhaddōn’s successor Assurbanīpal. Significantly, both VTE and
Deuteronomy demand wholehearted devotion to the suzerain. Of course, Deuteronomy stretches the model of these fealty oaths by extracting a pledge to Yahweh as suzerain and by placing the stipulations of the agreement in the category of divine law.

Clearly a political model was pressed into service to express religious ideology, a proposition familiar to those who would discuss Christian life in terms of a Loyal Opposition Society. Weinfeld affirms this connection, and its peculiar appropriateness for ancient Israel, when he writes,

The pattern that served a political need in the ancient Near East came to serve a religious need in Israel. The religious use of this pattern was especially possible in Israel, for only the religion of Israel demanded exclusive loyalty to the God of Israel, a jealous God, who would suffer no rival. The religion of Israel therefore precluded the possibility of dual or multiple loyalties, such as were permitted in other religions in which the believer was bound in diverse relationships to many gods. So the stipulation in political treaties demanding exclusive loyalty to one king corresponds strikingly to the religious belief in one single, exclusive Deity.

Such an unrivaled loyalty to God, a loyalty precluding other potential commitments, appears to be the point of Christian discipleship as well. As in the case of the Deuteronomists in ancient Israel, this loyalty may even place the modern believer in conflict with prevailing religious practice as well.

Deuteronomy reflects a change in the spiritual life of ancient Israel in the seventh century BC. Deuteronomy achieved a new status during the reforms of Josiah (2 Kings 22-23). The ancient Loyal Opposition gained enough power with the Josianic Reform and ‘discovery’ of the ‘book of the law’ to institute its vision of religious life. With Josiah, the Reform Movement received the royal imprimatur and this led to the execution of the ideals of Deuteronomy.

As an aside, the question of the changing dynamics when the Opposition becomes the Government, as in the case of Josiah’s reforms, is beyond the immediate scope of this paper. In light of texts describing the conduct of Holy War or the coercive imposition of the Deuteronomic reforms, one must consider how the Opposition, as Government, can or should wield power in a righteous manner when the opportunity is presented. Our purpose here is to look at the Josianic Reform as indicative of the kinds of concerns the Deuteronomists had and the implications of these concerns for Christian discipleship.

The impact of Josiah’s promulgation of Deuteronomy is seen most clearly in the narrowing of the Israelite cult. With centralization, and the requisite elimination of provincial cult centers, the Reformers institute the Opposition’s idea that Yahweh alone should be worshipped in the manner and in the place of Yahweh’s choosing. This cult restriction coincided with the development of the ‘name theology’ combating the idea of God actually dwelling in any shrine, even the divinely appointed place from among the tribes. This emphasis on the spiritual dwelling of Yahweh, which perhaps lessened the importance of cultic performance, was joined by an enlargement of humanistic expression within the covenant, a matter that we shall take up later in this paper.

For the moment, we wish to focus on the requirement of complete loyalty to Yahweh.
In this regard, the adaptation of a treaty structure for Deuteronomy is decisive. The VTE included strong words regarding loyalty to the suzerain followed by stipulations outlining the responsibilities of the loyal subject. In Deuteronomy, where the sovereign is Yahweh, some of the stipulations deal with proper worship and religious observances as issues reflecting loyalty to the divine suzerain. These loyalty stipulations are joined by concerns for the treatment of human beings.

As an example of the basic stipulation of allegiance to Yahweh, let us consider briefly the Shema, a familiar segment dealing with loyalty. The section 4:44-11:32 begins with a review of the Ten Words, principles that center on the primary relationship to Yahweh alone and on proper relationships within the community.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the Shema, expounds upon this first idea, the fundamental relationship with Yahweh. These verses read,

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

These verses place at the forefront one of the main concerns of Deuteronomy and, derivatively, of the Loyal Opposition. The first matter is a strong reiteration of the principle that there should be no gods but Yahweh. The people of God find their identity in their attachment to this deity alone and this commitment shapes the way in which they are to live in the world. The Shema is a positive restatement of the first commandment against the worship of other gods. This affirmation will set the inner compass of the individual and guide daily conduct in the world. Thus, for the faithful person in ancient Israel, as with the Loyal Opposition today, the challenge becomes the reapplication of the primary loyalty to God in ever-new situations in life.

The connection of the Shema to the basic concerns enunciated in the Ten Commandments in particular and Deuteronomy in general provides a starting place for life in the Kingdom. As Miller suggests,

Focusing on the Great Commandment and the Decalogue identifies a center around which other things revolve. It enables a reduction of the whole to its most important point, spelling it out in specifics and implications. A theological structure is thereby given to the covenantal community, one that continues throughout its life. It operates on two axes: the relation of faith and love or obedience, as succinctly set forth in the Shema, and the relationship to God and others as embodied in the Ten Commandments. Readers of the Book of Deuteronomy, therefore, are constantly being given clues to what matters most for those who live under and with this God.

The Shema expresses the requirement of allegiance to Yahweh, which echoes the first
commandment, after affirming Yahweh’s uniqueness and unity. A syntactic connection joins the command to “hear” (š’mr’) the declaration of Yahweh’s uniqueness in verse 4 and the verb requiring the faithful person to “love” (w’hbt) Yahweh uniquely in verse 5. The unity of Yahweh requires an undivided love from Yahweh’s subjects; Yahweh is “one” therefore you shall love Yahweh “with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”

This whole-hearted love excludes any rival for the affections of the Beloved One. In VTE, Esarhaddon entreats his vassals to love the king as one loves oneself, or, in other words, to be completely loyal to the suzerain. Though it is possible, albeit highly unlikely, that the vassal could have had a measure of affection for the sovereign, the primary usage of the term “love,” ra’amu in VTE and ‘hb in Deuteronomy, has to do with the faithful expression of loyalty by means of obedience to the covenant stipulations. In fact, to make the connection between the political and spiritual arenas, the treaty language used in Deuteronomy 6:5 “contains all of the elements found in the treaties: devotion with all the heart, with all the soul (i.e., readiness to give one’s life), and provision of might and force when necessary.”

The following verses of the Shema, Deuteronomy 6:6-9, complement this call to unmitigated fidelity. Verse 6 demands that the faithful take “these words” to heart as a constant companion reminding one of the need for loyalty. Verse 7 requires the inculcation (w’ešinnantām) of the next generation by means of constant recitation of “these words.” This theme, the education of the children, reappears in 6:20-25 to end this segment. Verses 8-9 prescribe the use of external anchors to complement and strengthen the internal reminders of verse 6-7.

The Shema’s theme of total fidelity continues in Deuteronomy 6:10-25. These verses demanding allegiance are particularly applicable to our concern for the Loyal Opposition.

Deuteronomy 6:10-19 recognizes that Israel has received freely a fully appointed residence. This grant of plenty, contrasting with a past of poverty, should cause the Israelite to remain always faithful to Yahweh. According to 6:13-15, the people must serve Yahweh, a jealous Deity, with steady devotion and guard against faltering fealty. One notes that the abundance of material blessing provides a challenge for the faithful to remain faithful and not to test the limits of the Suzerain’s patience.

These warnings against complacency in the face of promised plenty indicate that Deuteronomy understands that comfort may conflict with the performance of the injunction to love God and love persons. This warning provides a parallel for Christian ethics today, for the Loyal Opposition may need to live against a tide of material blessing, ignoring the inducements of enjoyment and excess, if good fortune leads to vacillation.

The evidence could be multiplied many times over to demonstrate that Deuteronomy attempts to foist upon Israel a restricted reverence for the one Yahweh. The existence of this program, coupled with other biblical and extrabiblical evidence, indicates that the religious climate of ancient Israel was more pluralistic than the writers of Deuteronomy sanctioned. In such a climate, those who held to the ideas of Deuteronomy appear to have been an opposition party asserting their brand of monotheistic and Yahwistic faith upon the people.

This Deuteronomic ideal, the stipulation of undivided allegiance to God in a time of pluralism, forms an interesting link to the concept of Christian ethics as Opposition. The notion of love of God in Deuteronomy arises out of the political climate of the Ancient
Near East, in which the term “love” in the covenants generally denotes uncompromising loyalty to the suzerain by means of severing all other ties and by abiding by the specific stipulations of the loyalty oath. In this vein, the political idea “Loyal Opposition” may be a useful way to express a view of Christian ethics in which the believer adheres exclusively to God as Sovereign, even in the face of competing loyalties.

III. COVENANT LOVE OF PERSONS IN DEUTERONOMY

Beside the love of God, the love of persons forms a corollary issue of life in the Kingdom of God. Generally speaking, chapters 12-26 of Deuteronomy take up this topic. One notes, however, that, despite the humanistic emphasis of Deuteronomy 12-26, care for others is a subsidiary theme to loyalty to Yahweh. The first of the stipulations outlined in these chapters has to do with the proper worship of Yahweh. This placement of the topic forces one to recognize again the primacy of this issue for Deuteronomy and for the faithful reader today.

Having noticed the continued emphasis on the proper regard for Yahweh, the reader also notes the peculiar tone of Deuteronomy in its stipulations for daily life. Predictably, the ethical demands of Deuteronomy 12-26 deviate from the politically oriented stipulations of the vassal treaties, which have much to do with the preservation of the dynasty. Deuteronomy uncompromisingly demands the faithful to love all, including disenfranchised persons on the fringe of society, such as the poor, the outsiders and the widows. This ethical demand to love others entails doing the right thing for others. One notices this particular humanistic tendency of Deuteronomy when comparing the social laws of Deuteronomy with parallel injunctions in Exodus.

For example, note the change in the law regarding the relationship between an Israelite and a stranger. Exodus 22:20 (Eng. 22:21) reads, “You shall not wrong or oppress (lō’-tōneh wēlō’ tilḥāṣennū) a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.” Similarly, Exodus 23:9 records, “You shall not oppress (lō’ tilḥāṣ) a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.” Both of these verses prohibit the Israelite from wronging or afflicting the stranger. The memory of the affliction of former bondage serves as the motivation.

In contrast to these two laws prohibiting wrongful action, Deuteronomy 10:19 exhorts the Israelite to a more difficult response toward the stranger. Once again, the experience of slavery is to motivate the action of the Israelite. The verse reads, “You shall also love (wa’āḥabtem) the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

This shift from preventing malevolence to prescribing beneficence displays the inchoate humanism of Deuteronomy. The loyal subject of Yahweh will exceed the requirement not to harm another and, reflecting the character of the suzerain described in Deuteronomy 10:17-18, love the resident alien by actively seeking the alien’s welfare in matters such as provision, inclusion and justice.

A particularly clear case revealing the distinctive flavor of Deuteronomy is the law concerning the release of slaves. These laws deal with those who have been subjected to servitude due to economic misfortune beyond the help a loan could provide. The material of Deuteronomy 15:12-18, when compared with the similar material in the
Covenant Code (Exodus 21:2-11), reveals some of the distinctives of Deuteronomy.

Both passages begin with a statement of the setting. Both Exodus 21:2 and Deuteronomy 15:12 declare that a Hebrew slave must be freed in the seventh year. Deuteronomy surpasses Exodus by including a female slave in this requirement for release.26 Essentially the initial point of the laws is the same: Hebrew slaves must be released in their sabbatical year.

The humanitarian nature of Deuteronomy, in contrast to Exodus, is displayed in the respective descriptions of the status of the individual about to be released. In Exodus 21:3-6, the freed slave reverts to his original state before he was enslaved. Specifically, if a previously single male was given a wife while in servitude, he faces a difficult choice. He may gain freedom, in which case he must leave his wife and any children behind, or he may choose to stay with his family and in slavery for life. Deuteronomy 15:16 does not deal with the matter of the slave’s marital status, but suggests that a slave may freely choose to remain in the master’s household out of a sense of love or loyalty.

The manner of manumission also declares the contrast between Exodus and Deuteronomy. According to Exodus 21:2, the slave is released in the seventh year, without debt (ḥinnām). Deuteronomy 15:13-14 expands this injunction by requiring that the master not send out the freed slave empty-handed (reqām), but that the master would provide liberally (ḥaʾānēq taʾānîq) from his bounty.27 The master must adorn the slave with hands full of the necessities for starting a new life, with provisions from flock, field and vineyard. In this regard, the master recognizes the contribution made to his household by the slave during six years of service.28

In addition to its appearance in the socio-moral laws, the humanistic vein of Deuteronomy emerges in its cultic ordinances. The law of cult centralization in Deuteronomy 12 is punctuated with exhortations regarding the Levite, the slave, and the maidservant (v 12, 18, 19).29 The legislation on the first fruit offering in Deuteronomy 26:1-11 expands the requirement from Exodus 23:19 in two ways. Deuteronomy 26:1-11 includes a historical liturgy or Credo (vv 5-10) and appends a prescription to include the Levites and aliens in sharing the feast of God’s bounty (v 11). The law of the tithe, which follows the first fruit legislation in Deuteronomy 26:12-15, specifies that the Levites, aliens, orphans and widows should be the beneficiaries of the giving of the tithe. Such concern for persons on the fringes of society is presented as a fitting link between the proper worship of God and the everyday life of God’s people.30

Regardless of the precise origin of this incipient humanism, it is clear that Deuteronomy reflects an advance over earlier legislation in the area of ethical development. Deuteronomy, despite some passages exhibiting a programmatic zeal, moves beyond its predecessors in promoting an expansive ethic to complement its restrictive theology. Since all persons are under the one God, so all persons are to be the recipients of covenant care. This kind of inclusive concern provides a model for the Loyal Opposition in the Church.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have considered the contribution of Deuteronomy to an understanding of Christian ethics as Loyal Opposition. Since the writers of Deuteronomy adapted a
political document, one which demanded an exclusive allegiance on the part of a vassal to a king, to express a vision of loyal service to Yahweh, we suggested that Deuteronomy is formative for the Loyal Opposition. The use of political terminology, such as Covenant, Love and Opposition, suggests points of contact between the views of Deuteronomy and those of modern believers.

Additionally, the authors of Deuteronomy modified the treaty format in decisive ways to present the book as a mosaic of sermons that speak to both ancient and modern hearers. Major sections and smaller segments of the book contain calls for obedience to Torah. This demand corresponds to the point of a good sermon, namely, to lead to a life changing response on the part of the hearer. Deuteronomy seeks to motivate the hearer to remain loyal to Yahweh and to portray such a commitment within the community. These are themes fitting for believers of any age.

We noted two themes of Deuteronomy, love for God and love for others, and suggested that these two ideas are the heart of Christian ethics. To be sure, the first matter, loyalty to God, is the consuming passion of Deuteronomy. Faithful people are called to affirm an unswerving loyalty to the God who has graciously entered into a covenant relationship with them.

The second matter, loyalty within the community, forms a secondary theme within Deuteronomy. The Deuteronomistic additions to previous laws, for instance, attest to an emerging humanism. To be sure, the viewpoint of Deuteronomy leaves room for further development. In this regard, the sermonic reapplication of texts reveals not only the views of the writers of Deuteronomy, but also provides a model of what faithful communities must do, reinterpret the message of God's grace for each new generation.

For the Loyal Opposition, one notes that a past authoritative word may not prove to provide the final word for a later generation. Contemporary issues require the reappropriation of earlier ideas. The function of the Opposition may be to challenge the Church to evaluate its theology and praxis in order to determine their appropriateness for current issues. By means of its persuasive, not coercive, power, the Loyal Opposition calls the Church to loyalty to God and commitment to persons.

NOTES
1. It is a privilege to write this article to honor Bob Lyon. Since our first meeting at Asbury Theological Seminary, Bob has challenged me to grow as a student and as a servant. I shall always be grateful for the surprises of grace that have come as a result of following Bob's model of strong commitment to God and to people.
2. For instance, the phrase hayyôm occurs in Deuteronomy 1:10, 39; 2:18, 25; 4:4, 8, 26, 39, 40; 5:1, 3; 6:6; 7:11; 8:1, 11, 19; 9:1; 3; 10:13; 11:2, 8, 13, 26, 27, 28, 32; 12:8; 13:19; 15:5, 15; 19:9; 20:3; 26:3, 17, 18; 27:1, 4, 10; 28:1, 13, 14, 15; 29:9, 11, 12, 14'; 17; 30:2, 8, 11, 15, 16, 18, 19; 31:2, 21, 27; 32:46. Variations of this phrase, such as hayyôm hazzeh, 'ad hayyôm hazzeh, and kayyôm hazzeh could also be noted. The term wē'attā, occurring, for example, in 2:13: 4:1; 5:25; 10:12, 22, 12:9; 26:10; 31:19; 32:39, complements the contemporary focus of the document by imagining the reader as hearing the words of Moses.
3. Author's translation. Other biblical quotes, unless indicated, are from the NRSV.

6. Besides calling people to a deep devotion to Yahweh, Deuteronomy may also indicate some deeper levels of contrast with Israelite society in general. For instance, the development of Israelite monotheism stands in stark contrast to the general polytheistic or monolatrous concepts that held sway for a time in Israel. Israel's emerging monotheism challenged the prevailing religious structures of its day and formed a new center from which to encourage ethical decision-making. Ultimately, this viewpoint left its stamp on the Hebrew Bible in general and the Torah in particular as the dominant perspective, but this precedence was gained over time.

7. As a significant point of comparison, the order of the curses in VTE parallels the order of the curses in Deuteronomy 28:23-35. It is clear that the pattern in Deuteronomy is derivative, having been borrowed from a list such as the one in VTE, which organizes the curses, by the hierarchy of the gods. See Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, p. 7.

8. Ibid., p. 8.

9. “The transition from Torah as a specific instruction to the sacred “book of the Torah” of the Josianic period marked a turning point in Israel’s spiritual life. The ritual instructions, which had been kept in priestly esoteric circles, were now written by scribes and wise men (cf. Jer 8:8) and became part of the national lore.” Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, p. 18.

10. Religious leaders in sympathy with the views expressed by Deuteronomy guided young King Josiah in his reign. Since these advisors trained up Josiah in the ways he should go, it should not appear as a surprise that Josiah would support their overwhelming reform movement when he became an adult. From a conversation with Dr. J. Edward Wright.


13. Miller points out the repetition of this theme in Deuteronomy 6:12-15; 7:8-10; 16b, 19b; 8:11, 15, 19; 11:1; 10:12-13; 11:1, 13, 16, 18:22, 28b; 13:2-5, 6, 10, 13; 18:9; 26:16-17; 29:26; 30:2b, 6, 8, 10, 16-17 (Miller, *Deuteronomy*, p. 98).


16. “As indicated above, love with all the heart means sole recognition of the beloved to the exclusion of any rival. Indeed, ‘love’ in the ancient Near East connotes loyalty. Thus, when the suzerain demands loyalty from his vassal, he adjoins him that he shall love (ra’emtu) the king as he loves himself (VTE, lines 266-68).” Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, p. 351.

17. Ibid., p. 351.

18. It does not appear necessary for our purpose here to determine whether the phrase “these words” (haddēbārīm hāʾēlēh) refers to the preceding proclamation of Yahweh’s uniqueness, to the Ten Commandments, or to the general parenetic discourse of Deuteronomy.

19. Deuteronomy 6:16 warns against testing God as at Massah. This reference provides an interesting contrast to the inducements of wealth, though the basic concern is the same. At Massah, the Israelites tested Yahweh by wondering whether Yahweh could supply their needs. In Canaan, the Israelites are warned against testing God when God has provided more than needed. In either situation, want or excess, the main matter is obedience to the divine commands.

20. Evidence, such as that from Kuntillet Ajrud, may indicate the identification of Yahweh with a variety of sites and of Yahweh with Asherah. This would indicate non-centralized worship and, perhaps, the worship of deities other than Yahweh in ancient Israel. For an inscriptive example, note brkt 'bmr lwhv bmr w'fr bmr (Zeev Meshel, *Kuntillet Ajrud*. A Religious Centre From The Time Of The Judaean Monarchy On The Border Of Sinai. Cat. No. 175. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.


22. Weinfeld quotes the vassal treaty of Esarhaddon concluded during Assurbanipal’s enthronement ceremony. Much has to do with homage to the king, but the text includes instructive clauses commanding the people actively to oppose all acts of rebellion and assassination attempts and to preserve the dynasty (ibid., p. 89).

23. In this regard, see, for example, Weinfeld, *Deuteronomic School*, p. 282. He also notes the example of the slave law in Deuteronomy 15:12-18 // Exodus 21:2-11 which we will review below.

24. The texts indicate that the care for the well being of the stranger should include such items as material provision, inclusion in the community and insuring justice. Provision is mentioned in the giving of meat not to be consumed by the covenant community (14:21), the sharing of the tithe every third year (14:29) and in the requirement to leave a portion of the harvest (24:19). The community should include the disenfranchised in some of its festivals (16:11, 14). The person on the fringe of society should receive fairness in legal matters (24:17).

25. For the laws of loans, see Deuteronomy 15:1-11.

26. Exodus 21:7-11 takes up the matter of a female slave. However, the Covenant Code legislation does not treat the woman in an equal way to the later Deuteronomic law. Exodus 21:7 states explicitly that the female slave is not to be released as the males are, but is treated like the concubine of the master. In this case, one notices that Deuteronomy 15:17b contradicts Exodus 21:7 by explicitly including the female slave in the possibility of manumission.

27. According to Deuteronomy 16:16, the Israelite males must appear before Yahweh at the specified spot three times annually. They must, however, not appear empty-handed (rêqâm), but bring gifts according to the bounty God has provided. It seems that just as it would have been inappropriate for the faithful to make a pilgrimage without a gift, it is inappropriate to release a slave without some grant.


30. Weinfeld also notes that Deuteronomy displays a new concern for women in society. He writes, "The book of Deuteronomy shows a particularly humanistic attitude towards women. We have already noted the lack of distinction in its law between male and female slaves and its approach to the law of the seduced maiden. There are also a number of laws pertaining to conjugal life which have no counterpart in any other of the Pentateuchal books. They deal with such matters as the inheritance rights of an unloved woman’s son (21:15-17); the protection of a wife’s honor and reputation as articulated in the law of conjugal slander (22:13-19); consideration for a woman’s intimate feelings (24:5: ‘he shall gladden his wife whom he has taken’); and the law of the female captive (21:10-14). Though the laws themselves may be quite ancient, the fact that the author of Deuteronomy chose to incorporate them in his code attests to his humanistic orientation.’" see ibid., p. 291.

IN BUT NOT OF THE WORLD: THE CONFLUENCE OF WISDOM AND TORAH IN THE SOLOMON STORY (1 KINGS 1-11)

FRANK ANTHONY SPINA

1. INTRODUCTION

1 Kings 1-11 portrays King Solomon in the most lavish of terms. Israel was awed when their monarch adjudicated a seemingly insoluble dispute between two prostitutes (1 Kgs 3:16-28). The number of his official entourage far exceeded that of other kings (1 Kgs 4:1-19; 9:23; see also 1 Sam 14:47-51; 2 Sam 8:15-18; 20:23-26). In his time, Israel’s population was beyond counting (1 Kgs 4:28), the country was content and secure (4:20, 25), the realm extended from the Euphrates to Egypt (5:1, 4 [RSV 4:21, 24]), and success in foreign policy was illustrated by the immense tribute received (5:1 [RSV 4:21]; 10:10, 25) as well as by relationships with Hiram King of Tyre and the Queen of Sheba (5:15-25 [RSV 5:1-11]; 9:10-14; 10:1-10). This king built a palace and a temple (1 Kings 6-8), had a fleet (9:26) and a harem of one thousand women (11:3). Given all this, it is virtually predictable that Solomon’s wisdom (1 Kgs 5:9-14 [RSV 4:29-34]; 10:1-10, 23-24; 11:41), wealth (3:13; 5:2-8 [RSV 4:22-28]; 9:26-28; 10:14-22), and fame (10:24) would be judged to be incomparable.

While Solomon’s incredible accomplishments and resultant reputation are not presented solely as a function of his vaunted wisdom, it is arguably the most decisive factor. God offered Solomon wealth and honor only after he requested wisdom (1 Kgs 3:10-13). Thus, it is no accident that just as Moses is conventionally associated with Torah, and David with the Psalms, so Solomon is with wisdom. In addition to the emphasis in 1 Kings 1-11 (see 2 Chr 1:7-13; 9:1-9, 22-23), Solomon is also associated with Proverbs, Qohelet and the Song of Songs, which is sometimes regarded as a wisdom genre (Prov 1:1; Qoh 1:1; Cant 1:1). Regardless of the variety of wisdom in view, the canonical tradition relates Solomon to it in one way or another. In 1 Kings 1-11 it is hardly a stretch to say that virtually all of Solomon’s successes are connected directly or indirectly to his God-given wisdom.

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THE ASBURY THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL
SPRING 2001 VOL 56 NO 1
In turn, Solomon's wisdom makes him Israel's "worldliest" king. That is, 1 Kings 1-11 portrays Solomon as the Israelite king most recognized and admired by the surrounding nations and their leaders. As David is the ideal or messianic king (1 Sam 1:10; 16:1-2; Sam 24 (the "ideal David" is in view in 2 Samuel 21-24)) and Josiah is the reformer king par excellence (2 Kgs 22:1-23:30; see 23:25), Solomon is Israel's wisest, wealthiest, grandest and most famous king.\(^4\) Not surprisingly, scholars have inferred from 1 Kings 1-11 that Israel in the Solomonic era was unprecedentedly urbane and sophisticated. This was nothing short of Israel's "golden age" or "enlightenment."\(^5\) Even if one does not take the account at face historical value, Israel under Solomon seems to have been at its acme in terms of economic strength, political power, and international involvement.\(^6\) Solomon's wisdom carried Israel to the pinnacle of the world's social and political scene.

However, regardless of the king's impressive wisdom and the heights to which he was able to bring Israel as a result of it, a prior question needs to be asked: How should Solomon's wisdom be understood when 1 Kings 1-11 is taken seriously as Scripture? In other words, what are the theological implications of the way the Solomonic reign has been rendered? More specifically, what happens when this passage is regarded not primarily as a source for reconstructing the history of Israel, but as a witness to God's involvement in the life of Israel as the people of God?\(^7\) In my view, it makes a great deal of difference how one approaches this material. Instead of taking a position "outside" the text to make ostensive objective judgments about this ruler's successes and failures, I want to attend to the way Solomon is presented as one whose role is to be evaluated by criteria rooted in the canon's witness to God's will for the king and the people for whom he was responsible.\(^8\)

Some scholars whose goal is historical reconstruction contend that 1 Kings 1-11 functioned to legitimate a king who had introduced a centralized, hierarchical political structure that was both foreign and inimical to what the community had formerly experienced and affirmed as quintessentially Israelite.\(^9\) Put more sharply, Israel's pre-monarchical social structures reflected its genuine beliefs and values, while the monarchy was an aberration. Even if there is a modicum of truth to this assessment—kingship is scarcely an unmixed blessing in the biblical witness (see 1 Samuel 8)—it still does not take seriously enough the theological complexity and nuances of the canonical testimony.

For instance, under the rubric of this Festschrift, for many biblical scholars the "loyal opposition" would most readily be identified with those stalwarts of truth and justice who denounce the king, denigrate the royal establishment, with its oppressive, bloated, self-serving bureaucracy, and all the power, wealth and status that are derivative of such social arrangements. The Solomonic kingship becomes then a symbol of any political, social, or ecclesiastical establishment that has lost sight of its mission, operated out of cynical self-interest and against the legitimate claims of common or disenfranchised folk, prostituted social ideals for personal or corporate aggrandizement, and cavalierly used religion to justify itself at the expense of a prophetic, revolutionary, and egalitarian moral agenda.

But seen from a canonical perspective, any "loyal opposition" should be rooted in the Bible's witness to the totality of God's involvements with the community of faith. The biblical testimony brings a corrective word to bear on all human causes and agendas, no matter how noble. Unless the whole witness is taken seriously, the biblical material will inevitably be read ideologically, neutralizing and domesticating the Word of God. We
who treasure the Old Testament as Holy Scripture are not obligated to find in the text analogues to contemporary situations with which we can self-righteously identify or alternately which we can berate from an assumed superior moral vantage point. We must first and foremost hear the text as God’s word to God’s people, trying under the Holy Spirit to appropriate all the elements of a message which has been designed to provide a theologically and ethically decisive word in our present condition of being simultaneously disengaged from and hopelessly entangled in the world.

In this light, it is instructive to approach 1 Kings 1-11 as a witness to how Solomon and Israel were supposed to be in but not of the world. While we can only touch on the high points of the theological implications of this rendering of the Solomon story in the brief scope of this essay, it is to be hoped that the text’s potential for further theological and ethical reflection will be evident.

2. Solomon’s “Early Wisdom” (1 Kings 1-2)

1 Kings 1-2 recounts the last days of David leading up to Solomon’s accession. The palpable tension in the story is a function of two factors. From an internal perspective, characters side with either Adonijah or Solomon as they maneuver to take the place of their father, who has become literally and metaphorically impotent (1 Kgs 1:1-6). From an external perspective, the reader puzzles over which of the king’s sons YHWH wanted to be king. All we know about Solomon up to this point is that the Lord loved him and on the occasion of his birth delivered a message concerning him via Nathan the prophet (2 Sam 12:24-25). But Adonijah was David’s oldest living son and presumably under normal circumstances the heir apparent (2 Sam 3:2-5; 1 Kgs 1:6; 2:22).

The problem is that there is no explicit confirmation that Solomon was YHWH’s choice. David’s recalling that he had promised the throne to Solomon appears to have been prompted by the manipulative strategy of Nathan and Bath-Sheba (1 Kgs 1:11-37). The episode is further complicated by YHWH’s absence, which contrasts greatly to the intimate divine role in the selections of Saul and David (1 Sam 9:15-17; 10:1; 16:1-13). Curiously, Adonijah was the first one who mentioned that his failure to retain the kingship was God’s doing (1 Kgs 2:15), but it is not certain that this is the narrator’s viewpoint.

Perhaps the divine word to David in 2 Sam 7:12-13 is key in that it states that the son who follows David will in fact be the one whom YHWH has raised up. Such a promise is not vitiated merely because Solomon’s takeover involved conventional or dubious means. YHWH’s will could be brought about even by questionable practices. This would be akin to YHWH’s word to Rebekah that her younger son would be pre-eminent over the elder, even though no instructions were forthcoming as to how this should come about (Gen 25:23). We discover later that it was a result of Jacob’s and Rebekah’s exploitation and deception (Gen 25:29-34; 27:1-40). Similarly, God’s protection of Jacob’s family and future was made possible by the evil of brothers selling a brother into slavery and by the courageous though highly suspect actions of a Canaanite woman named Tamar (Gen 37:1-36; 38; 45:5; 50:20). Likewise, Solomon fulfilled God’s will by assuming the kingship in David’s stead though neither he nor those who supported him necessarily knew or were concerned to follow God’s will, or used ethical means when they inadvertently accomplished it.
Solomon is largely passive in the events leading up to his enthronement (1 Kgs 1:11-48). Afterwards, his initial actions focus on his defeated rival Adonijah and men who had been David’s antagonists. The way this is recounted is important. Once he proclaims Adonijah’s movements (1 Kgs 1:49-53), Solomon receives deathbed instructions from his father. David first invoked the Mosaic Torah (1 Kgs 2:1-4), making his words consonant with those found throughout Deuteronomy and Former Prophets which are grounded in God’s promises to and requirements for Israel. Thus, Solomon is enjoined to keep Torah, something for which the ideal David was known (2 Sam 22:21-25; 1 Kgs 3:14; 9:4; 11:4, 33-34, 38). In David’s echoing Torah, and therefore speaking as it were in the name of YHWH or Moses, he stresses (along with the narrator?) that Solomon’s kingship also is to be governed by Torah (see Deut 17:14-20). The “unconditional” covenant with David’s dynastic house (2 Sam 7:1-17) is also subject to the Torah under which Israel was to live (see Josh 1:7-8).

However, after emphasizing Torah, David does an abrupt turn-about when broaching the matter of his enemies (1 Kgs 2:5-9). The use of wisdom vocabulary in this context is striking. When David urges Solomon to assassinate Joab, he counsels his son to “act according to your wisdom” (v6; wēʾāšīta kēḥōkmātekā). As for Shimei, David reminds Solomon that “you are a wise man and will know what to do to him” (v9; ki ṣīs ḥāḵām ṣattāh wē’yādaʾtā ʾēt šāʾer taʿāšēh-lō). Yet, in spite of this appeal to wisdom, David specifies each course of action. Evidently, Solomon was to use his wisdom to decide the best way to carry out the instructions rather than to decide whether to carry them out. Analogous uses of wisdom are found elsewhere (2 Sam 14:1-21; 16:20-17:23; 20:14-22).

David’s appeal to wisdom in this setting contrasts sharply with the role of wisdom in 2 Samuel 21-24. Sheppard calls attention to the fact that this section separates the previous account, which focuses on the succession to David’s throne, from its continuation in 1 Kings 1-2. Instead of succession, this material centers on David, describing the ideal attributes of Israel’s ruler in terms of righteousness and the fear of God, which is a wisdom motif (see Prov 1:7; 16:12; 29:4,14). The use of wisdom language in 2 Samuel 22 and 23:1-7 enables these texts to exercise a hermeneutical function in interpreting the previous material. Wisdom provides a theological evaluation of Israel’s religious and moral reality; it is not merely an anthropological phenomenon. The ideals of wisdom and the ideals of life under Torah are combined.11 Wisdom and Torah belong together (see Deut 4:1-8, especially v6).

In light of the combination of wisdom and Torah in 2 Samuel 21-24, David’s apparent appeal to wisdom independently of Torah in 1 Kgs 2:5-9 is put into bold relief. The point is not that David’s enemies should not have been punished. It is rather that there is no effort made to mete out that punishment according to Torah, let alone any attempt to consult the Lord directly or through prophetic or priestly mediators (compare Joshua 7). Regardless of David’s previous admonition about the importance of Torah for Solomon, wisdom that is unqualified by Torah has become decisive when dealing with adversaries. That this use of wisdom is sandwiched between 2 Samuel 21-24, where wisdom and Torah are inextricably related, and 1 Kgs 3:3-9, where wisdom is a gift of God and likewise connected with Torah (as we shall see), should caution us from disguising the role of “Torah-less” wisdom here with translations like “clever” or “crafty.”12 Nor should we too
Reflections on Solomonic Wisdom

hastily conclude that the wisdom being referred to by David is neutral just because he first called attention to Torah. Is it only a coincidence that Solomon's use of wisdom as encouraged by his father led to death and possibly a liturgical violation (murder at the altar), whereas the king's use of divinely given wisdom led to life and appropriate ritual acts (1 Kgs 2:28, 34, 46; 3:15, 27)? This material has been shaped to show that Torah and Wisdom are to be combined; serious problems arise when that is not the case.

3. Divinely Given Wisdom (1 Kings 3)

Scholars have tended to divide 1 Kings 3 into three components: (1) editorial remarks in vv 1-2; (2) material related on form critical grounds to certain ancient Near Eastern royal texts, or perhaps a dream form which has been reworked (vv 3-15); (3) a folklore element featuring a dispute between prostitutes (vv 16-28). However these genetic issues are resolved, I want to attend to the present canonical shaping to ascertain how to evaluate this phase of Solomon's kingship. To that end, the role of chap. 3 in 1 Kings 1-11 will also have to be considered.

In light of the introductory statements, it is difficult not to be somewhat ambivalent from the outset about Solomon's kingship. There is a negative cast in the note that Solomon entered into a marriage alliance with the Pharaoh and brought the latter's daughter into the royal city (1 Kgs 3:1). Israelites were expressly forbidden to marry foreign women because of the prospect of idolatry. In two key texts where Moses and Joshua respectively warn Israel about the temptation to idolatry (Deut 7:3; Josh 23:12), the very same term as that found here is present: wayyithattân. Further, if the king was not to return to Egypt to acquire horses—as stipulated by the "law of the king" (Deut 17:16)—doing so to acquire a foreign wife was surely a more serious offense. Unfortunately, this first marriage of Solomon after his kingship was "established" (1 Kgs 2:46) adumbrates his later numerous marriages which are given as the main reason for his precipitous collapse (1 Kgs 11:1-8).

It is less clear how one is to assess the information about the cultic activities (1 Kgs 3:2-3), which were being carried out at "high places." These may refer to pagan worship centers. Perhaps the fact that the temple had not yet been built meant that such practices were at least temporarily licit. Still, it should not escape our notice that the statement, "Now Solomon loved YHWH, walking in the statutes of David his father," is bracketed by two qualifying sentences beginning with "only" (raq). First we are told that the people were sacrificing (zabh) at the high places, then that Solomon sacrificed and burned incense (qîr) there. When we discover later that Solomon's many wives were sacrificing (zîq) and burning incense (qîr) as well, the repetition of vocabulary recalls this text (1 Kgs 11:8). Of course, Solomon's harem was being patentlv pagan. Was Solomon early on also acting implicitly as a pagan?

It is as though the main ingredients of Solomon's kingship, the good and the bad, are already present in 1 Kgs 3:1-3. Solomon loved YHWH and followed the divine commandments. But that did not prevent his ill-advised marriage and the possibly illicit cultic practices in which he and his people were engaged. Two Solomons, as it were, are put forward in the introduction to 1 Kings 3. The question is: Which one will finally triumph?

The initial answer to that query is encouraging. Solomon went to Gibeon, the "great
high place; to offer a thousand burnt offerings, on which occasion YHWH appeared to him in a dream (1 Kgs 3:4). When invited to ask what God should give him, the king’s response could not have been more praiseworthy. Having acknowledged YHWH’s loyalty to David, his father’s exemplary obedience, and the divine role in his own succession (1 Kgs 3:6-7a), Solomon confessed his sense of inadequacy for the job he faced. He was only a “little child” (na‘ar qāṭōn) who did not know how to “go out or come in,” that is, he was young and inexperienced (v 7). His task was formidable since Israel was too great to be numbered (v 8). What the king wanted, therefore, was a “listening heart/mind” (lēḇ šōmēš),16 and the ability to discern good from evil (v 9).17 God’s granting this would enable him to administer justice (līṣpōṯ). YHWH gave Solomon the opportunity to ask for anything imaginable and he opted for “wisdom.” That was indeed laudable.

God was pleased. Since Solomon did not ask for long life, riches, or the life of his enemies, but instead requested discernment for hearing justice (hāḇin līšmōaḥ miṣpāṯ) God gave the king a “wise and discerning heart/mind” (lēḇ ḥāḵām wēnāḇōn [vv. 11-12]). What God granted Solomon would be unsurpassed (v 12c). In addition, God would include riches and honor precisely because the king had not sought these things (v 13). Most importantly, God had provided Solomon with the gift most needed to rule “this weighty people” (v 9) justly, prudently, and wisely.

That Solomon had without question been endowed with wisdom from God was amply demonstrated in his arbitration of the dispute brought before him by two prostitutes (vv 16-27).18 With remarkable insight into maternal instincts, the king intuited that the woman who was unwilling to see the living child cut in two had to be the true mother (v 26-27).19 Predictably, Israel was overwhelmed when it saw that “the wisdom of God was in him to execute justice” (ki ḥokmat ʾēlōhim bēqirō ʾlā ʾasōt miṣpāṭ [v 28]). With such a wise king on the throne, Israel’s prospects were exceedingly enviable.

But there is more to Solomon’s wisdom than the fact that God gave it and the king applied it. What is the connection between Solomon’s divinely professed wisdom and the way 1 Kings 3 begins? We need to remember the introductory information about the foreign marriage, the sacrifices and incense at high places, as well as the king’s loving YHWH and walking in the statutes of David (vv 1-3). We also must keep in mind that Solomon arrived at Gibeon—the “great high place”—to make a thousand offerings (v 4).

Two references in the context of Solomon’s receipt of wisdom are crucial in this connection. One occurs during the dream, when God makes the lengthening of Solomon’s days depend on the king’s walking in “my ways, keeping my statutes and commandments as David your father did” (v 14). “Walking” (ḥlk), “statutes” (ḥqwt) and the example of David recall 1 Kgs 3:3. In other words, Torah and David’s exemplary keeping of Torah precede the story wherein Solomon receives divine wisdom. Wisdom cannot be thought of in this instance apart from Torah, and vice versa. Both wisdom and Torah derive from God. Both are to be used by the king as he rules over Israel.20 Indeed, using wisdom without Torah has already been illustrated in 1 Kings 2, where destruction is the outcome.

The second reference occurs after Solomon awakes. Before the dream the king offered a thousand sacrifices at Gibeon (v 4). This was consistent with the practices of the people and Solomon already mentioned (vv 2-3). But after receiving wisdom from God, Solomon returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the covenant, offered up burnt offerings and
peace offerings, and celebrated a meal with all his servants (v. 15). This is most interesting in view of our having been informed that the people's previous cultic activities were a function of the temple's not yet having been built (v. 2). Is Solomon now offering sacrifices in Jerusalem prophetically? Does the narration at this point signal that the combination of Torah and divinely given wisdom eventuates in appropriate cultic practices? Does the meal with his servants serve to ratify and confirm what has just happened? However such questions are answered, it seems clear that 1 Kings 3 depicts Solomon as a king whose behavior is equally informed by the concerns of Torah and wisdom.

According to the present canonical form, Torah cannot be thought of as "special revelation" and wisdom as "general revelation." In 1 Kings 3, Torah and wisdom are tandem resources provided the king by God. As further evidence of this, Kenik has shown how much terminology in the dream sequence evokes traditional language and ideas about Israel's model king. This pericope about God's bestowal of wisdom on Solomon is replete with the language and concepts of Torah.

The close association between wisdom and Torah is also confirmed by the way 1 Kings 9, a second divine appearance account, is explicitly tied to 1 Kings 3. After the king finished all his building projects, "YHWH appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon" (v. 2: wayyērā' YHWH 'el-šēlōmōh šēnīt ka'āšer nir'āh 'ēlāw bēgib'ōn). In this appearance, God responded to Solomon's temple dedicatory prayer (8:12-61) by emphasizing Torah and the necessity of the king's adhering to it (9:4-9). If Torah is violated, Solomon's kingship will indubitably end in disaster. Wisdom without Torah cannot guarantee Solomon's success.

In the end, Solomon's kingship has to be judged according to the way that he incorporates the contents of two divine appearances, one in which wisdom is given in the "ambience of Mosaic law" (see note 23) and the other in which Torah remains the crucial element in Solomon's carrying out the mandate he has been given. Properly understood, the wisdom which God gives was designed to help Solomon orient his kingship toward Torah, not rely on some administrative competence that is allegedly neutral with respect to God's will as expressed in Torah.

4. The Scope of Solomon's Wisdom (1 Kgs 5:9-14 [RSV 4:29-34])

As impressive as Solomon's adjudication of the dispute between the prostitutes was, the king's wisdom went far beyond the courtroom, not only in application but in reputation. The sapiential gift which God gave to Solomon consisted of "wisdom" (hōḵāh), "extraordinary discernment" (tēbūnāh harbēh mēʾōd) and a "broad mind" (rōḥāb lēḇ), either the latter quality or all three qualities were "like the sand on the seashore" (5:9 [RSV 4:29])—the amount of wisdom was equal to the number of Israelites over whom it was to be exercised (3:9; 4:20)! The result was that the monarch's wisdom was greater than that of any other sage, no matter how famous. He was wiser than the eastern and Egyptian wisemen. Even worthies whose possession of wisdom was a matter of general knowledge (Ezrahite; Heman, Calcol, Darda, the sons of Mahol) could not match Solomon; thus, his fame was widespread in the surrounding nations (5:10-11 [RSV 4:30-31]). This wisest of sages was responsible for three thousand proverbs (mēšālīm) and one thousand and five songs (šīrīm); he was able to expatiate on any variety of tree,
beasts, birds, reptiles or fish (5:12-13 [RSV 4:32-33]). Naturally, such sagacity eventuated in both royalty and ordinary folk seeking out Solomon to observe this amazing display of wisdom for themselves (5:14 [RSV 4:34]).

How should this summary of Solomon's magnificent sapiential prowess be understood in the overall presentation? At first glance, it seems without question to be an unqualified positive valuation. But a closer look reveals otherwise. To be sure, it continues to be stressed that Solomon's wisdom derived from God (5:9, 26 [RSV 4:29; 5:12]). But the context has to be taken into account, for it shifts the emphasis. For one thing, the summary follows chap. 4 (RSV 4:1-20), which, according to Stanley Walters, is an "office-note." 27 There are four of these in Samuel and one in Kings (1 Sam 7:15-17; 14:47-51; 2 Sam 8:15-18; 20:23-26; 1 Kgs 4:1-19). They are designed to differentiate the period of the judges and the post-Solomonic kings from the time of Israel's first three kings (Saul, David, Solomon) and the prophet who anointed the first two (Samuel). The various judges and post-Solomonic kings are separated by a rise-and-fall pattern, which is to be contrasted with the divisions that obtain in the Samuel, Saul, David, and Solomon stories. In addition, the office-notes serve a hermeneutical function in which an editorial viewpoint is conveyed by signaling a new, theologically significant, beginning in the narrative.

If Walters's thesis is valid, we should be on the lookout for clues indicating a shift in direction in Solomon's kingship after 1 Kgs 4:1-19. One may already be evident in 4:20, which at first appears innocuous enough; indeed, it seems to be a straightforward positive assertion. The population was as numerous as the sand by the sea—doubtless an allusion to God's promise to the ancestors having been fulfilled. Also, the people ate, drank and were happy. It seems impossible to improve on the situation. At the same time, there is a potentially ominous note. Solomon's rule over "all Israel" (kol yisra'el [4:1]) is the first datum revealed in the office-note. But this very first verse afterwards—and the last verse of the chapter in the Masoretic versification—refers to a divided Israel: "Judah and Israel." That is, in spite of the numbers, in spite of the celebration, there is already a hint of the schism that is soon to be triggered by Solomon's policies (1 Kings 11:1-12).

Furthermore, notwithstanding the impressive achievements of Solomon which are rehearsed—the boundaries of the kingdom; 28 the tribute taken, the amount required for one day at court, the vast holdings in horses and, of course, Solomon's incomparable wisdom (5:1-14 [RSV 4:21-34])—there appear to be cracks in the wall. There is another disquieting mention of "Judah and Israel," though it is once again found in the context of peace and contentment (5:4-5 [RSV 4:24-25]). Also, even the impressive foreign policy achievements as manifested in the arrangements made with Hiram of Tyre (5:15-25 [RSV 5:1-12]) seem to be qualified by the fact that after arrangements to acquire Tyrian materials and workers for the building of the temple, Solomon raised a levy of forced labor out of all Israel (5:27 [RSV 5:13]). Ironically, this notation follows immediately a verse that underscores God's gift of wisdom to Solomon (5:26 [RSV 5:13]).

Perhaps we should not be surprised, since already in the office-note Adoniram's job as head of the forced labor contingent indicates that this was hardly a temporary policy on Solomon's part (4:6). Even if it is the case that the kind of labor to which Israelites were subjected is to be distinguished from that to which non-Israelites were subjected (see 9:15-22, especially v 22), that does not absolve Solomon entirely. Samuel had warned
early on that Israel’s king would introduce a range of oppressive exactments, including making the people “his slaves” (1 Sam 8:11-18, especially v 17). Besides, had Solomon’s policy regarding Israelite laborers been as benign as some commentators maintain, it would be hard to explain the later reaction of Rehoboam, the king’s successor (1 Kgs 12:4). For all his wisdom, not everything in Solomon’s life portended a glorious future.30

5. Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10:1-13)

We already know from 1 Kgs 5:14 (RSV 4:34) that Solomon’s wisdom gave him an international reputation. Thus, a state visit by the Queen of Sheba is merely illustrative of one particular foreign response to the Israelite king’s enviable fame. She came expressly to test Solomon with hard questions, a test he passed with flying colors (10:1-3). Consequently, she is overwhelmed by the king’s abilities and surroundings, and thus effusive in her praise of him (10:4-9). Once more Solomon’s wisdom appears to be cast in a shadowless light.

But that judgment may also be premature. Paying close attention to the Queen’s speech where she gushes over Solomon is instructive. Having affirmed that Solomon was indeed greater than she had been told and that those who stood before him experiencing the benefits of his wisdom were most fortunate, she avers that God’s love for Israel led Him to establish the king on the throne to “execute justice and righteousness” (vv 7-9; mispät. ušēḏqāh). This was surely among the most important duties of an Israelite king (see 2 Sam 8:15), so in this instance the Queen of Sheba is echoing a decidedly Israelite sentiment.31 However, while she claimed that executing justice and righteousness were among the virtues that most caught her attention, the narrator’s report about what impressed her most placed the accent elsewhere: the house that he had built, the food of his table, the seating of his officials, the attendance of his servants, their clothing, his cup-bearers, and the burnt offerings which he made (vv 4-5). There has been a subtle shift from the administration of justice (3:28) to wealth, consumption, exotic goods, ritual and entertainment. Parker points out that none of these accumulations are said to have benefitted Israel in any way—Solomon’s wisdom is edging closer to the service of his own self-aggrandizement.32

The texts preceding the Queen of Sheba account indicate in other ways that neither Solomon’s reliance on wisdom nor his adherence to Torah were what they should have been. For example, in the account that details the building of the temple (1 Kings 6), the construction is, as it were, “interrupted” by the insertion of a text in which YHWH pointedly reminds Solomon to walk in ... my statutes and obey my ordinances and keep all my commandments and walk in them....” (v 12). The sudden appearance of YHWH disabuses one of the notion that the building of the temple in and of itself could be considered an act of complete obedience without remainder. Indeed, the Lord’s willingness to dwell among Israel was more a function of obedience than the erection of a sanctuary, even though the deity had commanded that it be built (v 13).

As the narrative unfolds, we realize that the Lord’s abrupt admonition in 6:11-13 was hardly superfluous. It is somewhat disconcerting that Solomon spent thirteen years on his palace and only seven years on the temple (6:38; 7:1). If that fact is not damning, then certainly the reminder that Solomon made a special dwelling for his Egyptian wife is
(7:8); this reference and that in 3:1 do not let us forget for a moment that the king’s foreign wife/wives is/are going to be a problem.

It must even be asked whether Solomon’s retaining of Hiram, a craftsman from Tyre, raises questions about the king’s changing outlook and conduct, Hiram’s father was a Tyrian, his mother an Israelite from Naphtali; his “wisdom, understanding, and skill” were in metallurgy (7:13-14). Hiram contributed a great deal to Solomon’s building projects (vv 15-46)—no single person was said to have done more. Are Hiram’s Tyrian connections a negative? Should a semi-foreigner have been so involved in the building of YHWH’s House? Was his wisdom nothing more than technical skill and artistic aptitude? After answering these questions would be all but impossible if we possessed only the text in 1 Kings. But it is difficult to avoid thinking about a similar use of craftsmen when the wilderness tabernacle was under construction (Exod 31:1-11; 35:30-36:2; see also 36:3-38:23). In the Exodus setting, YHWH named Bezalel and endowed him with the necessary gifts, including the “Spirit of God,” for a specialized task having to do with the tabernacle (31:1-5). Oholiab and others who were to assist Bezalel were also specifically selected by the Lord (v 6). These craftsmen worked according to explicit divine instructions (v 11).

After the beginning of the desert project had been interrupted by the golden calf incident (Exodus 32:34), Moses prepared the people once more by summoning them for an offering (35:1-29). Then the role of the divinely selected craftsmen was reintroduced (35:30-36:1). It turns out that all the artisans involved in the project received their ability and got their orders directly from the Lord (36:1). God’s involvement in this could hardly have been more intimate.

This contingent of divinely elected workers seems to stand in sharpest contrast to the man that Solomon employed. While the Tyrian was possessed at one level of sufficient skill—that was indeed rooted in wisdom—there were negative factors at work. He was not fully an Israelite, he was not uniquely called by YHWH, he was not assisted by craftsmen similarly endowed, and he was not said to possess the “Spirit of God.” In spite of the fact that Solomon was building the temple at David’s and YHWH’s behest (2 Sam 7:13-14; 1 Kgs 8:18-19), his use of Hiram appears to throw something of a shadow over the project. Hiram’s involvement undercuts the supposition that Solomon’s building project was a full-orbed fulfillment of God’s will.

These hints of something less than Solomon’s complete obedience coupled with the more materialistic emphasis surrounding the Queen of Sheba’s visit perhaps call for another appraisal of the king’s great temple dedicatory prayer, something which on the surface seems to be unassailable (8:15-53). Throughout the prayer, Solomon entreats the Lord to forgive or heal Israel for any number of transgressions and their concomitant punishments. But in one instance Solomon implores the Lord to reverse the effects of exile (vv 46-53)! This is an ultimate punishment for Israel. Should exile be even a remote consideration for a people whose king was leading according to the twin precepts of wisdom and Torah? The point is that in the event of exile YHWH would refuse to forgive and restore Israel. Rather, the issue turns on the fact that there might be an exile in the first place, since this was the punishment that Israel was to avoid at all costs. Exile could only mean that Israel had committed sins of such gravity and with such persistence that an unthinkable punishment had become a grim reality. Unfortunately, there has been a series
of clues leading up to the Queen of Sheba’s visit which make us realize that Solomon’s mentioning of exile in his prayer was more than hypothetical. We are doubtless supposed to regard Solomon’s prayer as sincere, but at the same time it is one of those instances where the supplicant revealed more than he realized. Solomon was in effect simultaneously praying for the reversal of the effects of exile and prophesying that it would almost certainly happen.

6. Conclusion

Solomon’s reign ended in unmitigated disaster—Israel was split into two and never unified again. This foolish king took many of his wives from the surrounding nations and erected shrines to their gods and goddesses (11:1-8). Such egregious behavior prompted the Lord to denounce Solomon and raise up a series of adversaries against the kingdom (11:11-13, 14-40). One of these, Jeroboam ben Nebat, became king of the northern kingdom Israel after leading a revolt against Solomon’s son Rehoboam, who was the first king of Judah (11:26-40; 12:1-20). Though Solomon’s own death was peaceful (11:41-43), the death of the United Kingdom over which he had ruled and to whose end he had contributed could hardly have been more tragic.

The issue brought to the forefront by this sad story is not which of several possible social systems are to be preferred. To judge the monarchy deficient on the basis of modern political standards is a thorough anachronism. Likewise, attributing the biblical presentation of the monarchy to those who had a stake in suppressing democratic or egalitarian institutions is no less an ideological reading than arguing for the legitimacy of the divine right of kings on the basis of the text. Rather, this account is geared to raise issues having to do with the importance of combining Torah and Wisdom, both given by God, in the person of the king who was responsible for leading God’s people. In 1 Kings 1:1-11, Torah is not to be seen as a “religious” requirement and Wisdom as a “secular” one. They together derive from God and are to be seen as instrumental for guiding those who are elected to carry out God’s mandate in Israel’s life. Solomon’s problem was not that he was a king, but that he was a king who increasingly allowed to slip from his grasp the combination of Torah and Wisdom without which even his best efforts would be doomed to failure. The “wisest” thing Solomon could have done was adhere to Torah.

The “loyal opposition” in 1 Kings 1:1-11 ought not, then, to be construed as those who considered themselves oppressed by Solomon and then later rebelled against that oppression. From a canonical point of view, we dare not lose sight of the fact that the rebellion in the story was a function of YHWH’s bringing judgment on Solomon’s disobedience, not some romantic notion of the noble aspirations of the downtrodden. Indeed, the one who successfully led the revolt against Rehoboam—fully sanctioned by a prophet speaking in God’s name (11:29-39)—was himself admonished to pay close attention to Torah (v 39). Because he failed as miserably as Solomon at that task (12:25-33), his name became synonymous with inducing Israel to sin (e.g., 15:34).

Rather, Solomon faced the task of presiding over an institution that in many significant ways compared to similar “worldly” institutions of the surrounding nations. At times, Israel wanted just such an institution (1 Sam 8:5). Though problematic and potentially destructive from God’s point of view (8:7-18), such an institution could be “sanctified” for Israel's
purposes. In Solomon's case, this meant combining Torah and Wisdom in the execution of his office. Torah and Wisdom would enable Solomon and Israel to be in but not of the world. Their monarchical institutions paralleled those of the pagan world in a thousand details. The difference—if a difference was to be maintained—would be the combination of Torah and Wisdom. The more Solomon moved away from these divine gifts, the more he became a king like all the other nations had. Apart from Torah and Wisdom, Solomon became increasingly of the world over against which he had been selected—and Israel had been elected—to be an alternative. With Torah and Wisdom, Solomon—and Israel—could have walked that fine line between being in but not of the world. Without them, the results were as disastrous as they were predictable. It soon became all but impossible to distinguish between Israel and any other nation. Institutional structures per se were not the issue. The will of God as expressed in Torah and Wisdom was.

**Notes**


2. The list of David’s ‘mighty men’ might be an exception to this, although these are not officers per se but members of an elite military force (2 Sam 23:8-39).


6. The historical problems notwithstanding, Brueggemann argues that the canonical witness ‘remembers’ rather than “invents” the connection between Solomon and wisdom; further,
Solomon is more than one historical figure, he is a symbol of a “sociocultural mutation.” See W. A. Brueggemann, “The Social Significance of Solomon as a Patron of Wisdom,” in The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East (John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue, eds.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), pp. 119-120.

7. For the distinction between the Bible as a source and a witness or testimony see Brevard S. Childs, Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), pp. 97-106.

8. It seems to me that many of the otherwise instructive insights of Brueggemann are clouded by his taking a stance over against the text. When he says that the canonical reading in the end has it right, he refers to the canonical “memory” of the connection between Solomon and wisdom rather than the manner in which the canon renders Solomon theologically. See “Solomon as Patron,” p. 117-132.


13. McCarer argues that wisdom such as is reflected in 1 Kings 2 derives from sources used by the Deuteronomist in which wisdom did not have as positive an assessment as the Deuteronomistic variety. See P. Kyle McCarter Jr., “The Sage in the Deuteronomistic History,” in The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East (John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue, eds.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 290. This does not in my view take seriously enough the intra-canonical debate about the use and misuse of wisdom, or how wisdom was to be related to other Israelite theological traditions. The juxtaposition of wisdom geared to facilitate social control and that which was a gift of God is more than a literary phenomenon in which two disparate sources were laid side by side.


16. The commingling of the good and bad features of Solomon’s reign throughout the narrative undercuts, in my judgment, efforts by scholars to decide when the pro-Solomonic traditions end and the anti-Solomonic ones begin. The text seems to have been edited in a much more subtle manner.


18. For the argument that the account of Solomon’s receiving wisdom and displaying it in the matter of the two prostitutes are temporarily connected, see I. Rabinowitz, ‘Az Followed by Imperfect Verb-Form in Preterite Contexts: A Redactional Device in Biblical Hebrew,” Vetus


23. According to Kenik, “…the Dtr composed the dream of Solomon by adapting traditional elements pertinent to the topic of kingship and by combining these traditional elements so as to portray kingship in Israel within the ambience of Mosaic law.” *Design*, p. 4. In chaps. 4 and following she shows how much Deuteronomistic language (=“Torah language”) is to be found in the dream sequence.

24. Deurlo is incorrect, in my opinion, to view the second appearance as confirming wisdom. The language of the second appearance is unmistakable oriented to Torah. See “The King’s Wisdom,” p. 14.


26. See the translation of “sons of the east” as “sons of aforetime” (see Isa 19:11) by Mendenhall, “Shady Side,” pp. 322-323.

27. Walters’s thesis is put forward in a privately published manuscript entitled *The Book of Reversals* (Courtice, Ontario, Canada: Manthano, 1990), pp. 13-17. His nomenclature for this phenomenon is less important than what it signals in the text. I am indebted to Professor Walters for granting me access to his work.

28. On the extent of the territory, see Parker, “Solomon as Philosopher,” p. 79.


30. Nelson argues that Judah’s apparent exemption from the district tax system (4:7-19 [5:9 in MT contains no reference to Judah]) is another indication that Solomon’s policies were far from being even-handed. See Kings, p.42.


35. An example of the difference between a strictly “historical” and “canonical” rendering of the text may be observed in 11:25, where we learn that Rezon had been an adversary “…all the days of Solomon….” Though that was the case historically according to the writer, Rezon’s mischief is tied explicitly to YHWH’s instigation when Solomon went astray and connected to his final days as king.

LOYAL OPPOSITION AND THE LAW IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS: THE ETHICS OF A RESTORATIVE AND UTOPIAN ESCHATOLOGY

FREDERICK W. SCHMIDT

I. INTRODUCTION

No study of two sayings from the synoptic tradition can completely account for the position that Jesus took on the Law, but for a number of reasons Mark 10:9 and 2:27 can provide the basis for a possible way forward. Although occasionally disputed, both sayings have strong claims to authenticity. Each impinges on a different part of the Law. Both sayings contain a prescription, as well as the justification for the demand made, thereby reducing the amount of speculation necessary in reconstructing the logic of Jesus’ demand. And together they illustrate one of the central difficulties in accounting for Jesus’ attitude toward the Law.

Nonetheless, existing paradigms for explaining the approach taken to the Law by Jesus have failed to account for these sayings and those like them in the synoptic tradition. For example, it has been argued that Jesus describes the real meaning of the Sabbath in Mark 2:27. But that cannot be said of Jesus’ treatment of the so-called divorce provision in Mark 10:9. There Jesus appears to set the Law aside, rather than define its real meaning.

Alternatively, one might argue, as does Marcus Borg, that Jesus’ approach is dictated by a hermeneutics of mercy. However, in so doing Borg is forced to argue that Jesus’ comment on divorce was initiated by his contemporaries and, as a result, he relies heavily upon the secondary features of the account. Furthermore, he makes no attempt to explain how it is that Jesus’ view of the divorce question can be understood in terms of a concern for mercy.

Yet another alternative has been to combine the two models and to argue that Jesus at times “abrogates” the Law and, at other times, insists upon observing its “true meaning.” But this, like the argument that Jesus exercises his sovereignty

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over the Law, only begs the larger questions: Was Jesus inconsistent in his approach to the Law, or is the consistency he practices foreign to our own, culturally conditioned notions of what constitutes consistency? If he was inconsistent by our standards and his, can patterns be isolated which account for at least parts of his approach? If not, on what basis did Jesus take first one approach to the Law and then another?

Together, then, these passages illustrate the difficulties in using some of the existing paradigms for understanding the problem of Jesus’ attitude toward the Law. For the same reasons, however, they also provide possible windows to the unifying “logic” behind part of his demands.

II. TORAH: A PARADIGM OF ITS USE

Accordingly we will offer an alternative paradigm; suggest other points of contact with the synoptic tradition; and assess the significance of the paradigm, using the insights of comparative religious ethics. Then we will consider where the approach taken by Jesus might be located in a schema for charting Jewish approaches to the Law. In closing we will identify two important implications of the results described here.

A. The Law, Emptied of Continued Relevance

As described in Mark 10:9, Jesus must have been aware of the fact that his demand impinges upon the provision for divorce in Deut 24:1. Nonetheless, he makes no direct reference to it. He does not refer to it in order to endorse its continuing validity or to assess its meaning and appropriate application. Nor does he directly forbid his hearers to avail themselves of the provision. Instead, the logion takes the form of a single-stranded mashal with a nuance which is far more difficult to define.

As it appears in the Greek of Mark’s gospel, the saying derives much of its prescriptive force from the use of me with the subjunctive mood verb, ἵπποις. There are other features too that contribute to this impression: It is terse. The subjects and verbs of both clauses are arranged in antithesis to one another: Θεός — ἐνθρόπος σωτάκαμεν — ἵπποις. And the relative clause is placed in an advanced position in the sentence. In this way, the act of man “putting asunder” is placed in sharp contrast with the act of God “joining together.”

There are few who would disagree about the interpretation of the second clause. It is a simple, unconditional prohibition of divorce. However, by referring to that which God has “joined together,” the first clause elicits assent to the notion that marriage is divinely instituted and, by implication, calls for a pattern of behavior which accords with that understanding.

In other words, the logion does not simply call for the hearer to refrain from invoking the provision for divorce. It calls for a pattern of response which takes seriously the character of marriage as divinely instituted. As a result the provision for divorce is not directly rescinded. Instead, it is emptied of any continued relevance.

B. The Law, A Summons to Free Fulfillment

Significant features of the demand in Mark 2:27 closely approximate basic features of
the logion in Mark 10:9. As in Mark 10:9, Jesus must have been aware that his own demand impinged upon the demand made by Torah. In spite of this he does not appeal for an approach to Sabbath observance on the basis of the Law itself. Nor does he explicitly summon those who hear him to abandon observing the Law. Instead, he simply advances his own demand. As in Mark 10:9, the demand also begins with a reference to the creative intent of God and, again, takes the form of an antithesis.

In Mark 2:27, however, the contrast is sharper and has a different significance. This is due in part to the fact that, unlike Mark 10:9, both clauses are of equal grammatical value. The main clause ἡμέρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγένετο is juxtaposed with the nominal clause οὐχ ὁ ἁμαρτωλος. The Sabbath is also the subject of both clauses, and this strengthens the contrast. Whereas in Mark 10:9 marriage is the subject of the first clause and divorce the subject of the second.

These are differences of considerable significance. For while both divorce and Sabbath observance are thereby set against the background of God’s will as creator, the effect is not the same. The provision for divorce, as we have seen, is emptied of continued relevance. Framed as his demand is in Mark 2:27, Jesus summons his hearers to a “free fulfillment” of the Sabbath.13

Accordingly, Jesus provides no clue to the specific nature of the response expected. Instead, he confines himself to characterizing the Sabbath as God’s gift to Israel and, only as the Sabbath is observed as gift, is the end for which it was intended realized. As Robert Tannehill notes:

The lack of concern with qualifications and with the practical problem of establishing rules of behavior is quite apparent as soon as one considers the implications of such a saying within the context of Jewish piety. The saying does not spell out a rule which will directly solve questions of how to behave on the Sabbath. Starting from this aphorism various practical conclusions could be reached, from an almost total disregard of the Sabbath law because of human need to observe the Sabbath law except in unusual cases, since the Sabbath is good for man. The aphorism does not predetermine the conclusion but requires the hearer to think about these things in a radical way. 14

C. Other Points of Contact in the Synoptic Tradition

Together, these two patterns provide a paradigm which can be applied to authentic traditions elsewhere in the gospels. The first, second, and fourth of the so-called antitheses found in Matt 5:21-48 provide an example.15

1. The Antitheses

Here Jesus is described as juxtaposing his own demand with that of Torah. He introduces his demands in language which is without substantive parallel; and he does so without customary recourse to other parts of the Law. Yet, as Reinhart Hummel observes, the antitheses “are less antithetical in content than in form.”16

The fourth antithesis might appear to set aside the Law, but the remaining antitheses do not clearly dispense with the Decalogue. Conversely, the first and second
antitheses might suggest a heightening of the Law's demand. Yet the fourth antithesis does not heighten the Law's demand, but appears instead to supplant it.

The relationship of Torah to the prescriptive content of Jesus' demand is then of greater complexity than the words "radicalization," "abrogation," or "exposition" can account for. The patterns of prescription are, however, very much like those which we have identified above in Mark 10:9 and 2:27.

On the one hand, antitheses one (on murder) and two (on adultery) can be compared with Mark 2:27. Both demands point to a wider range of attitudes and actions than that required by the commandments by juxtaposing an additional demand with Torah. So the prohibition of murder is juxtaposed with the further warning:

πῶς ὁ ὀργιζόμενος τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ
ἐνοχο" ἔσται τῇ κρίσει

And the prohibition of adultery is juxtaposed with the words:

πῶς ὁ βλέπων γυναῖκα πρὸς τὸ ἐπιθυμήσαι αὐτὴν

Neither antithesis begins to spell out all of the possible actions or attitudes which are prohibited. To the contrary, it is impossible to specify the claims which they make. In this way the auditor is summoned to its free fulfillment.

On the other hand, the fourth antithesis compares favorably with Mark 10:9. Jesus juxtaposes the demand for trustworthy oaths with his own prohibition of oath-taking.

The demand for trustworthy oaths is, as a result, no longer relevant: ἔστω δὲ ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν ναι ναι οὐ οὐ.

2. Mark 7:15

One or the other part of our paradigm may also apply to still other synoptic traditions. For example, in its present setting and form, Mark 7:15 cannot be authentic. However, it may have originally had a different form, or it may have been uttered under circumstances which would put the logion in a very different light. Were it possible to recover the form or reconstruct the setting, we believe that the demand would compare well with at least part of the paradigm described above.

So, for example, Charles Carlson argues that the earliest and authentic form of the saying may have been: "what truly defiles a man comes from within, not from without." If he is right, then the Law is not set aside; instead, its free fulfillment is demanded. And the logion, like other parts of the synoptic tradition, conforms to a part of the paradigm which we have identified.

Be that as it may, by examining those prescriptive traditions with strong claims to authenticity, we have identified two patterns which help to define the relationship of Torah to the prescriptive content of Jesus' ethic. In the space remaining, it needs to be asked, What ties these two parts of the paradigm together? Why does Jesus take one position on the Torah in Mark 10:9 and another in Mark 2:27, at times emptying the
law of continued relevance and at other times summoning his followers to a free fulfillment of God’s will? Is he inconsistent, or is the consistency he practices foreign to our own, culturally conditioned notions of what constitutes consistency?

III. Practical Justification in the Ethics of Jesus

The answer could be provided by arguing, as so many have, on the basis of coherence. But this approach has bedeviled studies of the historical Jesus. Of necessity, arguments from coherence begin with a given picture of the whole and then argue that one part or another of the tradition coheres with the larger picture that the writer has in mind. This approach has its advantages. However, such arguments often disregard the potentially diverse character of Jesus’ thought and the variety of influences which may have shaped his thinking. Furthermore, such an approach is ultimately no more convincing than the extent to which one is prepared to accept a given scholar’s larger assumptions.

This tendency can be seen, for example, in the case which some have recently made for a Jesus who is a “teacher of subversive wisdom. Insisting that eschatology cannot account for the whole of Jesus’ teaching, some have argued that the model ought to be completely abandoned.19 The work of more cautious scholars suggests, however, that such absolute distinctions ought not to be made too quickly, or too firmly.20

Accordingly, the methods of comparative religious ethics are used here, believing that this model will allow us to analyze the use of ethical language without prejudging the outcome. The use of such a model also has the advantage of allowing us to study the use of ethical language from selected passages, without insisting on a picture of the whole in advance. Interpretation of the evidence will, of course, always remain a matter of debate, but in theory the use of such a method requires greater accountability to the evidence because it focuses upon the logic of individual demands.

Others may question the wisdom of using a method like the one described here, particularly since the language of the method is patently foreign to the setting in which Jesus lived. Yet, like the application of other social sciences to the biblical text, the purpose of comparative religious ethics is not to reproduce the subject’s thought-world or thought-forms. Indeed, by using a method of this kind, we acknowledge the distance which exists between us and the object of study. Use of the method is also based upon the realization that the questions to which we seek answers may not have been the questions to which Jesus or his contemporaries may have addressed themselves.

Nonetheless, such methods should not be allowed to force the original subject matter to “say” things that are alien to its original purpose. For this reason, students of comparative religious ethics require that the definitions they use conform with the subject’s intuitive understanding of the term and be cross-culturally applicable. A thorough defense of such an approach cannot be undertaken here, but the authors of the method have made every effort to conform to these criteria. It has been applied to more than one culture, some of which are from the past. And more than one student of religious ethics has confirmed the model’s usefulness.21
A. The Logic of Religious Ethics

The concept from comparative religious ethics which is the most helpful here is that of “practical justification.” In a given situation anyone making a demand must describe how s/he expects an action to be performed: “What is to be done, to whom, in what way, under what circumstances.” In addition, s/he may be called upon to give reasons for the action (or behavior) s/he demands.

The process of providing those reasons is called “practical justification.” Although often unexpressed, the reasons given may, in fact, lie on one of three levels, which can be arranged in an appellate fashion:

3. Vindication
   ↑
2. Validation
   ↑
1. Principles / Rules
   ↑

Situational Application

If, for example, the speaker was called upon to justify the prescription, “do not strike your parents,” s/he might begin with an appeal to a moral principle, such as “Honor your father and mother.” In so doing s/he would be appealing to level one.

Challenged, s/he may then argue that the person to whom s/he is speaking ought to honor her/his parents because it is a direct commandment of the community’s god. S/he might also elaborate by arguing that, having accepted the premise that whoever has the power to create humankind has the right to be obeyed, the person to whom s/he is speaking is, therefore, bound by that creator’s command. These appeals belong to level two, validation.

Only if these last reasons were challenged as arbitrary or unreasonable would the speaker then be required to move to level three and to vindicate her/his demand. The speaker would then need to argue by some means that it is reasonable to obey the creator or that there is a creator.

In a religious ethic a number of statements may prove to be significant, but none is more important on level two (i.e., validation) than the appeal made to divine authority. Logically prior to all other demands, even the harshest or most inviting of sanctions are of logically secondary significance to such an appeal. Without having identified the divine authority making the demand, any other justification given for a course of action lacks meaning. Without being convinced that a certain divinity can and will exercise authority, the demands made lack force.

B. Jesus and Practical Justification

Where tradition provides us evidence that Jesus defended his demands in this way, he is described as having appealed to the will of the Creator.
1. In Mark 10:9

The prescription in Mark 10:9 relies for justification upon an explicit appeal: ὁ...ὁ θεός συνέζευξεν. The reference to God immediately suggests that we are no longer on the same level of the appellate ladder of practical justification as we were in discussing the appeal to moral principles. We are, instead, dealing with a higher order of justification: an appeal to divine authority.

This particular appeal rests upon two basic premises. One is a prior and general premise (here, that the intention or design of a creator is obligatory). The other is a positive belief about God (here, that he is creator of the marital relationship). An instance of what students of comparative religious ethics call “proprietary entitlement,” the logic of the appeal combines these premises and, if given full expression, would run as follows:

Premise 1: The intention or design of a creator is right or obligatory.
Premise 2: God is the creator of not only men and women, but of the relationship established between them (i.e., marriage).
Premise 3: God intends that man and woman live in unbroken relationship to one another.
Conclusion: Therefore, maintenance of that relationship is right or obligatory.

Appealing as Jesus does to the authority of God as Creator, certain understandings of the logos are seen to be misleading. One such interpretation is that of the appeal as one made to ‘Scripture against Scripture,’ or Schrift gegen Schrift, as some writers refer to it. As we have noted, in our judgment the references to Gen 1:27 and 2:27 are both secondary. And even if the references were authentic, Jesus does not appear to place any weight on the argument that these texts (as opposed to Deut 24:1) provide an earlier, superior view of marriage or a view which must be harmonized with that of Deut 24:1.

Completely absent too is any indication that Jesus relied upon his own authority in justifying his demand. The only evidence that might be adduced for the suggestion that he does is the bold character of the assertion itself. Nonetheless, it is upon God’s authority that the weight of the demand rests.

2. In Mark 2:27

A similar justification is given by Jesus for his demand in Mark 2:27. There is only one difference. Rather than refer to God explicitly, Jesus uses a reverential circumlocution: τὸ σάββατον διὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐγένετο. Again, then, the logic of the appeal is that of proprietary entitlement:

Premise 1: The intention or design of a creator is right or obligatory.
Premise 2: God is the Creator of the Sabbath.
Premise 3: God, in creating the Sabbath, intended that it be observed in such a way that man’s (i.e., Israel’s) well-being would be enhanced.
Conclusion: Therefore, that the Sabbath should be observed with a view to man’s well-being is right or obligatory.
The logic of the appeal excludes alternative interpretations of the appeal from consideration for the same reasons adduced in connection with Mk 10:9.34

C. The Significance of Mark 2:27 and 10:9

As brief as are the authorizing reasons offered here, their importance cannot be underestimated.

1. For the Logic of Jesus’ Ethic

Together, these two passages preserve a record of Jesus validating his demands, using the highest order of appeal possible on that level. The only higher appeal that he might have made would have been to vindicate (rather than validate) his demand. That is, he might have attempted to defend belief in the divine authority back of his demand.36 This we have no record of him doing and, given the setting in which he taught and lived, he may not have found it necessary.

In both prescriptions, then, we are in contact with that which is, logically speaking, most basic to the justification which Jesus gave for obedience to his demands: the personal authority of God, who is also creator. It is a finding which is all the more important because it is drawn from sayings material in which both demand and the validation for the demand appear in single sayings. Separate traditions are not employed. The connection does not need to be reconstructed.

To date, where scholars have argued that the Endzeit = Urzeit equation shaped the content of Jesus’ demand, they have been forced to rely upon an argument from coherence.37 Here the connection is explicit and, using the insights of comparative religious ethics, we have been able to characterize the connection in more specific terms.

2. For the Place of Torah in Jesus’ Ethic

The pattern of validation used by Jesus also explains why he does not begin in making his demands with the word of Torah itself. For him Torah is not identical in an absolute sense with the will of God. At times the two intersect, even though the demands of God’s will may be impossible to specify using the Law. At other times the Law is emptied of continued relevance. In either case the issue is always the will of the Creator, which is the ultimate justification for the demands Jesus makes. Such an understanding of the place of divine authority in his demands and the resulting ambiguity in his attitude toward the Law should come as no surprise.

IV. JESUS, JUDAISM AND THE LAW

Judaism before, during, and after the life of Jesus manifests considerable variety of opinion on the place of the Law in the context of Jewish eschatological expectation. The schema used here for describing that variety has been developed by Gershom Scholem.38 Scholem’s interest is primarily in the development of the Messianic idea as reflected in rabbinic literature and, clearly, our interest lies elsewhere. Nonetheless, his schema is of considerable heuristic value: (1) Describing such expectations in terms of tendencies, Scholem recognizes eschatological beliefs (like many others) are often a matter of emphasis. Accordingly, his approach avoids the pitfalls of attempting to
assign particular approaches to one “party” or another. (2) Although his work is not of immediate relevance, it does establish that these emphases exist elsewhere, and there is no evidence to suggest that (at least in this case) there is any reason to make a special exception for the material discussed here. (3) Scholem’s schema is also at home with the notion that there was more than one Judaism in the ancient world.

Specifically, he describes conservative, restorative and utopian tendencies in Jewish messianic thought. In what follows, we review those categories, focusing on the way in which Torah figures in these three visions of the future. The discussion is, necessarily, illustrative in nature and is not meant to be exhaustive.

A. Conservative, Restorative and Utopian Tendencies in Jewish Eschatology

At times the literature can be conservative in its vision of the future. Seeking to preserve that which already is, it sees even the eschatological future in these terms and, so, expects the Law and, in some instances, even the halakhah to be a part of that future. So, for example, T. B. Sanhedrin 51b reads as follows:

R. Nahman said in the name of Rabbah b. Abbuha in the name of Rab: The Halachah is in accordance with the message sent by Rabin in the name of R. Jose b. Hanina. R. Joseph queried: (Do we need) to fix a halachah for the days of the Messiah? - Abaye answered: If so, we should not study the laws of sacrifices, as they are also only for the Messianic era. But we say, Study and receive reward. i.e. Learning has its own merit quite apart from any practical utility that may be derived therefrom.

Current circumstances may preclude the offering of sacrifices, but the halakhah governing sacrifice will govern eschatological practice. It remains important even in the present and even now it is worthy of study.

At other times the literature can be restorative in its outlook. Anticipating a return to or recreation of a past, ideal condition, the literature draws upon golden eras of the past, when obedience was a hallmark of man’s relationship with God. It looks for a day when the demand of Torah or the will of God was at once lighter and heavier, because it is perfectly understood.

One portion of the Testament of Levi (apparently free at this point of later Christian interpolation) envisions the future in just such terms:

And he [i.e., the eschatological priest] shall open the gates of paradise; he shall remove the sword that has threatened since Adam, and he will grant to the saints to eat of the tree of life. The spirit of holiness shall be upon them.

At still other times the literature can be utopian in its outlook, anticipating a state of affairs which never existed before. Abandoning models provided by either the past or the future, it can be “anarchic” in character, foreseeing a day when recourse to the familiar means of quantifying obedience will be unnecessary.

Although a problematic passage, susceptible of a variety of interpretations, Jer
31:31-34 is clearly utopian in its outlook:

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

These three tendencies rarely, if ever, find pure expression in Jewish literature. Combinations are more frequently the rule, and no one group is always the predictable advocate of a particular vision of the future. For example, it is not at all clear that Jeremiah (or the later editor of his prophecies) foresees a future entirely without Torah in any external sense. His vision, therefore might be characterized as one shaped by both utopian and conservative impulses. Nonetheless, the influence of differing visions of the future does exist.

B. Restorative and Utopian Tendencies in the Eschatology of Jesus

Against this background, Jesus need not be seen as a “conservative” in order to locate him within Judaism; nor do we need to characterize his approach as a singular exception to an otherwise uniformly “conservative” world. The apparent ambiguity of his approach to the Law and the justification which he gives for obedience to his demands suggest that his ethic had restorative inspiration and that he drew at length for such inspiration upon the creative role of God. Endzeit may not have been Urzeit for Jesus in that he draws at length upon the Genesis account, but the will of the Creator certainly appears to have been the will of the one who brings the end.

However, the tendencies in his thought do not appear to have been limited to the restorative impulse. He foresees obedience of a kind for which the creation narratives may provide inspiration, but they do not completely delimit his demands. As such, he re-envisions the return of the Creator, embracing not only a restorative, but utopian vision of things to come. It is, nonetheless, a Jewish vision of the future and of the Law’s place in it, shaped by hopes that had and would continue to shape those visions.

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Of course, just how far these categories dominated Jesus’ thought and even his approach to the Law remains to be seen. As was noted above, the results of this study are necessarily provisional. We have dealt with only a few of the sayings which might be discussed and with only prescriptive sayings.

Nonetheless, the passages have strong claims to authenticity and provide an opportunity to study not only the kind of demands which Jesus made, but the justifying rea-
sons which he provided for those demands as well. Avoiding reconstruction across sayings and prescinding from an appeal to larger assumptions about the nature of the teaching of Jesus, this approach located at least one dimension of his approach to the Law squarely within the Judaisms of his day.

The evidence described indicates that it is premature to argue that an eschatological understanding of Jesus should be replaced by a sapiential one. Such a position not only fails to account for the kind of evidence described here, but overlooks the possibility that Jesus could have been influenced by both realms of thought. Any long-lasting contribution to the discussion of what the whole of Jesus’ teaching may have looked like will need to avoid the simplistic and misleading “either/or” that has characterized much of the past debate.

The logic of the demands made by Jesus also presents a challenge to the “either/or” approach which has characterized the discussion of parts of Jesus’ teaching – specifically, the relationship between ethics and eschatology in his thought. The insights of comparative religious ethics suggest that both divine authority and eschatological understandings of God are too closely intertwined in the demands which Jesus made to justify arguing that either “theo-logy” or “eschato-logy” is more basic to the teaching of Jesus. The former might be argued to be logically prior, but the latter proves to be a part of the most basic appeals which Jesus makes when justifying his demands.

As such the ethic of Jesus is at odds with conservative understandings of God’s will and breaks in upon attempts to capture the will of God in those terms. However, the “loyal opposition” Jesus practices is not opposition for opposition’s sake. In the Kingdom one confronts again and again the will of the God who was, who is and who will be.

Notes


2. On the performative and, therefore, prescriptive force of the language used here, see D.D. Evans, The Logic of Self-Involvement, A Philosophical Study of Everyday Language with Special Reference to the Christian Use of Language about God as Creator (London: SCM, 1963), pp. 27-78.


8. Cf. the first half only of Banks' observation (Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition [SNTSMS 28; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1975], p. 242): "Jesus neither moves out from the Law in making his own demands nor relates these requirements back to it." For a just criticism of the second half of Banks' statement see Sanders, *Jesus*, p. 247.


11. Cf. Tannehill *Sword*, pp. 95-96): "The possibility of separation is brought up against God's act of joining man and woman. There is no longer an option which man may exercise without offense to God. The whole marriage relation is understood in light of the active presence of God realizing his will in the union of man and woman. There is no possibility of the destruction of this relation with impunity."

12. Banks (Jesus, pp. 149-50) writes: "...the Deuteronomic provision is thus neither abrogated nor expounded but set in a context in which it no longer applies." Although similar to the view which I take here, we differ at two crucial points: (1) Unlike Banks, I believe that Jesus advances his demand, fully aware of the fact that he thereby relativizes the authority of the Law and (2) that he does so not on the basis of his own authority, but on the basis of God's (see below).


23. The diagram and the illustration which follows is adapted from the work of Little and Twiss, op. cit., p. 99.
24. For further on this subject and the subject of practical justification in general, see Little and Twiss, op. cit., pp. 96-122 and Ladd, *Moral Code*, pp. 146-91.
26. Ibid., p. 183.
27. E.g., Catchpole, "Divorce Material," p. 121.
29. Ibid., pp. 454-55.
32. In implying that the Sabbath is part of God’s primordial creation, Jesus’ thought approximates that of the writer of Jub 2, esp. vv 23, 30 and 31. See M. Testuz, *Les idées religieuses du Livre Jubilé* (Geneva: Droiz, 1960), pp. 140-43. In Jubilees, however, the Sabbath is preserved to be given to Israel, presumably with Torah (v 20), and appropriate behavior on the Sabbath is specified (vv 26-33).
34. Those who believe that the reference to I Samuel is original regard Jesus’ defense of his demand as appeal to scripture against scripture (e.g., Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 115). Others detect an appeal to christology: e.g., Banks, *Jesus*, p. 150-51.
35. On the subject of vindication, see: Little and Twiss, *Ethics*, pp. 111-16.
36. The best of recent descriptions is probably that given by B.F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), pp. 137-53. However, in our opinion Meyer exaggerates the distance between Jesus and his contemporaries. Having argued that Jesus is heir to what we describe below as the restorative impulse in Jewish theology, he then describes Jesus in terms which are seemingly foreign to the rest of Judaism.
38. Ibid., p. 3.
39. As quoted in W.D. Davies, *Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come* (JBLMS 7; Philadelphia, PA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1952), p. 64.
40. On the meaning of this passage, see: Davies, ibid., pp. 63-64.
42. The composition and provenance of the Testaments is often difficult to determine. Here, however, the prominence of the Testament’s eschatological priest suggests a Maccabean origin for the passage cited here. See: J.J. Collins, *Testaments," Jewish Writings of the Second
Temple Period (ed. Michael E. Stone; Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum 2.2; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), p. 343.


45. Ibid., pp. 3-4.

46. Davies, Torah, pp. 16-26.


I. INTRODUCTION

It is my great pleasure to offer this essay in tribute to Professor Robert W. Lyon, my first teacher of New Testament exegesis and criticism at Asbury Theological Seminary. Although he set rigorous academic standards, our honoree always stressed the need for scholarly endeavor to serve the people of God within whose faith and life the documents originated. Therefore, churchman that he is, it is fitting that my subject should deal with some aspect of the Church’s life and thought which are to be found in the NT. But Bob is a certain kind of churchman, believing that the people of God need to know how to hear and accommodate the loyal (might we say “loving”?) opposition within it. At its best, a conversation among multiple and diverse voices on the grand theme(s) of Scripture can move us closer to the ideal of the Church as semper reformanda. It is in this spirit that I offer this two-part thesis in commemoration of his retirement: (1) By approaching 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy via their dominating images of the Church as body and house(hold), one is thereby able to integrate (and not merely treat in no particular order or configuration) their primary themes or motifs, respectively. (2) These two distinct images (and the internally-integrated themes which they “control”) are in “opposition” to each other in the sense that they resist the objectifying and absolutizing of one over the other: i.e., they protest the confusing of these or any other image with the single reality to which they join us.

On the way to developing these points further, a word needs to be said about definitions and rationales which should be kept in mind throughout.

I concur with those who see in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy two very different views of the Church and church life. Others might minimize the diversity. Since both, after all, do appear in the same Canon, they cannot be that far apart.

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Obviously, enough of a similarity exists between them that permitted each to be included. In response, one may point to significant diversity among other NT writers. There is the multiple gospel corpus. The Synoptics differ among themselves according to the manner by which each evangelist adopts, adapts, and arranges his traditions. And there are the well-known contrasts between the Synoptics and John. Acts reports tensions in the early Church between non-hellenistic and hellenistic Jewish Christians (6:1-6) and between these and the Pauline Gentile mission (15:1-5). The Apostle in Galatians vividly recounts his "heart-to-heart" with Peter at Antioch (2:11-14). Furthermore, the Canon itself preserves the literary contributions of these disputants in the two epistolary corpora: Pauline and "general" or "catholic."2

2. We have here at least a toleration, if not delight, in plurality and diversity. It is legitimated. The Bible itself tells us so. Consequently, whatever hermeneutical method is used to interpret the NT, it shall have to avoid harmonization, reduction to a common denominator, and preferential treatment of one document over another, and one theme above another. So it is, as Paul Minear observes, with images: "No writer makes any single image serve in a passage of any length as the only or sufficient analogy for the community of faith. There is, however, an equally significant corollary. If no figure dominates the stage, all figures gain in import by sharing that stage." However, there are boundaries. Only this much variety is sanctioned. If there is deviation, it is "standard deviation."3

3. But why approach this study via "images" rather than through examining themes or *Leitmotive*? The reason lies in part with my discontent with the way in which the latter kind of investigation usually emerges as "singular" and "horizontal" in character. Images, however, tend to organize several categories at first regarded as separate into a cluster or gestalt. My thinking first started moving in this direction as I began reading bumperstickers more carefully. There was a certain cohesiveness or integrity to the presence of these signs anticipating the 1984 presidential election: "Reagan-Bush; "Free Trade," "Nuclear Power," "Pro-Life," "Support the Right to Bear Arms." Likewise, the following constellation of stickers had its own integrity: "Mondale-Ferraro," "Fair Trade," "Solar Power," "Pro-Choice," "Support the Right to Arm Bears."

What is the 'glue' which binds these slogans together? My claim is that controlling images (including verbal ones) help to envision or picture such a gestalt. This is clear when we observe how much of a community's *modus operandi* is determined by the symbols and metaphors that organize its complex of persons and policies.4 In the fairly recent past, small colleges and universities occasionally employed family language to describe the character of campus life. However, one may now find the president referred to as the CEO of a "management team" in a corporation having to pay attention to the "bottom line" and the "products" which one "delivers" to various "markets" This view of education as a business enterprise has profound and not-so-subtle effects on the concept of mission, curriculum development, faculty hiring and promotion, and student recruitment. So far as 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy are concerned, I shall endeavor to show how the body language of the former and the household language of the latter account for and integrate several categories: Christology, faith, Pneumatology, church organization, leadership, class, women, and eschatology. In other words, I shall not be so much concerned with determining a singular meaning for "body" and "household" as I will with showing how they
work to give coherent shape to these internal “themes.”

4. Furthermore, I shall attempt to suggest how the diversity between these two images and the subjects which they “control” may function in an equally authoritative way to determine the “whole counsel of God.” The Canon itself, when viewed with sufficient comprehensiveness, can provide the clues. It conveys not only standard subject matter but also standard means of making it “work.” Four phenomena are crucial. (a) The Bible legitimizes multiple visions and expressions of the same reality. For example, the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants appear in both unconditional and conditional forms (Genesis 12 and 22, 2 Sam 7:14-16 (See Psalm 89) and 1 Kings 9, respectively). The role of human, ethical response in justification is conveyed variously in Galatians and James. (b) Scripture contains both a conservative and libertarian attitude towards tradition, seen most clearly in the gospel tradition. One is concerned to preserve and conserve. The other is to adapt and apply. (c) With multiple visions and a dual attitude to tradition, the authors themselves inform, confirm, and correct their readers, depending on the need. In other words, having argued for or assumed a foundation of thought and experience, writers either provide weal or pronounce woe, either console or condemn. (Or, more often, they do both, to one degree or another). (d) Documents possessing the qualities in (a)–(c) seem to have been selected for their capacity to transcend the original Sinne im Leben so as to “speak” to future generations in other times and places. Can we understand the role of the two letters in this light? My suggestion is that one of the canonical functions of Corinthians is to confirm the genius of all corinthian-like church situations and to criticize excesses or shortcomings of those of the timothean kind—and vice versa. In other words, readers in every age were intended to gaze into these full-length, 180-degree mirrors, reflecting the whole truth about themselves, “warts and all.” It remains for us to see which of the two images tends to govern and support a particular tradition in our own day and how each will convey bane or offer blessing (or both).³

5. In the process, it will be apparent that certain kinds of historical questions are out of place in such canonical (biblical theological) study.⁴ Whether or not Paul wrote 1 Timothy is not a criterion for making a value judgment for or against the views of the letter. Is it the historical authors of the NT who are authoritative, or is it the corpus of literature recognized as such by the Church? We do not have the option of preferring 1 Corinthians above 1 Timothy (or vice versa). So, the focus of attention is on exegeting the final form of the canonical text rather than on the historical reconstruction of each church’s beliefs based on information mined from the NT. Here we have a microcosm of the classical debate on the nature of biblical theology.

6. Ultimately, interpreters will have to consider more self-consciously the nature and role of image-symbol-metaphors in exegesis and hermeneutics. With apologies to Ogden Nash, one has to ask, “What’s a met for?” As their etymology suggests, symbols act primarily as bridges, connectors (συν + βάλλειν = “throw together”) which “carry [us] across” (μετα + φέρειν) from one understanding or experience to another (and back?). They are not the reality about which they speak. Rather, they enable us to move from our present conception or experience of it to another. Such a shift can be a disturbing experience. Quoting Amos Wilder, ‘Paul Minear writes that the symbols touch, “that level of experience...where man is made and unmade, where the world is shaped and
reshaped, where the bondage of necessity or social and psychological patterns is dissolved.” Of their particular usefulness, Minear writes, “In every generation the use and re-use of the Biblical images has been one path by which the church has tried to learn what the church truly is, so that it could become what it is not. For evoking this kind of self-knowledge, images may be more effective than formal dogmatic assertions. This may well be why the New Testament did not legislate any particular definition of the Church and why Christian theology has never agreed upon any such definition.”

7. Furthermore, we have to ask how much of the metaphor is essential and how much of it is penumbral? It used to be (until the end of the nineteenth century) that each detail of a parable was thought to correspond to a point whose message was equally meaningful and authoritative. Then Adolf Juelicher convinced several generations of scholars that there was only one central point to be made and sought. Thus, in the Parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8), one is not to deduce that God is corrupt but that, on analogy, he will hear the case (the “prayer”) of the persistent petitioner. In recent years, several scholars have rightly dared to challenge an overly-mechanical application of Juelicher’s fundamental insight. Yet, the main point still stands. So it is with more complex analogies such as metaphors. We may have to distinguish the primary vision which the core of the image promotes from penumbral, optical distortions which adhere. In other words, the idea of household does not stand or fall with the presence or absence of servitude from slaves. Nor does such an image of the Church require that women be excluded from leadership roles. In this way, one can avoid the “battle of the proof-texts’ approach, whereby an opponent’s scriptural backing / bashing can be countered by another, equally as authoritative (and damaging).

8. Imagistic language is flexible in other ways. The same metaphor can have positive and negative applications. For example, government can function under God (Romans 13) or under the Devil and his henchpersons (Revelation 13). The Temple can realize its purpose as a house of prayer for all the nations, or it may degenerate into a den of thieves (Mark 11). Families may be either healthy or “dysfunctional” (a word whose usefulness (functionality) is nearing extinction). Because Jesus’ own relatives regarded him mad and requiring isolation (Mark 3:21), he redefined his family along other lines: those who do the will of God (vv 31-35). However, by this appeal to the flexibility of language, I am not suggesting that exegesis of the specifics is no longer important for hermeneutics. Nor am I proposing that the Prologue to St. John’s Gospel should read, “In the beginning was the metaphor.” Rather, I am calling for an exegesis (and hermeneutic) of the reigning metaphors or images. What is their role in the communicative and interpretive task? in doctrine?

So far as organization is concerned, I shall move in two stages: Part II will explore the dominating image of the Church in each letter, demonstrating how each vision controls or governs several categories. In Part III, I shall attempt to show how each NT paradigm and its constituent parts might function as mirrors of contemporary church life, at least on the American scene.

II. IMAGES OF THE CHURCH

In 1 Corinthians, body imagery prevails, especially in chap. 12 where Paul attempts to prevent both uniformity and disunity resulting from a misunderstanding and misappropria-
ation of spiritual gifts. This problem is but a variant, perhaps the most serious one (requiring three chapters of attention), of the difficulty announced as early as 1:10. So the Apostle appeals for the charismata to bring about unity from diversity. However, my main concern is not to repeat that common observation but to concentrate on the character of the body language. Of the 114 instances of swma in the NT, 46 occur in 1 Corinthians in various senses. None ever appears in the Pastorals. The usages salient for my purpose are these: “just as the body is one and has many parts... thus also Christ. For we all were also baptized into one body by one Spirit...” (vv 12-13). Rather than join the debate over every contested point here, I shall concentrate on the character of the image. This language suggests inter-relation with Christ (however defined) and with others so joined with him, such that what affects a part, affects the whole (3:17; 5:5, 6, 9-13; esp. 12:26). The picture of the Church which emerges is that of a collective, intimate, organic, integrative, dynamic entity.

In 1 Tim 3:15, the Pastor regards the Church as “the house (hold) of God, the bulwark and pillar of the truth.” No such sense occurs in 1 Corinthians. This determinative reference is reinforced in vv 4, 5, and 12, where leaders, unable to “rule” at home, will hardly be successful in this role in the Church. To appreciate the full impact of “house(hold),” we must not think of a modern, single-family dwelling inhabited by two parents and one and three quarter children (mistakenly called “traditional” by careless politicians and churchpeople). Wayne Meeks observes that “the household was much broader than the family in modern Western societies, including not only immediate relatives but also slaves, freedmen, hired workers, and sometimes tenants and partners in trade or craft.” All of this needed to be organized and administered as a veritable institution requiring structure, order, and efficiency. A premium would be put on preserving and protecting life and property. “The structure of the oikos was hierarchical, and contemporary political and moral thought regarded the structure of superior and inferior roles as basic to the well-being of the whole society.”

“Pillar and bulwark of the truth” extends the image in the direction of the cultus: the “house of God,” i.e. the Temple (or a pagan shrine). Here, too, the religious image suggests something more than a place where God and people meet: orders of priests, rotations of service, supply of sacrificial offerings, furniture, paraphernalia, and the oversight required to make everything work. Stability and propriety, conserving of tradition, and the passing on of sound teaching belong quite naturally to such an environment. More can be said under this heading, but I shall reserve pressing the point further for the categories that follow. It is enough to observe that we have before us the differences which exist between an organism and an organization.

Christology

The prevailing image of the Church in Corinthians has its roots in a particular Christology, which branches out in several directions. This appears most specifically at 15:20-22, especially in the “in Adam” - “in Christ” contrast, where each is viewed as a corporate or at least representative figure. The fundamental issue is that Paul uses the language of organic, ‘personal’ connection between Christ and both individual Christians and their life together as a body. Clowney points out that “The key to Paul’s use of the metaphor ‘body
of Christ' lies in this representative principle as it is applied to the literal body of Christ. He...refers to Christ's physical body when he says...Whoever partakes of the sacrament unworthily is 'guilty of the body and blood of the Lord' (1 Cor 11:27). Here the crucified body is in view."¹⁸ Subsequently, the Apostle takes the imagery further: "For you [emphatic] are the literal body of Christ and individually members of it" (v 27. See 10:16-17). Earlier, he had argued that the reason that Christians may not unite physically with prostitutes is that their bodies (here, individually) are members of Christ (6:15). Sexual ethics are grounded, not in an idea about Christ, but in one's union with Him, however that might actually occur. Once again, there is a sense of intimate relationship and 'organic' connection.

In 1 Timothy, the relation between Christ and believer is more formal and remote. The creed or hymn of 3:16 emphasizes several revelatory moments of salvation history—all "public" and none of them directly touching the Church's experience of him. Earlier, Christ Jesus is portrayed (2:5-6) as the man who mediates between God and humankind. He spans the gap. But mediation, while suggesting a certain kind of resultant proximity (he mediates as a human for humans),¹⁹ does not necessarily mean intimacy.²⁰ The soteriology of ransom for many suggests substitution or exchange rather than incorporation. In chap. 6, the author lays a different Christological groundwork for ethics. The foundation is not the current, mystical union with the risen Christ. Rather, Timothy is to fight the good fight and run the race by looking back to the good confession which Jesus made before Pontius Pilate (v 13) and by looking forward to the "appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v 14). Instead of proximity, there is remoteness. (Once again, I must remind the reader that I am not making a value judgment here.)

(The) Faith and Truth

Likewise, the language of faith matches the ecclesial and Christological images just reviewed. So, the accent in 1 Corinthians falls on faith's subjective dimension. In general, Christian faith is not to be defined in terms of human wisdom but according to the Spirit and power of God (2:5). That same Spirit grants a special exercise of faith (12:9). But faith capable of moving mountains means nothing without love (13:2), which is superior to all (v 13). Yet, there are objective grounds for this subjective response. Empty is the Corinthians' faith (and so is the apostolic preaching) if Jesus did not rise from the dead (15:14, 17). Of course, such an emphasis is not lacking in 1 Timothy (e.g., 1: 5, 14, 19; 2:7, 15). However, dominating this letter is the articulate 'the' faith, a reference to a body of doctrine, of teaching (3:9; 4:1, 6; 5:8; 6:10, 12, 21). In fact, the two expressions (της πιστεως και της καλης διδασκαλιας) appear together at 4:6 (See v 1). The preservation and transmission of teaching (also specified in some cases as "sound" or "healthy") dominates the letter (1:10; 4:1, 6, 13; 5:17; 6:1, 3). Furthermore, the role of teaching looms large here, too. Thus, besides calling himself a preacher and apostle, Paul early on (2:7) claims to be a "teacher [διδασκαλος] of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (or, "a faithful and true teacher?"). Although women are not permitted this role (v 11), teaching (διδασκαλευ) is incumbent upon the young Pastor (4:11, 6:2) and a qualification for the bishop who must be διδακτικος (3:2).

Of course, these activities are to be found in 1 Corinthians; but they bear a different nuance, a sense governed by the dominant vision. Διδακτικος is not so much a qualifi-
cation as it is a spiritual endowment (2:13, twice). The Spirit grants to the body the
charism of teachers (12:28, third in the list), though not all teach (the Greek grammar
requires a negative response to Paul’s questions in v 29). In a more general sense, Paul
(and even nature itself) teaches (4:17, 11:14, 14:6). And the Corinthians themselves may
introduce into Christian worship a psalm, a teaching, revelation, tongue, and interpreta-
tion (14:26). Finally, in the pastoral letter, faith and teaching are grounded in the truth
(2:7, 4:3. See 2:4, 6:5). All of this corresponds naturally to an understanding of the
Church in 3:15 as both the “house” of God and the “support and pillar of the truth.” (Not
surprisingly, what follows in v 16 bears the marks of a creed or confession about the
“mystery of godliness” or “piety.”) The point is not that such formality is lacking entirely in
1 Corinthians (See 5:8 and 13:6). Paul can be very conscious about the reception and
transmission of traditions (11:2, 23; 15:3). However, the communication of revelation
both through him (as a bearer of a “word from the Lord” in chap. 7) and through the
Spirit is much more direct and ad hoc and in keeping with the body language of this letter.

The Spirit

Next to Christology, perhaps the closest link with the image of the Church as body is
with Paul’s claims about the Spirit’s role. It is He who enables one to confess Jesus’ lord-
ship (12:3), in whose body believers are discrete members (v 27). Each of the Spirit’s indi-
vidual and varied gifts is designed to function for the common good (v 7 and much of
chap. 14’s argument about the relative value of the gifts of prophecy and tongues speak-
ing). Throughout the discussion, there is constant oscillation between the diversity of the
charismata and the unity of the Spirit, who apportions them as he wills (vv 8-11. See vv
4-6 for the “proto-Trinitarian” origins (the same Spirit, Lord, and God) for the varieties of
gifts, service, and working). In the middle of Paul’s development of the body imagery, the
link with Spirit is most clear at v 13: “by the one Spirit, we were all baptized into the one
body and were made to drink of the one Spirit.”

In 1 Timothy, the differences in conception and operation are not simply numerical.
The nineteen instances in 1 Corinthians do quantitatively overshadow the two references
here. However, most notable is the distinct focus which complements the categories
examined thus far in this letter. The creed of 3:16 opens with the declaration that God
(Θεός) or “he” (ὁς) was manifested (ἐφάνεται) in (the) flesh. He was justified in or by
(the) Spirit (ἐκκλησίαν ἐν πνεύματι). This statement, reminiscent of another document
connected with Ephesus, seems to say that the Spirit argued that Jesus was in the right,
was vindicated (See also John 16:8,10). Here, too, the connection between Christology
and Pneumatology is clear; but it proceeds along other lines. Furthermore, the teaching is
encoded or at least formalized in a poetic/hymnic pattern. It belongs to a confession of
commonly-held truth. The only other mention of the Spirit’s role follows immediately and
reflects a similar motif (4:1): “And the Spirit says specifically (ἡγήσαται) that in subsequent
times some will desert from the faith understood as a body of doctrine which the
Church as pillar of the truth is to preserve and give their minds to misleading spirits and
demonic teachings.” This is followed by a brief but condensed summary of their content
(vv 2-5). Then the Pastor exhorts his younger colleague how to combat their influence
(vv 6-16). Thus, the Spirit functions as the revealer of truth about future (and perhaps
imminent) threats to the integrity of the Church, via onslaughts against its doctrines. Again, the nature of the Spirit’s role corresponds to the image of the Church as the pillar of the truth. Pneumatology and ecclesiology walk hand in hand.

Leadership

It should come as no surprise, given the controlling images and the observations about (the) faith, teaching, and Spirit, that concepts of leadership should follow suit. God-appointed (or placed, εὐχαρίστο) Spirit-gifted apostles, prophets, teachers, and governors should lead the body of Christ (1:28, 31). But these appear to be leaders of the Church universal. There do not seem to be “officers” of the community at Corinth per se. Chloe’s circle reports dissension to Paul (1:10-11); but it is not certain that they themselves are members of the Corinthian church. None of the principals (Apollos, Cephas, and Paul himself), around whom “cults of personality” have grown are in town at the time (v 12). Who orders the prayers and prophesying by men and women (11:1-15)? No one seems to preside over the chaotic eucharist (11:16-34). Is anyone heading up the worship encouraged in 14:26-34? Through whom does the church write its inquiries to the Apostle? Whatever leadership there is seems entirely ad hoc and remains completely in the background. However, there does seem to be a steady stream of emissaries from Paul, including Timothy (4:17; 16:10, 12, 15-18). The body at Corinth does not have a head. An egalitarian spirit prevails, even though some kind of hierarchy cannot be ruled out.

It seems quite natural, then, that “the household of God, the bulwark and pillar of the truth” (see above) should require specifically-qualified leaders rather than “gifted” persons. Aspiration to fill the office of a bishop (ἐπίσκοπος) is noble. Among other things (3:1-7), one must be a good teacher (v 2) and manage (προϊστάμενος) his own children and household. Otherwise, he will not be able to care for (ἐπιμέλεσθαι) God’s Church (v 4-5). A similar set of standards is to be applied to deacons (v 13), who must likewise be grounded in the truth (v 9) and able to manage their children and households as experience for an analogous role in the Church (v 11-13). This phenomenon is not so much a matter of later development as it is a function of sociology and theology, as the community at Qumran should ever remind us. Timothy himself, urged to be a good minister (διδάσκοντα) of Jesus Christ, must maintain certain standards of character and performance (4:6, 11-16), of which teaching has a prominent place (v 6, 11, 13, 16). He has been granted a gift (χάρισμα) through prophecy (words more prominent in 1 Corinthians) when the council of elders (πρεσβύτερος) laid hands on him (v 15). Paul’s further instructions regarding Timothy’s disposition towards other elders reinforces what was said earlier about their role as teachers (5:17).

Class

Lacking qualified leaders at Corinth may in part, at least, be a function of class. Not many in that body were wise as defined by “fleshy” standards, not many were powerful or nobly-born (εὐγενεῖς). In their case, God had chosen the foolish (τὰ μωρά), weak, low-born, and rejected elements of the world in order to confound their opposites (1:26-28). Did any own slaves? Although householders may have done so, it is only a possibility. That there were slaves among Christians at Corinth is clear from 7:21-22; but there is no way of telling
here how many, if any, belonged to Christian households. More clear is 12:13: in stressing that the many have become one through the Spirit, Paul supplies "whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free." Fee notes, "As in 7:17-24, these terms express the two basic distinctions that separated people in that culture—race/religion and social status." What is clear is that there does not seem to be enough of a problem between Christian master and slave to call much attention to the nature of their social and spiritual relationships.

How different is the situation in 1 Timothy. Determining the socio-economic conditions does not require detective-like assembling of circumstantial evidence. Women were rich enough to afford elaborate gold-leaf hair pieces (2:9). Before becoming widowed, some were financially able to provide relief to the afflicted (5:10). The church at Ephesus was economically sound enough to support widows, although their number had begun to drain resources, such that "real" widows needed to be distinguished from those young enough to remarry (5:3-16). Masters were numerous enough to require advice for their treatment of slaves. And both needed instruction about their attitudes towards one another (6:1-2). Affluent members existed in sufficient numbers and influence to need exhortation twice regarding both the evils of money and its potential for good (6:7-10, 17-19).

Eschatology & Relation to the World

Will members of an organism relate differently to the world and its future than those belonging to an organization? An answer can only be inferred. The slogan, "you can't take it with you," has its biblical roots at 1 Tim 6:7: "we brought nothing into the world and it is certain that we cannot take anything out of the world." The point here is that the Pastor does not appeal to the imminent end of all things as the rationale. It is the end of one's physical life, not the end of the age which should cause one to be free of wealth. This is in keeping with prayer for the general population and for political authorities (kings and all who are in power) so that "we may lead a quiet and peaceable life" (2:2). In other words, there is a sense of legitimate accommodation in a world whose imminent end is not in sight. Indeed, the author refers in 4:1 to the Spirit's clear warning about apostasy in later times (νσταρουν [not ενγκακισον] καιρος). But not much more is made of this, either here or elsewhere in the letter. How different the scene in Corinth. Apparently there are some (though not many) in this body who are able to buy goods (χορηγονοι) and deal (χρωμοσθαι) with the world (7:31-32). Yet, they are to live free of acquisitions and connections in view of the present circumstance, variously described as the impending distress, the shortening of the appointed time, and passing away of this world's form (vv 26, 29, 31).

Women (and Men)

Might it be that images of the Church at Corinth and Ephesus have an effect on the status and role of women in these churches? Could an analogous, interlocking influence be at work here, too? The Corinthian context is public worship and the exercise by both sexes of prayer and prophecy (11:5), which heads the list of spiritual gifts (14:1). Of all the charismata, prophecy has the special value of building up the Church (vv 3-5, 12), two chapters before being imaged as a body (See esp. 12:23-24, 27-31). What is often overlooked in the intricate discussion about the need for women to be covered during the prophetic act is that, although it signals inferiority, the covering is an egalitarian device.
In other words, the “veil” confers authority (ἐξουσία, read the best texts at v 10) upon women to participate equally with men in speaking a word from God to the congregation. And, although Paul begins his argument with a hierarchical, and hence vertical, “chain of command” model of authority (God→head of! Christ→man→woman) and the chronological priority of the male in creation (v 3, 8), he switches to a more lateral and organic one, “Nevertheless woman is not apart from man, nor is man apart from woman in the Lord” (v 11). Furthermore, the procreative process reverses the original created order: “For just as the woman came from the man, so also man comes through woman; and all things come from God” (v 12).

Of course, the Pastor in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 does not make room for such a reversal in the order of creation which gives Adam priority over Eve. Nor does Paul in 1 Corinthians link any subordinationist language with her being the first to transgress. It appears to be a different world, a different mindset not to be explained away by recourse to different authors or to an earlier (allegedly better) and later (allegedly worse) development (known by the grossly-simplistic category, “early catholicism”). The canonical approach rules out preferential treatment, whether the criterion for doing so is historical, authorial, or doctrinal.

Instead, one must proceed along two contextual lines, one more narrow and the other more broad. More narrowly speaking, it is necessary to be as precise as possible about what Paul is or is not saying in the immediate context. One has only to examine the renderings among modern translations of αὐθεντέων in v 12 (“to domineer”? “have authority”? or of σωζεῖν (“save”?, “kept safe”?, “restore”?) and of ἐν τῇ τεκνογονίᾳ (“in (the act of) childbearing”?, “in the birth of the Child”?) and various permutations of these to see that the sense here is not as straightforward as it seems at first reading.

So far as the broader issue is concerned, one must ever keep in mind that the author’s attitude towards women belongs to the controlling image of the letter which we have seen to be a more organizational, institutional, formal, and hence traditional one. The accent is upon regularity, preservation, conservation, and established authorities. Political and social stability is reinforced by prayer for leaders and by the maintenance of slavery, albeit on a different plain. The real threat is ideological. This increases the tendency to guard, protect, and transmit the truth to the next generation. So, not surprisingly, political, social, ecclesiastical, and familial hierarchy are firmly in place at the church in Ephesus.

III Canonical Conversation

Unfortunately, the canon does not itself explicitly suggest the canons which should be applied in the interpretation of these macroscopic images and their component parts. However, one could at least posit (given the confirmatory and critical functions of Scripture elsewhere) that each model and its components were intended both to support its own view of the Church and to help prevent extreme and exclusive appropriation of the other.

Were one to search for “dynamic equivalents” in our American ecclesiastical context, one might tentatively suggest that the Corinthian paradigm has supported the Church’s life as manifested in the Pentecostal and “holiness” traditions. Using very broad strokes for the sake of argument, I suggest that these have exhibited a more intimate Christology,
subjective faith, and charismatic Pneumatology. Personal experience and right living have been deemed more important than right doctrine. The congregation’s “body life” has been such as to welcome the marginalized of society and to be supported by the “blue collar” worker. Its leadership has tended to be authorized by “giftedness” rather than by formal qualification. Few had advanced education. Fewer still enjoyed the luxury of full-time, salaried positions. Women often found opportunities for leadership, even “ordination.” Until recently, its eschatology has been more imminental (pre-millennial among Pentecostal, primarily post-millennial among Wesleyan groups). A corresponding attitude to the world has generally emphasized withdrawal from political involvement and social reform by governmental programs. Of course, the rescue of souls from societal evils, such as prostitution, drink and gambling, was deemed appropriate from the start. The Church as a vital, living organism (a body) bursting with energy and vitality has been characteristic of worship in congregations arising out of this tradition.

A more “Ephesian” model has tended to undergird the mainline Reformed and sacramentarian traditions. Doctrinal purity, confessional assent, and liturgical integrity have been dominant concerns. An educated, qualified (and often specialized) clergy has not only maintained vigilance to defend against outside threats, it has also passed on the tradition to subsequent generations through a formal catechetical process which led to confirmation and extended into adulthood. Until very recently, the Church’s operations have been supervised by men rather than by women. The Spirit has been seen as operative in and through the collective rather than through individual inspiration. Congregations have served middle and upper classes whose success in the world of politics and business indicated a coming to terms with the institutions of modern life. In fact, the church itself has functioned as an organization—albeit of a different sort. Although “this world was not their home” in the absolute sense, churches have thrived on the stability, regularity, and tacit support of the society in which they found themselves.

However, these pure types (or their approximations) tend not to exist as such anymore. Each has leavened the other. Charismatic renewal bearing certain “Corinthian” features (including more participation of women in leadership roles) has manifested itself in mainstream Protestant denominations and in the Roman Catholic Church, although no significant inroads have occurred in Eastern Orthodoxy, to my knowledge. Worship that has been regarded as formal at best and moribund at worst has come alive. Mainline churches have taken up (and sometimes taken over) the causes of the excluded and oppressed. “Born again” language can be heard across the traditions. Likewise, a “Timothy” influence has appeared among Pentecostal and Assemblies groups where economic success has enabled and demanded a more formally-educated clergy and has encouraged at least an openness to liturgical renewal. There has come a recognition that structure need not squelch vitality, that what often appeared to be “free” worship contained its own, sometimes rigid, stricutures.

Such cross-fertilization has helped and continues helping to keep the “down-side” of each model from gaining ascendency. Not all growth is healthy. Uncontrolled and without direction, it can produce cancer. Change is good until moorings with the past are cut in search of a rather fuzzy future whose realization lacks both maps and methods. The desire for stability can cloak an underlying rigidity which refuses to consider a reasoned
and documented strategy for change. Although unintended, quenching the Spirit sometimes results. These sensibilities emerge when an interpreter treats the texts as both preserving something at once extremely vital and profoundly vulnerable to abuse. So, by reading each in this fashion, faith could be kept from being both mindless, on the one hand and frozen into dogma on the other. Reading both texts thus might prevent intimacy with Christ from becoming familiarity, at one extreme, loftiness from turning to remoteness at the other. 1 Timothy would keep women’s liberty (εξουσία) from dissolving into demagoguery (αμφισκέψις), while 1 Corinthians could be appealed to when orderness is in danger of being a means of oppression.29

Whichever the direction of the application, the interpreter must become an astute observer of all of the dynamics of the situation. Besides becoming as fully informed as possible, s/he must avoid settling into an unyielding, disloyal, unloving opposition which can easily become diabolical in its divisiveness διαφανές, “throw through,” so as to separate. Dialectic is the key. As the etymology suggests, it requires constant conversation between the parties, neither of whom is dispensable. What cannot be done without is thorough knowledge of the disputant’s point of view. Although my loyalty is to the Other Place, I must relate the report by Professor Billy Abraham of a tradition at Oxford (which I dearly love) that one has to be able to defend the position of one’s opponents more ably than they themselves could before being allowed to criticize them.

What may we conclude from this exercise? First, individual themes in these very different documents can be integrated around a dominant image of the Church. It remains to be seen whether or not analogous instances can be found elsewhere. It may well be that particular views of God or Christ (or some other category) will be the unifying elements. Second, I have attempted to provide a sample of how two different (“opposing”) voices within Scripture might function in a more fully-blown capacity to address the entire people of God with “the whole counsel of God” in very different circumstances. If these tentative proposals even so much as point in the right direction (being themselves treasure in breakable clay pots, 2 Cor 4:17), then we may be going a step farther along the road of practicing the claim that “all scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that God’s person may be perfect (i.e. ‘complete’), thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16).

NOTES

1. The most comprehensive treatment in English of variety in the Early Church’s thought and life is still J. D. G. Dunn’s Unity and Diversity in the New Testament (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1977). Despite the promise of the title, there is little demonstration of fundamental unity. See n. 3, below.


6. Furthermore, the history which is sometimes reconstructed is poorly done. Simplistic linear models of development cannot be supported by the data. For example, it is a commonplace to assert that earliest Christianity was of the apocalyptic, other-worldly variety whose egalitarian and informal character later became doctrinaire, hierarchical, and accommodating to the world. Yet, except for J. A. T. Robinson, mainstream experts, both “conservative” and “liberal,” regularly date Revelation in the 90s of our era. However, here is a late apocalyptic work neither presupposing nor advocating any specific kind of organization or leadership. On the other hand, the Qumran sectarian manifest an even earlier apocalyptic outlook whose exponents lived in a highly structured society headed by a stratified leadership. Often, it is overlooked that Judaism, the matrix out of which Christianity emerged, was itself simultaneously capable of embracing Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes, each with its own social and political characteristics. Both Judaism and Christianity did develop. But they did not do so at a single rate or in a straight line. The image of a great watershed, with many tributaries and tidal influences, describes the situation better than that of a single river.


Minear, *Images*, pp. 222-223, observes that “through all the analogies the New Testament writers were speaking of a single reality, a single realm of activity, a single magnitude. The purpose of every comparison is to point beyond itself. The greater the number of comparisons, the greater number of pointers. When so many pointers impel our eyes to look in one direction, our comprehension of the magnitude of what lies in that direction is enhanced. This is why in the New Testament we observe no sentimental fascination for the images themselves, such as a preacher or a poet feels for a symbol of his own devising. The overarching interest is that reality toward which all point.” There is much to agree with here. I would only add that symbols not only point to the reality, they also connect us with it. Otherwise, why does one get so involved (whichever way it goes) with the desecration of images (such as the flag and the cross)? Furthermore, biblical images do not only point towards the Reality; they also “compete” with one another in a “monotheizing” way by relativizing one another.

12. Given the limited scope of this essay, it is not necessary to join the debate over the nature of the particular relation to Christ: whether Christians are the only body that Christ has, as J. A. T. Robinson maintained in *The Body. A Study in Pauline Theology* (SBT 1/5; London: SCM, 1952), p. 51 or whether it is another kind of body of which they are part: “an ecclesiastical Body, consisting of believers, in which he dwells on earth through his Spirit”, as R. H. Gundry argues in *SOMA in Biblical Theology with Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology* (SNTSMS 29; Cambridge: University Press,

13. George W. Knight III notes that “even though building terminology is utilized ἵστυλος and ἔδρατοιος, since the conduct in view relates to the interaction of the members of God’s family, modern translations have opted for ‘household’ (RSV, NASB, NEB, NIV).” See his Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 180.

14. All six references to οἶκος or οἰκία are confined to individuals’ homes or households (1:16; 11:22, 34; 14:35; 16:15, 19). Οἰκοδομεῖν and οἰκοδομή occur merely as terms of growth by way of construction.


16. Ibid., p. 16.


18. Ibid., p. 86.


20. There is a certain discordancy in some forensic and cultic portrayals of Christ’s mediation, where the pleading Son finally convinces a reluctant, frowning Father to forgive the ransomed sinner. While not an exact parallel, there are some interesting analogies within the canon of Wesley’s hymns. I have in mind the deeply intimate and incorporative cast of “And Can It Be?” (“alive in him my living Head”) and the more removed, predominantly juridical flavor of “Arise my Soul Arise” (“five bleeding wounds He bears” which “pour effectual prayers, they strongly plead for me”). Of course, the language of adoption in the last verse changes the imagery from God as Judge to Father.


22. Although Stephanus managed a household and Caius and Crispus might have been prominent persons outside of the Christian circle (Theissen, ibid., pp. 73-96), this says nothing illuminating about their place in the congregation and their role in the correspondence. Theissen (ibid., pp. 94-95) places too much weight on sixteen named persons (culled from Acts, Romans, and 1 Corinthians), despite his own admission that “it is not always certain that those named come from Corinth.” [1]

23. Although Theissen (ibid., pp. 72-73) correctly points out that a minority of powerful persons can nevertheless exercise an influence disproportionate to their numbers, this is not the same as showing that they did in this case.

24. After reading between the lines, mining other genuine pauline literature, and making generous use of Acts without any justification, Theissen concludes that Christian households at Corinth very likely included slaves (ibid., pp. 85-87). While the possibility cannot be denied, one needs to make a case for probability.


26. According to Fee (ibid., pp. 699-708), Paul’s alleged absolute prohibition of women speaking in church belongs to an early scribal interpolation. After a thorough examination of linguistic and manuscript evidence for 14:34-35, he comes to the view that “in keeping with the textual questions, the exegesis of the text itself leads to the conclusion that it is not authentic.”


28. Clowney, Biblical Models, p. 105 sees the problem in these terms: “So long as one metaphor is isolated and made a model, men are free to tailor the church to their errors and prejudices.” Its solution lies in recognizing that “the interpreter carries a particular responsibility to present those
metaphors that may be misunderstood or found offensive. Only this way can balance be gained, and only in this way can the misinterpretation of favourite models be avoided” (Ibid.). What Clowney does not point out is that there are signs in the Canon itself that legitimate such a role (viz. the multiple gospel tradition, and the overall diversity of Scripture).

29. If such appropriation of biblical imagery is to be useful, the point is not to correct and balance each of the categories studied item-for-item. This would lead to anomalous results: how could the view of slaves in 1 Timothy correct the apparently more egalitarian model in 1 Corinthians without suppressing liberation altogether? The answer lies in being ready to employ the full range of biblical paradigms which touch on the question of slaves’ status and role in the community. So, the dynamics of Onesimus’ return to the “household” of Philemon would need to be brought into a comprehensive canonical treatment, of which this study is only a discrete sample.
We are frequently told that deep faith causes intolerance. Fundamentalists persecute; those who look at religious questions dispassionately do not. Though the view might have some truth, a survey of history casts doubt on it as simplistic.

Early Christians were persecuted by broad-minded Romans who insisted that they must participate in civil religion. Since sophisticated Romans did not themselves believe in the gods, or at least did not believe in anything like we normally think of when we use that word, we assume they did not care what Christians privately thought. Further, until Celsus and Porphyry pagans never bothered to study the faith. While the masses projected crude views on Christians, as they had on the Jews, and accused them of violent crimes; the learned dismissed them as superstitious.\footnote{In his letter to Trajan, Pliny the Younger wrote.} In his letter to Trajan, Pliny the Younger wrote.\footnote{I do not doubt that whatever kind of crime it may be to which they have confessed, their pertinency and inflexible obstinacy should certainly be punished... I thought it more necessary, therefore, to find out what truth there was in this [their beliefs and mode of worship] by applying torture to two maidservants, who were called deaconess. But I found nothing but a depraved and extravagant superstition, and I therefore postponed my examination and had recourse to you for consultation.}

Pliny, famous as an urbane Roman, would have rejected the claim that he prejudged their case, but he did not hope for Trajan to explain Christian beliefs. He wanted advice on how to suppress the movement without making Rome appear cruel. In other words: What was the politically most expedient way to make Christians conform?

Less than a century after Pliny, Christians in North Africa were suffering under
persecution. After becoming a Christian, Tertullian took up their case. His personality is legendary. He thrived on debate, arguing with heretics and the official church after becoming a Montanist, as well as with civil officers.

This article looks at Tertullian’s debate with the officials in Carthage found in The Apology. We will study the method he used in his defense of Christians. We are not asking so much what specific arguments he marshaled as what kind of arguments. Or, looking at the same issue from the other side of the equation, what kind of arguments would Roman officials have found persuasive?

We attach to this inquiry a second. We intend to explore how the Scriptures figured in The Apology’s argument.

I. TERTULLIAN’S TASK: ARGUING WITH THOSE WHO DID NOT ACCEPT CHRISTIAN PREMISES

Tertullian wrote The Apology to refute charges against Christians upon which the officials based their persecution. In chapter 2 he named four, two civil and public (sacrilege and treason) and two private and supposedly part of eucharistic celebrations (incest with mothers and sisters and the killing and eating of infants).

The latter two, incest and cannibalism, were scurrilous and propagated by rumor. That did not make them less serious, since they grew from fear and hatred of the unknown. We cannot tell just how many people actually thought the rumors true but evidence suggests a good number did until the middle of the third century.

Tertullian’s defense against these two charges was to deny them. He noted that the authorities could not present one person who had actually witnessed the acts. He also pointed out how the acts were totally inconsistent with Christian faith and practice—much more so than with pagan faith and practice. We will look at one case of this defense to show how Tertullian argued in this regard.

The civil charges of treason and sacrilege were really more serious, since they arose from an indisputable feature of Christian discipline, the restriction of worship to the living God. Faithful Christians could not yield in the way Rome demanded they yield, to participate in civil religious ceremonies and offer supreme allegiance to the emperor, without denying the faith. According to Roman law, Christians were guilty.

There are a number of ways Tertullian might have made his case to vindicate the beleaguered faithful. First, he could have argued, as Western democracies now do, that religion is a private matter, and the state has no right to impose its will so long as its sovereignty is not undermined. But Rome did think the church undermined its sovereignty, and nothing in The Apology disputes that Tertullian thought religion a legitimate concern of the state.

Second, Tertullian could have reasoned that since the state was ruled by evil people, Christians should defy their laws. But this approach would have earned nothing but contempt as well as condemnation. Further, The Apology’s tone suggests something different from defiance. It suggest an appeal to people who can reach a sound judgment. This is an genuine apology.

Finally, Tertullian might have argued that Christians should not be persecuted because they were really not guilty of criminal acts. This is, in fact, the tactic he took. And it was
for this reason that his pre-Christian work as a lawyer proved invaluable. He not only knew the rules of legal debate but also practiced them with considerable skill.

But Tertullian’s task was still not easily accomplished. True, the church now had the advantage of an advocate skilled in legal debate, and he could marshal compelling arguments against the charges of infanticide and incest, but those of treason and sacrilege were more difficult. As noted Christians, according to Roman law, were guilty; the public character of Christian action in these two cases made the charges inescapable.6

If Tertullian’s goal was to argue that Christians were not guilty of criminal acts and yet acknowledge that in the cases of treason and sacrilege they systematically broke Roman law, the only recourse left was to prove that the laws were flawed. He had somehow to show that these laws, either as written or as commonly understood, were bad laws.

We will also inquire whether Tertullian could have used the Scriptures to any real gain. Several options lay before him. First, he might have explicitly cited or alluded to them as proof for his argument. But he could have done so and accomplished his ultimate goal only if the officials would have accepted the Scriptures as authoritative, which they hardly did.

Two other possibilities lay before him. Following one of them, Tertullian might first have given an apologetic for the Scriptures and then based his further argument on their authority. In fact, he does offer in chapters 18-20 a kind of apologetic. But, as we shall later see, he does not go on to make the Scriptures the basis for his remaining argument.

Or, Tertullian might have used scriptural themes but offered reasons why they should be accepted as true other than that the Scriptures prove them to be true. In doing so, he could have mentioned that these themes were scriptural and even that Christians adopted them because of the Scriptures. At the same time, however, he would have argued that Roman officials should accept them because of other evidence. This last is the method he follows in The Apology.

Before we go on several issues concerning Tertullian’s implicit use of the Scriptures in The Apology merit note. First, his method in The Apology differs sharply from that in his works on heresy. For example, in the Ante-Nicene Fathers the translator, Holmes, identifies 326 citations or allusions to the Bible in Against Praxeas. In The Apology, a document a quarter longer, Thelwall identifies only five. I have found more in The Apology, but certainly not enough to alter the impression the numbers give.

The short explanation for the difference between his method in The Apology and that in the anti-heretical works is that the latter were written to those who accepted the authority of the Scriptures, though the heretics did argue that they were the only ones who properly understood the Scriptures. But since Roman officials did not accept the Scriptures, an argument from them in The Apology would have been fruitless.

Having reached the preliminary view that Tertullian does not base his argument on scriptural authority, we have to inquire whether we can reconcile this method with his well-known rejection of human reason. The Prescription against Heretics (chapter 7) contains his famous remark contrasting human philosophy and God’s revealed word and his assertion that Christians have no need of any source of knowledge beyond their faith. Granted, no one so prolific and creative as Tertullian can be held to rigid consistency, we still query how the same person could say the one thing and then do the other. The contrasting methods seem to be main points in both documents.
We mention this apparent contrast at the outset to indicate an issue that needs to be taken up again at the end of our study. The issue can be put into the form of a question: In order to be thoroughly scriptural and argue for a Christian view on this or that topic, do we have to prove beforehand that the Scriptures offer the sole or even the primary means of support? Or, to pose the question of the work we are presently studying, is Tertullian thoroughly scriptural in The Apology?

Our preliminary observations, therefore, indicate that in The Apology Tertullian primarily uses the Scriptures implicitly, that is, scriptural themes appear without any note to the effect that they have their origins in the Bible. And even when he uses them more explicitly by directly citing them or, as generally happens, by paraphrasing or alluding to them, his primary point is not to use scriptural origin as the reason why pagans ought to believe that an idea is true but simply to show this as the source from which Christian faith and practice have sprung.

We now inquire into Roman legal practice which provided for a review of a law's legitimacy. Tertullian's effort to exonerate Christians required both that it be possible to review a law and also that he follow the rules of legal review. Such a procedure did exist. Before we can make sense of his argument, then, we must get critical aspects of the procedure in mind.

Roman law had originally grown from two sources, from the customs of early Romans and the will of patricians and then in the imperial era from the rulers. Both kinds of law, those from custom and those from the powerful, could very well be nothing more than inherited, self-serving traditions. Those in power had a good deal to gain by making certain that such laws were not amenable to correction from a higher standard.

But a procedure for legal review did evolve within the Roman system. During the period of the republic, the principle of natural law was introduced into Roman jurisprudence. The concept had already pervaded the Mediterranean world, Stoicism first coining its systematic, philosophical form. Settlement the question whether Roman jurists adopted the concept directly from the Stoics or merely from their cultural milieu is unnecessary to our purposes. During the time when Rome's hegemony was extended far beyond the Italian peninsula, the idea of natural law had nearly universal acceptance and was profoundly influencing Roman jurisprudence.

We should make a few remarks about natural law and its relation to jurisprudence. First, natural law governs both that part of the universe which lack self-consciousness and, especially in the case of human beings, that which possesses it. For humans, the good life is achieved when people voluntarily govern their lives according to this law. Thus, through clear thought we can discover natural law and through a positive will we can follow it. Second, Stoic ethics pivoted on the four principles of wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage. Law was particularly concerned with the issue of justice. Third, in natural law theory ethical questions precede legal questions. The validity of a law depends up the degree to which it furthers justice. Fourth, since natural law is a universal principle, the customs of people everywhere should reflect its influence. This does not mean that all national laws are considered just, but that when they are compared, the pervasive character of natural law will appear. Thus, as the power of Rome extended farther and farther, the jus gentium was regarded less as a mere reflection of various ethnic customs and
more as ius naturale.

Now we consider briefly aspects of the procedure in Roman legal review. In a fine article on Tertullian’s exegesis of Scripture J. H. Waszink offers from Cicero (De inventione 2.40.116) four criteria for the examination of legal documents. Waszink makes the point that the African father transferred techniques he learned in working with legal documents to his study of the Scriptures. Putting aside the issue of method in interpreting the Bible, we return to his task as an advocate before a Roman court. The citation mentioned above is illuminating. Cicero writes that controversy over a law “arises from ambiguity, from the letter and intent lex scripto et sententiall, from conflicting laws lex contrantis legibusl, from reasoning by analogy, from definition.” Thus, Cicero offers four ways in which the meaning of a law can be examined to determine whether it is an appropriate law or has been understood appropriately. The four ways are: (1) discovery of original intent, (2) comparison of contradictory laws, (3) discovery of meaning by analogy, and (4) giving precise definition to the law. The principle of natural law is seen most clearly in criterion three, but obviously provides the background for the other three criteria as well.

Before we conclude this section on the practice of Roman legal review, we make several observations which seem to contradict what we have just observed. First, Roman jurisprudence did not begin with the broad theory of natural law and extrapolate from it statutes for particular situations. That is, it did not work from the general to the specific. Rather, its tendency was to review current laws in the light of the general principles and how successfully they achieved equity. It worked from the specific to the general and then back to the specific.

The application of this to Christians is obvious. Roman courts would naturally have seen the laws which required compliance with civil religion as appropriate. The mere assertion that natural law confirmed the Christian case and refuted the law’s legitimacy would have struck them as odd. Only through a detailed argument could the conformity of the Christian case with the principle of natural law have been made compelling.

Second, the fine achievements of Roman law in adapting natural law did not result in its disinterested application to all cases. Those involving Roman citizens and their property garnered the most impressive displays of such legal review. Rank injustice to non-citizens and common people were never reviewed and do not appear to have caused much soul-searching among the government. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix has pointed out that experts in Roman law have long noted a contradiction between high standard and narrow application. In particular, magistrates were given a free hand in cases of criminal law to interpret and apply statutes. Their arbitrary cruelty, extraordinem procedures were sanctioned by the state. They did not act illegally.

Thus, in the time of Tertullian, Roman legal practice offered a method of judicial review by which a statute or a custom could be examined. The general principle behind this procedure was that of natural law. Accordingly, a legal statute was appropriate to the degree it reflected natural law. Roman jurists were charged not only with the task of prosecuting or defending on the basis of enacted laws, but also with examining the appropriateness of laws. However, it would not have been a foregone conclusion that the principle of natural law in the case of Christians would have led to their exoneration. In the mind of a typical Roman jurist, Christian belief was superstitious, hardly something sup-
ported by natural reason. Further, they not only found Christian belief illegal, they also considered it dangerous for the welfare of the state and thus treasonous.

II. TERTULLIAN’S REASONING IN THE APOLOGY

We query now whether Tertullian in fact appealed to the right of legal review in The Apology. In chapter 4 he indicates how he intends to proceed and he explicitly mentions the legal principle he will use in arguing his case. (I have edited the translation myself to divide the paragraphs into shorter and more logical units.)

Well, if I have found what your law prohibits to be good, as one who has arrived at such a previous opinion, has it not lost its power to debar me from it, though that very thing, if it were evil, it would justly forbid me? If your law has gone wrong, it is of human origin, I think; it has not fallen from heaven. Is it wonderful that man should err in making a law, or come to his senses in rejecting it? Did not the Lacedaemonians amend the laws of Lycurgus himself, thereby inflicting such pain on their author that he shut himself up, and doomed himself to death by starvation? Are you not yourselves every day, in your efforts to illumine the darkness of antiquity, cutting and hewing with the new axes of imperial rescripts and edicts, that whole ancient and rugged forest of your laws? Has not Severus, that most resolute of rulers, but yesterday repealed the ridiculous laws which compelled people to have children before the Julian laws allow matrimony to be contracted, and that though they have the authority of age upon their side? There were laws, too, in old times, that parties against whom a decision had been given might be cut in pieces by their creditors; however, by common consent that cruelty was afterwards erased from the statutes, and the capital penalty turned into a brand of shame. By adopting the plan of confiscating a debtor’s goods, it was sought rather to pour the blood in blushes over his face than to pour it out. How many laws lie hidden out of sight which still require to be reformed! For it is neither the number of their years nor the dignity of their maker that commends them, but simply that they are just; and therefore, when their injustice is recognized, they are deservedly condemned, even though they condemn.

We could hardly find a clearer statement that natural law stands above civil enactments than that in the first sentence above. Civil laws which prohibit good as defined by natural law have no legitimate force; natural laws against an evil, though lacking statutory support, are still binding.

This principle forces an obvious insight into civil laws. They are no more than enactments of human beings and must be treated as such. When human error has been discovered, the law must be rescinded.

The last paragraph is crucial to Tertullian’s argument. He does not bitterly accuse his readers of evil or stubbornness. He gently explains that they may have followed bad laws out of ignorance. But the laws should now be reviewed. Only one criterion can justify keeping a law: the justice of the law.
We turn to Tertullian’s explicit discussion of the Scriptures in chapters 18-20. The standard edition of The Apology has 50 chapters, the section on the Scriptures appearing about one third of the way in the work. If Tertullian based his argument on the authority of the Scriptures, he would have developed the first third of the book as an apology for them and in the last two thirds argued from them. But he does not, as we have noted. We can show how this is the case by comparing the arguments of chapters 17 and 18. Chapter 17 describes how humans have a kind of natural knowledge of God.

The eye cannot see Him, though He is (spiritually) visible. He is incomprehensible, though in grace He is manifested. He is beyond our utmost thought, though our human faculties conceive Him. He is therefore equally real and great. But that which, in the ordinary sense, can be seen and handled and conceived, is inferior to the eyes by which it is taken in, and the hands by which it is tainted, and the faculties by which it is discovered; but that which is infinite is known only to itself. This it is which gives some notion of God, while yet beyond all our conceptions—our very incapacity of fully grasping Him affords us the idea of what He really is. He is presented to our minds in His transcendent greatness, as at once known and unknown. And this is the crowning guilt of men, that they will not recognize One, of whom they cannot possibly be ignorant. Would you have proof from the works of His hands, so numerous and so great, which both contain you and sustain you, which minister at once to your enjoyment and strike you with awe; or would you rather have it from the testimony of the soul itself? Though under the oppressive bondage of the body, though led astray by depraving customs, though enervated by lusts and passions, though in slavery to false gods; yet, whenever the soul comes to itself, as out of a surfeit, or a sleep, or a sickness, and attains something of its natural soundness, it speaks of God; using no other word, because this is the peculiar name of the true God. “God is great and good,” “which may God give,” are the words on every lip. It bears witness, too, that God is judge, exclaiming, “God sees,” and, “I commend myself to God,” and, “God will repay me.” O noble testimony of the soul by nature Christian! Then, too, in using such words as these, it looks not to the Capitol, but to the heavens. It knows that there is the throne of the living God, as from Him and from thence itself came down.

This passage mirrors themes of Romans 1:18ff. and Acts 17:24ff., though differences also appear. The ideas about the testimony of material nature to God have been transmuted from the Scriptures, if we must find sources, through such predecessors as the African Munucius Felix (The Octavius, chapters 17-18). Tertullian’s reflections upon his predecessor’s work may have shaped how he read the Scriptures.

Tertullian values the testimony of the soul. While he argues that reflection on the material universe leads to recognition of the living and transcendent God, he also says that the inner soul of the human involuntarily testifies to truth about God. Then he makes the astounding observation that the soul is naturally Christian (animae naturaliter Christianae). Bray claims that Tertullian hardly ignores the fallen condition of the human, since he had just catalogued shackles that inhibit a clear knowledge of God. This
claim is true, yet the whole point of the words which follow the recognition of this condition is that the soul persistently reflects an apprehension of God.

Now we turn to chapter 18 which specifically mentions the Scriptures.

But, that we might attain an ampler and more authoritative knowledge at once of Himself, and of His counsels and will, God has added a written revelation for the behoof of every one whose heart is set on seeking Him, that seeking he may find, and finding believe, and believing obey. For from the first He sent messengers into the world-men whose stainless righteousness made them worthy to know the Most High, and to reveal Him-men abundantly endowed with the Holy Spirit, that they might proclaim that there is one God only who made all things, who formed man from the dust of the ground (for He is the true Prometheus) who gave order to the world by arranging the seasons and their course. These have further set before us the proofs He has given of His majesty in His judgments by floods and fires, the rules appoint by Him for securing His favour, as well as the retribution in store of the ignoring, forsaking and keeping them, as being about the end of all to adjudge His worshippers to everlasting life, and the wicked to the doom of fire at once without ending and without break, raising up again all the dead from the beginning, reforming and renewing them with the object of awarding either recompense. Once these things were with us, too, the theme of ridicule. We are of your stock and nature: men are made, not born, Christians. The preachers of whom we have spoken are called prophets, from the office which belongs to them of predicting the future. Their words, as well as the miracles which they performed, that men might have faith in their divine authority, we have still in the literary treasures they have left, and which are open to all.

Tertullian does not mince his words. Knowledge given through revelation is superior to that given through any other form, not just parallel to it. Echoes of the Scriptures are numerous, as are more muted echoes of the rule of faith. Likening his former attitude to that of his auditors, as a mocker of Christian ideas, Tertullian reinforces the view that calm reflection can result in great change.

The balance of chapters 18-20 gives an apology for the Scriptures in three strokes. Its divine authority is shown by: (1) the remarkable translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek (chapter 18); (2) the antiquity of the Hebrew Scriptures which predate the Greeks, Egyptians, or other ancients renown for their wisdom (chapter 19); and (3) the amazing fulfillment of scriptural prophecies (chapter 20).

Thus, chapters 18-20 offer an apology for the Hebrew Scriptures. But once Tertullian finished these comments, he returned to his previous argument and employed it throughout the balance of the book. Noting that Christianity was born in the time of Tiberius, and thus is not so ancient as the religion of Israel, he connects the two eras by observing that the prophets of Israel predicted the coming of Jesus. But we hear no citation of the New Testament Scriptures, only echoes them.

Tertullian’s next move (in chapter 21) is stunning. He compares teaching about Christ with themes found in pagan thought.
Accordingly, He appeared among us, whose coming to renovate and illuminate man’s nature was pre-announced by God—I mean Christ, that Son of God. And so the supreme Head and Master of this grace and discipline, the Enlightener and Trainer of the human race, God’s own Son, was announced among us, born—but not so born as to make Him ashamed of the name of Son or of His paternal origin. It was not His lot to have as His father, by incest with a sister, or by violation of a daughter or another’s wife, a god in the shape of serpent, or ox, or bird, or lover, for his vile ends transmuting himself into the gold of Danus. They are your divinities upon whom these base deeds of Jupiter were done. But the Son of God has no mother in any sense which involves impurity; she whom men suppose to be His mother in the ordinary way, had never entered into the marriage bond. But, first, I shall discuss His essential nature, and so the nature of His birth will be understood. We have already asserted that God made the world, and all which contains, by His Word, and Reason, and Power. It is abundantly plain that your philosophers, too, regard the Logos—that is, the Word and Reason—as the Creator of the universe. For Zeno lays it down that he is the creator, having made all things according to a determinate plan; that his name is Father and God, and the soul of Jupiter, and the necessity of all things. Cleanthes ascribes all this to the spirit, which he maintains pervades the universe. And we, in like manner, hold that the Word, and Reason, and Power, by which we have said God made all, have spirit as their proper essential substratum, in which the Word has in being to give forth utterances, and reason abides to dispose and arrange, and power is over all to execute. We have been taught that He proceeds forth from God, and in that procession He is generated; so that He is the Son of God, and is called God from unity of substance with God.

Tertullian boldly compares Christian and pagan ideas. Pagan ideas, he implies, can be drawn from two kinds of sources, myths and philosophy. The two do not have equal value. Though myths may resemble Christian teaching in that both refer to a divine son, they differ in that Christ’s birth is unlike anything their vile stories report. Some philosophy, on the other hand, more closely resembles Christian teaching, since both speak of the Creator as God’s Word, Reason, and Power. Tertullian hardly suggests that philosophers who spoke in this fashion had a clear idea of the truth, but he believes they were approaching truth, and this is far from the case with the myths.

Christians, according to Tertullian, read the Scriptures for two reasons. First, as implied in what we have noted, they provide clear knowledge of the truth; second, they give clear directives for living. For the second, I include the one instance, and the only instance I have discovered, in which Tertullian explicitly cites from the Bible in The Apology and indicates he is doing so (chapter 31).

But we merely, you say, flatter the emperor, and feign these prayers of ours to escape persecution. Thank you for your mistake, for you give us the opportunity of proving our allegations. Do you, then, who think we care nothing for the welfare of Caesar look into God’s revelations, examine our sacred books, which we do not keep in hiding, and which many accidents put into the hands of those
who are not of us. Learn from them that a large benevolence is enjoined upon us, even so far as to supplicate God for our enemies, and to beseech blessings on our persecutors [Matthew 5:44]. Who, then, are greater enemies and persecutors of Christians, than the very parties with treason against whom we are charged? Nay, even in terms, and most clearly, the Scripture say, “Pray for kings, and rules, and powers, that all may be peace with you” [11 Timothy 2:21]. For when there is disturbance in the empire, if the commotion is felt by its other members, surely we too, though we are not to be given to disorder, are to be found in some place or other which the calamity affects.

The Scriptures explain Christian behavior. Christians do the The Apology (hence the quotation) what the Scriptures instruct them to do. Such use of the Scriptures has a restricted purpose. Tertullian is not asking that his readers agree with them; he merely asks that they note how seriously Christians read them. For Christians the Scriptures provide the rule of life.

Chapter 39 offers a fascinating description of Christian worship. In agreement with what we have seen before, he here describes how the Scriptures shape Christian belief and conduct. The new element in this passage is that through this window into early Christian worship we envision the actual process.

I shall at once go on, then, to exhibit the peculiarities of the Christian society, that, as I have refuted the evil charged against it, I may point out its positive good. We are a body knit together as such by a common religious profession, by unity of discipline, and by the bond of a common hope. We meet together as an assembly and congregation, that, offering up prayer to God as with united force, we may wrestle with Him in our supplications. This violence God delights in. We pray, too, for the emperors, for their ministers and for all in authority, for the welfare of the world, for the prevalence of peace, for the delay of the final consummation. We assemble to read our sacred writings, if any peculiarity of the time makes either forewarnings or reminiscence needful. However it be in that respect, with the sacred words we nourish our faith, we animate our hope, we make our confidence more steadfast; and no less by incitations of God’s precepts we confirm good habits. In the same place also exhortations are made, rebukes and sacred censures are administered. For with a great gravity is the work of judging carried on among us, as befits those who feel assured that they are in the sight of God; and you have the most notable example of judgment to come when any one has sinned so grievously as to require his severance from us in prayer, in the congregation and in all sacred intercourse.

In chapter 9, Tertullian takes up the charges against Christians of criminal acts. He begins by noting that pagans are guilty of infanticide. Citizens of his own country had formerly sacrificed infants to Saturn, and some continued the practice in secret. Tiberius, in an unsuccessful effort to eradicate the evil, had actually ordered the priests involved to be crucified. Why, Tertullian ironically asks, should Roman officials want Christians to worship the very deity unable to save his own children?

He next takes up the issue of cultic murder beyond that of children and mentions
cases where it was still practiced. He notes one instance in which the pagans, because they sacrificed a beast-fighter so his was not innocent blood, did not think it a crime. He queries: “Is it less, because of that, the blood of a man?”

Then, returning to the issue of infanticide, he asks whether sacrifice is the only way such a vile act could be carried out. Pagans have found many ways to dispose of unwanted children and suffer no punishment: drowning, exposure, and abortion. The last, he reasons, is impossible for Christians.

In our case, murder being once for all forbidden, we may not destroy even the foetus in the womb, while as yet the human being derives blood from other parts of the body for its sustenance. To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man-killing; nor does it matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to birth. That is a man which is going to be one [homo est et qui est futurus!]; you have the fruit already in its seed.

Tertullian next considers blood-eating. Human blood had been consumed for several reasons: to seal a covenant between friends, to initiate one into the cult of the goddess Bellona, to cure epilepsy by consuming the blood of gladiators. Then, having mentioned the games, Tertullian goes on to speak of those who devour bears which have in their viscera undigested human flesh. He asks: Is this really less than cannibalism? We note in this passage how he alludes to the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:29).

Blush for your vile ways before the Christians, who have not even the blood of animals at their meals of simple and natural food; who abstain from things strangled and that die a natural death, or no other reason than that they may not contract pollution, so much as from blood secreted in the viscera. To clench the matter with a single example, you tempt Christians with sausages of blood, just because you are perfectly aware that the thing by which you thus try to get them to transgress they hold unlawful.

After naming more cases of murder or cannibalism, justified by the pagans, Tertullian turns to the issue of incest. We hear again the same litany of contradictions between pagan rage at what Christians supposedly do and what is known of them. The practice of incest was enjoined by Jupiter, reported of Persians, and glorified by Greeks in the story of Oedipus. Exposure of infants makes a pagan vulnerable to unintentional incest. Here is an infant left to the elements, picked up by a sympathetic stranger, and raised to maturity. Years later, not knowing the biological origins, the pagan giving way to uninhibited lust may have intercourse with this relative.

In contrast, Christian sexual ethics provide absolute protection from incest. The discipline of the church is clearly visible.

A persevering and steadfast chastity has protected us from anything like this: keeping as we do from adulteries and all post-marital unfaithfulness, we are not exposed to incestuous mishaps. Some of us, making matters still more secure, got away from them entirely the power of sensual sin, by a virgin continence, still boys in this respect when they are old.
III. THE SCRIPTURES IN THE APOLOGY’S ARGUMENT

We return to the issue raised earlier, whether Tertullian contradicts himself when he says one thing in The Prescription Against Heretics and does another in The Apology. Actually, the contradiction might be more profound than at first recognized. In this case Tertullian would have explicitly argued for one method of discovering truth and excluded another in The Prescription and then would have systematically used the excluded method in The Apology.

Within The Apology Tertullian follows the techniques of Roman legal debate. He depends upon the principles of natural law and its corollary, general revelation, to an astonishing degree. He applies the principles in various ways to show how they confirm Christian thought. His argument from the beginning to the end proceeds on the assumption that this mode of argumentation is valid and will succeed. He nowhere breaks from it. He nowhere leaves us with the impression that he is merely playing the pagan’s game but does not believe their rules are valid. Observations made now and then about the Scriptures introduce no new pattern of argument.

All of this leads us to an important conclusion. Tertullian really believes natural law and the Scriptures converge in some ways. We do not ignore that he acknowledges the serious problems with natural reason, as was discussed in the passage from chapter 17. But he suggests that in all people the soul innately knows something better about God than pagan thought reflects.

Does all of this make the Scriptures irrelevant? Or, to put the question a different way: Are there two equally reliable paths to the truth about God and his will, Scripture and natural reason and law? We observe several points in this regard, both drawn from The Apology.

What the pagan world offers is a mass of confusion within which there are only shreds of truth. These shreds are so mixed with error that pagans never follow them up. Therefore, he does not appeal to natural law so that pagans will follow it by itself but that they will note how their better thoughts parallel themes in Christian teaching.

The Scriptures, on the other hand, offer clear direction, and they are the source of Christian faith and practice. Nowhere in The Apology does Tertullian suggest that Christians have come to the truth about God (that he is spiritual and one) or do correct things (such as not kill or be chaste) because natural reason or natural law has enlightened them. The Scriptures awaken within the latent but darkened shreds of truth that natural reason and law reflect. They give clear instruction on the truth.

If this is all true, then, a second issue must be considered, the relation of the Scriptures to the ‘rule of faith.’ As is well known, Tertullian and Irenaeus (Against Heresies 3:4:1-2; 4:26:2-3) first articulated the concept of the rule, the former stating it in boldest form (The Prescription Against Heretics chapter 19, see chapters 12ff). A few comments must suffice.

First, Tertullian did not see a necessary tension between the rule and the Scriptures as Protestants might. For him the two agreed perfectly, and any fear that an unresolvable conflict might arise is anachronistic.

Second, Tertullian appealed to the rule’s authority in debates with gnostics. He did so for a simple reason: Both Catholics and gnostics believed the Scriptures supported their teachings; and the gnostics, it should be noted, had developed sophisticated interpreta-
tions and hermeneutics. Tertullian knew how well the gnostics went about their business and how skillfully they confused simple Catholics through a display of scriptural learning. So he short-circuited their claims by saying that according to the rule, which every Catholic knew, their case fell apart. It was not necessary in his opinion to refute them point by point from the Bible, showing how the Catholic view was correct and the gnostic wrong. Tedious debates (as his longest work, Against Marcion) had their place, and he hardly feared that Catholics could not prove their case by the Scriptures. But gnostic views contradicted Christian faith at its core, as witnessed to in the rule, and their learning was merely a display which confused the issues.

A more serious question may be embedded in our query about the relation of the rule to the Scriptures in Tertullian’s thought: Have church traditions invaded and reshaped Christian teaching, so that they fundamentally contradict the Scriptures? Frequently, we hear the complaint that second, third, and fourth century teachers of the church converted the Hebrew religion of Jesus and the apostles into the Greek one of historic orthodoxy.

The complaint, however, is often driven by an agenda, so that the scholars object when the early teachers of the church failed to endorse their favorites views which they imaginatively find in the heroes the Bible. Adolf Harnack11 is sure the ontological language of orthodoxy betrayed Jesus’ simple gospel and made Christianity impossible for modern people. Anders Nygren12 is sure Tertullian is little more than a Christian moralist and did not understand Paul and grace, as Luther did. G. E. Wright13 is sure the language of the creeds obscured the Old Testament’s vision of the God who acts. The list could go on. I only make a few comments relevant to our present task.

This complaint is wrong-headed and simplistic. There is no doubt that there is a clear attempt to translate the Gospel into language that conforms to the cultural environment the church lived in. But that is quite another thing from betrayal of its basic values. We can in fact argue the reverse: Unless the Church can translate its values into the language of its cultural environment, it has not really grasped the heart of these values. The pertinent question is: Does the church speak the language of the people and replace the values embedded in that language with Christian values? That is precisely what Tertullian attempted to achieve in the Apology.

Using hellenistic categories and hellenistic terms as justice, treason, and sacrilege, Tertullian redefined what those concepts ought to mean, infusing them with Christian values. He did not argue that a nation can survive without justice; he did argue that the pure Gospel provides the best picture of justice. He did not argue that a nation can survive without divine worship; he did argue that Christians alone really know the true God and how to worship him. He did not argue that a civilization can survive without obedience; he did argue that Christian ethics offered the highest form of serving the state. Whether the new definitions he gave to the terms were correct, whether his arguments were convincing, and whether he betrayed the Gospel at this or that point are not our major concern. In The Apology Tertullian redefined in legally approved terms the values of Roman civilization according to his Christian understanding of justice, citizenship, and religion.14

In a little more than a century after Tertullian wrote, the Roman Empire officially became Christian. Measuring The Apology’s role in converting the empire offers special difficulties, since the intellectual transformation of a culture is hidden from public view.
We can see events which suggest a transformation is happening; we cannot see the process itself or describe all the factors in it. It might be easy to assign more success to Tertullian than he merits; certainly others made great contributions. However, the nature of his treatise suggests that his work was more important than some wish to acknowledge.\textsuperscript{15}

The collapse of paganism’s dominance in the Mediterranean world signifies more than purely political decisions or military acts. Paganism had lost its credibility; it no longer explained the world. The temples were empty and their priests went unpaid, because the values these institutions required for maintenance were no longer embraced. The intellectual universe had shifted in a Christian direction.

Several factors are involved in the intellectual foundation of a civilization: (1) What questions does it spend its intellectual energy trying to solve? (2) What criteria does it use to judge truth from error? (3) What terms does it use to embody its values? (4) What definitions do these crucial terms possess? In The Apology Tertullian did not set the agenda for the first three questions. The Romans decided that service of the state through divine worship was crucial for the survival of the state, that judicial review could occur under an appeal to natural law, and that treason and sacrilege were criminal acts. It is in the last category, the definition of these terms, that Tertullian made his contribution.

Though many bemoan Constantine’s act as the tragic time when the church invited the world into its soul, it was inevitable. Certainly it was to his political advantage. Certainly the spiritual fervor of the church contributed; “the blood of Christians I was seed” (chapter 50). But the intellectual groundwork had also been laid. The case for paganism had been eroded. Rage against Christians for the crimes of treason and sacrilege could not be sustained, because huge numbers of people now understood these concepts in more Christian terms. The church had succeeded in transvaluing them.

To take terms infused with pagan values and redefine them so they bear Christian values, as Tertullian attempted and in some degree accomplished in The Apology, is a supreme act of the loyal opposition.\textsuperscript{16}

NOTES
7. An excellent summary of this entire question can be found in *Outlines of Roman Law: Comprising its Historical Growth and General Principles* by William C. Morey (New York, NY: Putnam, 1889), pp. 107ff.


13. For example, see his comments in *God Who Acts* (Studies in Biblical Theology, 8; London: SCM, 1952), pp. 107-111.

14. The thesis that Tertullian redefined intellectual categories to invest them with Christian values has been dealt with at length by Jean-Claude Fredouille in *Tertullien et la conversion de la culture antique* (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1972). Relevant to our study especially is chapter 5, part 1, pp. 235ff.

15. For example, in an extended note W. H. C. Frend in *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), p. 358, disputes the thesis of Barnes and Fredouille that Tertullian was “a seminal thinker who was also a bridge between the pagan and the Christian worlds.”

16. My thesis is diametrically opposed to that of H. Richard Niebuhr in *Christ and Culture* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1951). Niebuhr identifies Tertullian as an example, if not the greatest one in the post-biblical era, of “Christ against culture” (pp. 51ff.). He goes on to identify Augustine as a great example of Christ transforming culture (pp. 206ff.). In this paper I have argued that The Apology attempts precisely what Niebuhr has in mind with Christ transforming culture. Further Augustine, working two centuries after Tertullian, was clearly in the latter’s debt. Paganism in Augustine’s time, was not only on the run; it was crippled. See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkley, CA: University of California, 1967), pp. 299ff.
CHARISMATIC PROPHECY AS LOYAL OPPOSITION IN THE SECOND-CENTURY CHURCH

TED A. CAMPBELL

INTRODUCTION

Among the many reasons for honoring Professor Robert Lyon, one is the model he has set for so many students and indeed for more distant admirers (such as myself) as a dedicated advocate of “Loyal Opposition” in the Church and in the academy. From his example, I have come to understand “Loyal Opposition” as a spirit that opposes institutional compromise and lethargy, on the one hand, but on the other hand elects to work within the system for change. I am grateful for Professor Lyon’s example, and pray that what follows may be helpful in continuing his work in making “Loyal Opposition” a living alternative for contemporary Christians.

The notion of a “Loyal Opposition” has been illustrated throughout the history of the Christian church by a train of brilliant (if sometimes eccentric) saints, including early Christian monks, the followers of Francis and Clare of Assisi, the Reformers of the sixteenth century, early Pietists, Moravians and Methodists, and a host of others. What I wish to offer in the essay that follows is an attempt to connect this on-going tradition of “Loyal Opposition” with its roots in the New Testament. The connection is made by way of the phenomenon of charismatic prophecy, which appeared in the New Testament period and continued to challenge early Christian communities through the end of the second century.

The subject bears particular interest, I think, because in the second century the Christian communities began to face in a critical way the crises of institutional compromise and lethargy which would beset the Church so many times thereafter. The letters of Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna (ca. the 110s C.E.) reveal a developing institutional structure to the churches of Asia Minor, where a three-fold order of deacons, elders, and bishops had emerged, with submission to the bishops seen as a key to church stability. On the other hand, the Didache (its date is much

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SPRING 2001 VOL 56 - NO 1
disputed; probably from the first half of the second century) presupposes the existence of itinerant prophets who were expected to preside at eucharists, and the *Shepherd of Hermas* (written the 140s C.E.) is in itself an account of prophetic visions received by a Roman Christian. By the time the Montanist movement emerged (ca. the 170s) charismatic prophecy had begun to be regarded as eccentric by many second-century Christians, but even later writers such as Irenaeus of Lyon and Hippolytus (both writing around 200 C.E.) presumed that the gift of prophecy was still exercised in some quarters of the churches. An examination of the phenomenon of charismatic prophecy, then, will illuminate a significant transition in the life of the Christian communities, a transition in which a “Loyal Opposition” became necessary.

**Charismatic Prophecy in the New Testament**

In order to make clear the role of charismatic prophecy as a “Loyal Opposition” in the second century, it will be worthwhile to consider for a moment the role that charismatic prophecy had played in the New Testament age. Here we are in danger of belaboring a rather obvious point, namely, that the religion of the New Testament included charismatic prophecy as a central and distinctive element.

Jewish author Geza Vermes has made an intriguing suggestion about the character of Jesus: Vermes points out that although Jesus did not fulfill the typical image of the first-century rabbis of Jerusalem, he did in fact reflect the image of what we know of first-century Galilean rabbis, a circle to which Vermes refers as first-century “charismatic Judaism.” Jesus appeared both in the role of *rabbi* (teacher) and of *nabi* (prophet) and his identification with the movement of John the Baptist solidified his identification with the prophetic tradition in tension with the institutional Judaism of his day.

Instances of Christian prophecy after Jesus are numerous in the New Testament. The prophet Agabus mentioned in the Acts, for instance, predicted a famine (Acts 11:28); Paul himself records an ecstatic vision in which he (or the person whom he describes) was “caught up into Paradise” (2 Cor 12:1-4). Perhaps more importantly, Christian “prophets” (so called) were consistently enumerated as constituting a recognized caste or office within early Christian communities, typically enumerated immediately after the rank of “apostles” (1 Cor 12:28, Rom 12:6, Eph 4:11, Acts 13:1). The consistency in these lists suggests that these designations (including that of “prophet”) were not merely *ad hoc* designations of leadership roles, but were early on recognized as common positions across widely different Christian communities. The book of the Revelation, moreover, stands as an intact example of New Testament prophecy, and its position within the canon (not undisputed) signifies the importance of visions and prophecy within the continuing Church well beyond the New Testament period.

Although the prophets of the New Testament age existed within the structure of the early communities as a distinctive caste or office, it is easy to see how their ministry took on an “oppositional” character. For Jesus, this oppositional character was expressed in tension with both ruling elites (Sadducees) and rabbinic experts (Pharisees), setting off the lowly and humble (the *ptochoi*, “spat upon”; Matt 5:3) against the high and mighty. In the Revelation, especially the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev 2-3), prophetic opposition is directed against the churches’ lethargy (“lukewarmness”) and their compro-
mises in the face of Roman oppression and Roman civil religious demands. In this we may see prophetic opposition in the context of second- or perhaps third-generation Christian communities, reacting no longer against the institutions of Judaism but rather against the existing institutions of Christian communities.

It is important to note, however, that the Revelation’s positive reliance on charismatic prophecy does not seem to have characterized all of the communities represented in the later New Testament literature. If the Revelation stands as an affirmation of charismatic and “oppositional” prophecy, the Pastoral Epistles and the letters attributed to Peter bear a different character. In these letters, “prophecy” (when used positively) seems to denote only the writings of the Old Testament (or perhaps an occasional pagan “prophet,” Tit 1:12). There are consistent warnings about “false prophets” (2 Pet 2:1-3), but the contemporary offices of the church listed in these works were deacons, “widows,” and presbyter-bishops. The office of contemporary Christian “prophet” that had appeared prominently in the Pauline lists is notoriously absent in these letters. In this we may see a development that foreshadows Ignatius of Antioch’s more institutional church structure in the early second century.

The New Testament literature, then, indicates that charismatic prophecy was at first a central element of the Christian movement, typified in the ministry of Jesus himself, with a caste or office of “prophet” recognized consistently in the early Christian communities associated with Paul. The later New Testament literature suggests a growing division between those communities in which visionary prophecy was normative (viz., the community represented by the Revelation) and those other communities in which Christian prophets no longer appeared as recognized leaders (viz., the Pastoral Epistles and the first and second letters attributed to Peter).

**Charismatic Prophecy in the Early Second Century**

This divergence over the role of Christian prophecy continued into the early second century, and the literature of the so-called “Apostolic Fathers” reflects both sides of the divergence.² On the more institutional side, continuing the tradition of the Pastoral Epistles, are the letters attributed to Ignatius of Antioch, generally dated from the 110s C.E. It would be wrong to characterize Ignatius himself as “compromised,” since the letters we have from him were written while he was being conveyed to Rome, under guard, to face martyrdom. The letters stand as a critical development in the polity of the early Christian communities, though, because in them the three-fold order of deacons, presbyters (presbuteroi, “priests” or “elders”) and bishops appears plainly. Absent in them are the “widows” of the Pastoral Epistles, and the offices of “presbyter” and “bishop,” confused or perhaps identical in the Pastoral epistles, appear in Ignatius as clearly distinct offices. The Ignatian letters presuppose throughout a congregational structure in the churches of Asia Minor in which there were many deacons and presbyters in each city-church, but a single bishop for each.

Since, then, in the persons already mentioned I have seen your whole community in faith and have loved it, I exhort you: be eager to do all things in godly concord, with the bishop set over you in the place of God, and the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles, and the deacons, most sweet to me, entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ....³
We should note Ignatius’s reference to “the bishop set over you in the place of God” in this quotation from his letter to the Magnesians (6:1). If there is a consistent theme to the Ignatian correspondence, it is the necessity of unity in the church grounded in obedience to a single bishop in each community. Ignatius consistently utilizes the parallelism given above, with the bishop in the place of God and presbyters and deacons subject to the bishop.⁷

In one place (Philadelphians 5:2) Ignatius acknowledged his love for “the prophets,” presumably Christian prophets (although this has been disputed). At this point, though, Ignatius affirmed the role of the prophets so long as they remained within the unity of the church.⁸ Thus, although there may have remained Christian prophets in the churches of Asia Minor in Ignatius’s time, they were never given a consistent place in Ignatius’s understanding of the authoritative offices of the church, and he understood that their conduct and teaching had to be subject to local bishops.

The situation is very different with the ancient Christian text called the Didache or “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles.” The date of this text is much disputed—estimates range from the middle of the first century to late in the second century—but the work is probably an early second-century compilation of earlier written and oral traditions, some of which may date from the first century.⁹ On the one hand, the community described in the Didache had deacons and bishops (apparently multiple bishops) answering to the pattern of the Pastoral epistles, and a distinction between bishops and presbyters is not made in the work (15:1). On the other hand, the Didache describes a number of traveling Christian leaders: “apostles,” “prophets,” and “teachers,” and gives fairly lengthy descriptions of these (11–13). The bishops and deacons can be described as ‘your honorable men together with the prophets and teachers’ (15:2).¹⁰ Since the prophets and teachers (and itinerant “apostles”) are described separately, this passage indicates two different types of leadership in the Didache community: local deacons and bishops, and traveling (or “itinerant”) apostles, prophets, and teachers. Although local congregational leaders are warned to test the itinerants carefully to be sure of their validity, there seems to have been a sense in which, once tested, the itinerants held authority over local officials. After a discussion of the method of celebrating eucharist, the Didache concludes, “but [allow] the prophets to hold Eucharist as they will” (10:7).¹¹

The fact that the Didache is concerned to root out false itinerants (apostles, prophets, and teachers) should indicate some level of tension between local and itinerant leaders in the community. But the community of the Didache seems to have integrated this tension in a different way than the communities of Asia Minor depicted in the Ignatian epistles. For the community of the Didache the “loyal opposition” of the itinerant prophets had become a part of the on-going life of the community. On the one hand, it can be argued that the Didache’s community is closer to that of the Pauline churches of the New Testament, since the same sets of “primitive” offices appear in both (apostles, prophets, teacher, etc.; this makes the case for an early dating of the Didache). On the other hand, it could be argued that the Didache represents a “Montanist” community because of the prominent role played by the prophets (this would make the case for a late second-century dating of the work). Neither of these extremes is necessary, however, if we recognize an on-going tradition of charismatic prophecy that extended from the Pauline period
through the early second century right up to the Montanist movement (probably in the 170s C.E. and thereafter). This would conform to the most consistent scholarly datings of the Didache, and would indicate the importance of the work as presenting a picture of a more "charismatic" early second-century community that stands in rather sharp contrast to the community represented in the epistles of Ignatius of Antioch.

One other work reckoned among the "Apostolic Fathers" can be considered here, and that is the "Shepherd of Hermas." Mentioned in the Muratorian fragment as having been written quite recently, in our own time in the city of Rome, by Hermas, while his brother Pius was sitting on the throne of the church of the city of Rome\textsuperscript{12}

the work may be dated rather accurately to 148 C.E. (or the months immediately before and after it) in Rome. The work bears significance in our discussion because, like the Revelation in the New Testament, it is an intact example of early Christian prophecy.

The "Shepherd of Hermas" contains a sundry collection of divine revelations given to Hermas involving a number of divine beings representing Christ (one figure for Christ is a shepherd, hence the title of the work) or the personification of the Church (the figure is of a woman, the "Bride" of Christ). The work seems to presuppose the rather rigorous doctrine of many early Christian communities, that post-baptismal sins could not be forgiven (cf. Heb 6:4-6). One of the primary (and first) revelations of the work is that

After you have made known these words to them, which the Master commanded me to reveal to you, all the sins which they have formerly committed shall be forgiven them, and they shall be forgiven to all the saints who have sinned up to this day, if they repent with their whole heart, and put aside doublemindedness from their heart.\textsuperscript{13}

That is to say, Christ makes a one-time offer of forgiveness for post-baptismal sins if the church will repent sincerely. It is interesting to consider this as a prophetic message, for it does, in a sense, "liberalize" the church's earlier rigorism, and could be taken as a first sign of growing laxity in the early church regarding moral life. Nevertheless, the issue was apparently taken so seriously that only by a divine revelation such as this one could the church consider changing its approach. The "Shepherd of Hermas," then, shows how prophecy could influence the early church to change its accepted ways, even in a less rigorous direction.

The early second century in general, then, presents a varied picture with respect to charismatic prophecy. Some communities seem to have been moving towards a formalized local structure in which prophecy was pushed to the periphery of the community's life. The communities in Asia Minor represented by Ignatius of Antioch represent this situation. In other areas, though, prophecy seems to have persisted. We do not know of Hermas's influence in the Roman church (the Muratorian fragment treats it skeptically), but in the community represented by the Didache itinerant charismatic leaders seem to have played a central, perhaps defining role. We should be safe in concluding, I think, that
through the end of the second century the two strands represented in the New Testament and in these communities both continued as vital forms of Christian religious life.

**CHARISMATIC PROPHECY AND THE MONTANIST MOVEMENT**

By the end of the second century, though, the more institutional and less prophetic tradition represented by Ignatius of Antioch seems to have been winning the day. The rise of Montanism, or perhaps we should say the isolation of charismatic prophecy in the Montanist movement, gives clear evidence that by the 180s charismatic prophecy was seen as increasingly “eccentric,” i.e., outside of the centers of Christian thought and life.

The Montanist movement was described by Eusebius of Caesarea, Epiphanius, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and other ancient Christian writers. A consensus of ancient and modern scholarship places the origins of the movement in the 170s C.E. The movement was centered in Phrygia, headed by a prophet named Montanus and prophetesses Prisca (or Priscilla) and Maximilla. Attempts to prove that Montanism was grounded in a pagan Phrygian cult, or that the Montanists perpetuated theological or christological heresies have not received wide acceptance.

The distinguishing mark of the Montanist movement, then, lay not in the area of doctrine, but in the claim that the gift of prophecy through the Holy Spirit was truly given to Montanus, Prisca, Maximilla, and other “prophets” of the movement. Not surprisingly, the movement was referred to by some ancient authors as “the new prophecy.” Secondly, at least in the Montanist community known to Tertullian, the movement stood for a rigorous Christian morality reminiscent of older eras of the Church’s life. In both of these respects, however, Montanism appears within the development of Christian polity not as an aberration from an originally institutional Christian church, but rather as a local expression of a tradition of Christian prophecy which, as we have seen above, extended from the age of Paul through the communities represented by the Revelation in the New Testament, and then by the Didache and the “Shepherd of Hermas” in the early and middle parts of the second century. Thus, Hans von Campenhausen refers to Montanism as “a reactionary phenomenon” insofar as it reflected this earlier strand of Christian prophetic tradition.

If this is true, though, it remains to be explained why the movement should have received such a consistently negative response from those communities that in retrospect have been identified as orthodox. Eusebius of Caesarea noted that the movement was condemned very early on:

> For when the faithful throughout Asia had met frequently and at many places for this purpose, and on examination of the newfangled teachings had pronounced them profane, and rejected the heresy, these persons were thus expelled from the Church and shut off from its communion.

But these councils did not carry weight beyond Asia, for Tertullian noted that at one point the Bishop of Rome (in the early third century) had briefly acknowledged the validity of the movement.

Two more likely explanations for the isolation of Montanism as a “heresy” excluded
from communion with the orthodox can be offered. First, the ecclesiastical power structure centered in monarchical bishops and represented by Irenaeus of Lyons seems to have prevailed by the end of the second century in those communities that were also reckoned to be theologically orthodox. The older pattern involving itinerant prophets, which had been a living option up until the middle of the second century, seems to have been increasingly “eccentric,” i.e., outside of the center of the churches’ life, from that time. Second, the very use of charismatic prophecy by the Montanists seems also to have been regarded as unusual. Although some early Christian writers from the third century and beyond preserved the memory that prophecy had at one time been exercised in the Church, others frankly acknowledged that the age of prophecy had passed. Tertullian’s contemporary Origen wrote,

Moreover, the Holy Spirit gave signs of His presence at the beginning of Christ’s ministry, and after His ascension He gave still more; but since that time these signs have diminished, although there are still traces of His presence in a few who have had their soul purified by the Gospel, and their actions regulated by His influence.

In both of these respects then, both in its rejection of episcopal authority and its continuing use of the charismata such as prophecy, the Montanist movement represents a strand of earlier Christian tradition that had become dissociated with the communities reckoned as orthodox.

But Montanism, perhaps especially as represented in Tertullian’s later career, did function as a kind of “Loyal Opposition” in the later second century and beyond. It serves to remind us—and perhaps it should serve to remind the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches today—that the consistent three-fold ministerial orders of deacon, presbyter, and bishop were not established in the churches without considerable time, and not without considerable loss. The loss I refer to was the loss of living prophecy as a “normal” part of the life of the Church. The Montanist movement shows, if nothing else, the tragic reality that by the end of the second century the exercise of this kind of “loyal opposition” was regarded eccentric (at best) and heretical (at worst) for most Christian communities.

CONCLUSION: CHARISMATIC PROPHETCY AND “LOYAL OPPOSITION”

But the story of “Loyal Opposition” in the Christian community did not end with Montanism. Within months of Constantine’s conversion to Christianity, St. Anthony and others in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria began withdrawing to the deserts where they could pursue a more radical vision of Christian faith. Francis and Clare of Assisi would call Christians in the twelfth century to obedience to the “apostolic poverty” of Christ and the earliest disciples. Sixteenth-century Reformers of whatever party (including many Catholic Reformers) would call for a return to “primitive” Christian conditions.

The witness of ancient Christian prophecy as “loyal opposition” was not lost on all of these later reformers. John Wesley, for example, was well aware of the role of prophets in the early Christian communities, and in his sermon on “Prophets and Priests” he called upon the model of ancient Christian prophets to justify his use of laymen and laywomen
as preachers in the Methodist movement:

I cannot prove from any part of the New Testament, or from any author of the first three centuries, that the office of an evangelist [which Wesley elsewhere identifies with early Christian “prophets”] I gave any man a right to act as pastor or bishop. I believe these offices were considered as quite distinct from each other till the time of Constantine.  

Moreover, Wesley believed that the Montanist movement, with its continued exercise of the prophetic office, reflected the true Christian faith in the later second century:

By reflecting on an odd book which I had read in this journey, *The General Delusion of Christians with Regard to Prophecy*, I was convinced of what I had long suspected: (1) that the Montanists in the second and third centuries, were real, scriptural Christians; and (2) That the grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn, was not only that faith and holiness were well-nigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to decry them all as either madness or imposture.

Thus, although his understanding of the chronology of the decline of prophecy and other details about ancient Christian prophecy may have differed from our understanding, Wesley nevertheless had a clear sense of the continuity between the Methodist movement’s “loyal opposition” within the Church of England, and the “loyal opposition” represented by itinerant teachers and then by Montanists in the ancient Christian communities.

The Christian church is an “incarnational” institution: bearing the marks of its origins in Christ and the apostles, it lives from age to age in “the flesh,” i.e., in the realities and vicissitudes of history, and it faces the crises of an on-going human institution. But from time to time, God raises up brilliant women and men to challenge the institutional dilemmas that the Church faces. They are the “loyal opposition” that adorns and enlivens the life of the Church from age to age. They appeared even in the New Testament period, and as we have seen above, in the second century and then beyond.

But the “loyal opposition” also appears in our own time, and we are blessed indeed when we come into the presence and under the influence of one of these brilliant and faithful pioneers of the Church. Such a person is Robert Lyon, and we offer thanks and praise for his consistent witness of loyal opposition, and for the challenge that his witness lays before us.

**NOTES**

1. Each of the authors or communities dealt with in this paragraph will be discussed in detail later.
denote that the term, in these passages, may not denote so much “the twelve,” but a larger group of disciples who were “sent out” (apistomenos) by Jesus.


6. Magnesians 6:1; translation is that of Schoedel, p. 112. See also Schoedel’s comments on the three-fold order, pp. 22-23. The three-fold order found in Ignatius has been recognized as forming the basis for contemporary discussions of Church polity, most notably in the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission document entitled *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order paper no. 111; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982, III:A:19-21, p. 24.

7. For similar passages urging obedience to the bishop, see Ignatius’s letters to the Ephesians 2:2, 3:2, 4:1-2, 5:1-3; Magnesians 6:1-2, 7:1; Trallians 7:2; Philadelphians 3:2, 4:1, 7:1-2, 8:1; Smyrnaeans 8:1-2, 9:1; and to Polycarp 6:1. The theme of obedience to bishops does not appear prominently in the letter to the Romans, where Ignatius’s primary concern was the preparation for his approaching martyrdom there. Not surprisingly, we might note, the authenticity of the Ignatian epistles was defended in the seventeenth century by Anglican bishops, defending episcopacy against the presbyterianism of Puritans (three principal Anglican defenders of the Ignatian epistles were James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, John Pearson, Bishop of Chester, and William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury).

8. The very next passage (Philadelphians 6:1) goes on to state that prophets should not be accepted if they “interpret Judaism”; on this see Schoedel, pp. 201-203.

9. On the dating of the *Didache*, see Robert A. Kraft, *Barnabas and Didache*. “The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary,” vol. 3 of 6 vols.; (New York, NY: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), pp. 76-77. Kraft argues that *Didache* is composed of a number of earlier documents and oral traditions (divisions between these can be seen easily in the text), and although much of this material dates from the first century, the present form of the *Didache* dates from no earlier than the early second century. To this may be contrasted Tugwell (p. 1), who asserts that the *Didache* was composed in the first century; but Tugwell consistently gives surprisingly early dates for the literature of the Apostolic Fathers.


11. Lake, 1:325. Lake has “suffer” for epitrepete. The expression he translates “hold Eucharist” is simply eucharistein (“to give thanks”), although following the first six verses of chapter 10, it does seem to denote presidency of the weekly eucharistic celebration.

12. Muratorian fragment; translation in Lake, 2:3.

14. The principal sources for the study of Montanism are the following: Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5:16-19 (PG 20:465-484; NPNF 2:1:229-337); Epiphanius, *Panarion* 12:1:48-49 (PG 41:855-882); Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 8:12 (ANF 5:123-124). There is also a letter attributed from Firmilian to Cyprian preserved among the letters of Cyprian (Cyprian Epistles 75; FC 51:295-313), and many of Tertullian’s later works (from his Montanist period) describe the movement.


16. On the former (the notion of a Phrygian cult origin of the movement), see Wilhelm Schepelern, *Der Montanismus und die phrygischen Kulte* (1929); also with Schepelern in rejecting this theory are Hans von Campenhausen (p. 181, n. 16) and E. R. Dodds (p. 63, n. 2). The latter theory, that the Montanists reflected theological or christological heresies, may have some grounding in the fact that later Montanists might have reflected such teachings, but ancient orthodox writers themselves admitted the theological orthodoxy of the earliest Montanists: Epiphanius, *Panarion* 48:1; Firmilian’s letter to Cyprian; Hippolytus, *Refutation of all Heresies* 8:12; Tertullian De leuiatis 1 and De Monogamia 2 (although of course these latter works date from Tertullian’s own Montanist period, so it should come as no surprise that he would defend the Montanists’ doctrinal orthodoxy).


22. The sermon “Prophets and Priests” was called “The Ministerial Office” in earlier editions of John Wesley’s works; in Albert Cook Outler, ed., *Sermons* (Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley; Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984) 4:77. Here Wesley supposes that the separate office of “prophet” or “evangelist” continued through the age of Constantine; our own conclusions in this article would suggest the late second century as the time for the diminishing of the office of charismatic prophet.

“The Right Use of the Appropriate Means” - The Debate Over Strategy and Goals Among Nineteenth Century Evangel Reformers

Douglas M. Strong

According to the eighteenth century Calvinist Jonathan Edwards, the spiritual awakening he witnessed in New England was completely unexpected, a “surprising” work of God unaided by human instrumentality. In the distinctly different theological climate of the nineteenth century, Arminian Charles G. Finney was convinced that a revival was “not a miracle,” but simply a natural result of Christians availing themselves of the resources placed at their disposal by God. To produce a successful revival, Finney believed, all that his fellow preachers had to do was to engage in the “right use of the appropriate means.”

The so-called “appropriate means” to which Finney was referring were the controversial “new measures” of evangelistic technique which he and other revivalists were at that time employing. Finney’s new measures included the public participation of women, the overt display of religious emotion, and the promotion of revival meetings that would last for several days. Most importantly (for our purposes), Finney also insisted that revivals could flourish only when Christians had a proper attitude “in regard to any question involving human rights”—by which he was indicating issues such as temperance and slavery. Unlike most evangelists (then and now), Finney was convinced that a preacher’s engagement with the pressing social concerns of the day was an important accessory to the work of converting sinners. Nonetheless, Finney always viewed his commitment to social concerns as an “appendage” to revivals; it was never to take away from the primary task of personal evangelism.

Finney fully expected other revival preachers to understand and agree with the pragmatic parameters of his maxim to pursue the “right use of the appropriate means.” Many of those who were inspired by Finney’s revivalism, however, went beyond his rather cautious involvement with social reform and his opportunistic
standard for achieving successful results. These other reformers debated what specific “means” were appropriate and what, in fact, constituted the “right use” of those means. The outcome of this debate was a conflict among nineteenth century evangelicals regarding social reform strategy, a conflict that was derived from their differing goals and theological presuppositions.3

Through their involvement in this struggle over strategy and goals, evangelical reformers were attempting to resolve the ethical tension that exists between means and ends, a seemingly relentless quandary confronting those Christians of every era who are committed to seeking a more just society. Thus, a study of antislavery advocates (abolitionists) and other nineteenth century evangelical reformers provides us with an example of some of the challenges and pitfalls facing all of us as we try to live out our Christian vocation with integrity.4

Specifically, nineteenth century reformers disagreed with one another over three related questions. First, to what extent can Christians use power in order to achieve their desired outcome? That is, how should Christians relate to the “principalities and powers” of this age, given the strategy of “nonpower” that seems inherent in the gospel? What is the correct stance, they asked, that one should take toward existing political and ecclesiastical institutions? Does one accept these institutions as legitimate; does one try to reorganize and purify them; or does one stand over against them as a prophetic witness? At issue was the problem of who does the empowering in the reign of God—God himself, human beings, or some cooperative combination of them both?

Closely related to this first question was a second: what is the appropriateness of using coercion to obtain desired results? This apparently straightforward query was complicated by the existence of various tactical options used by abolitionists—personal persuasion, political action, civil disobedience, rebellion, and even the threat of war—all of which could be defined as coercive strategies to a greater or lesser degree. Hence, the reformers questioned further, what amount of coercion is acceptable or unacceptable? Is any violence permissible? Where is the line between violence and nonviolence? Such topics became especially critical among antislavery reformers in the 1840s and 1850s with the escalation of anti-abolitionist vigilantism and the rise of sectional jingoism preceding the Civil War.

A final question concerned the dilemma that reformers faced between their commitment to religious principle and their utilitarian dependance on expedient methods. Simply put, evangelicals asked themselves which tactical model was to take priority: a reliance on pragmatic means (emphasizing the achievement of success), or an adherence to ethical principles (insisting on sanctified behavior, without the expectation of success)?

Thus, in their desire to live out the implications of the kingdom of God within American society, abolitionists and other reformers had to contend with (at least) three fundamental tensions—power versus nonpower, violence versus nonviolence, and success versus nonsuccess. These three concerns certainly were not unique to nineteenth century reformers; indeed, Christians in every time period must deal with them. Nonetheless, such strategic questions take on different forms in different contexts—and the particular context within which nineteenth century evangelicals deliberated was the emerging democracy of the young American republic.
The early nineteenth century in the United States is often referred to as the "era of the common man," a period when the demand for greater democratization was felt throughout all institutions of American society, including the Church. It is not surprising, then, that the theological notion of the "kingdom of God" came to be known in America by a democratic euphemism—the so-called "moral government of God"—a term that referred to the extent of God's jurisdiction over human activities. The moral law of God's government, according to nineteenth century thought, had an approximate equivalent in the civil law, if the civil law was democratically administered.6

By using this theological concept, evangelical preaching provided a religious vocabulary that coincided with the prevailing political discourse of the early American republic. Those nurtured under such preaching, particularly revivalistic reformers, appropriated the moral government language to frame their deliberations concerning the civil government. Among Northern social reformers (such as the abolitionists), the imminent "government of God" was identified with the government of the United States—but only after the latter had been democratically reformed and freed from the sin of slavery.7

It was believed that sufficient human means were at the disposal of revivalists and reformers to help establish the divine government. With the assistance of these available means, each moral agent was free to choose to obey God. When practiced by regenerated individuals throughout the whole society, such obedience would eventually effect (or at least closely approximate) the harmonious millennial government of God.8

This social optimism was made possible by the general spirit of millennial expectation that existed among the religious segment of the population. Millennialism is a theological concept regarding the prophesied reign of God on earth.9 The most prevalent antebellum expression of this concept was postmillennialism. Postmillennialism asserts that Christ's second coming will occur after an idyllic thousand-year period. According to this belief, human beings are presently in the penultimate time prior to the millennium. It is the responsibility of humanity to assist in ushering in the impending millennium by approximating God's government as much as possible. On a personal level, the postmillennial goal assumes that individuals can become holy. By extension, the collated holiness of many individuals will eventually result in the millennial society.10

The United States was viewed as the most suitable arena for God's unfolding millennial drama.11 Abolitionist Jonathan Blanchard was convinced that "the world is on its return to God," with America leading the way. Blanchard foresaw that reforms would sweep the land. Though there was a great amount of work to be done, there was an exuberance and a certainty that it would be accomplished, since it was God's work. Already, as revivalistic reformers pointed out, the temperance reformation had produced widespread results. Such success encouraged the reformers toward ever more ambitious endeavors in preparation for the millennium. For abolitionists, this meant the creation of a society free from slavery.12

**Power versus Nonpower: The Problem of Institutionalization**

In the early years of the abolitionist movement (before 1840), Northern evangelical reformers were in general agreement that their principal task was simply to persuade others that slavery must be ended immediately. Within a few years, though, more definitive
strategic matters were broached. As one reformer reflected some years later regarding this important tactical juncture: “When a large body of the people were convinced of the truths abolitionists had taught them, the question arose, How shall they best be led to put their principles in practice?” Their predominant tack had been simply “moral persuasion”—a term that referred to the voluntary convincing of others by the use of the press, the pulpit, various forms of education, and legislative petitions. Up to that point, abolitionists had eschewed overt political activity or any trappings of institutional power.13

By 1840, however, the effectiveness of moral persuasion was being questioned by many abolitionists. It seemed that more efforts were required just to produce the same results. For example, one of their original goals—the persuasion of slaveholders to emancipate their own slaves—was a dismal failure. In some ways, the South was more unyielding in its commitment to slavery than it had been prior to the rise of abolitionism. And the North was equally intolerant of antislavery agitation, as evidenced by unremitting mob violence directed against abolitionists. Abolitionists realized that their attempts to change the political and ecclesiastical structures by moral persuasion had failed.14

Many abolitionists believed that they were bogged down by the ineffective tactics of moral persuasion. Since “the motto of abolitionists should be ‘forward,’” wrote a contributor to an antislavery paper, then “greater force should be immediately brought into the field.” One contemporary perceptively observed that, for such reformers, “moral persuasion” was no longer “potent enough, for their cause. Hence they are hurried onward, like mad men, to grasp the civil arm to aid in accomplishing their purpose.” Some abolitionists were now willing to embrace the tactics of power politics, tactics that had long been used by their opponents. Other abolitionists, however, were unwilling to sacrifice their high standards in order to play the political game.15

Such disagreements among reformers were due to differing views about whether Christians should rely upon the power of human institutions to reach their goals and, consequently, the degree to which human governments were to participate in the establishment of God’s government. Polemics among abolitionists consisted of deliberations about the role of organized structures in the emerging millennial order. Thus an understanding of the divisions that existed among abolitionists can be gained by analyzing the ways in which they understood and talked about God’s government, human government, and the interaction between the two. Various formulations of abolitionism represented various degrees of support for or denial of the power of institutions.

There was a spectrum of views regarding the amount of institutionalization considered appropriate within the society. Differences among abolitionists were articulated in the language of their theological discussions concerning the appropriate structures for a democratic society. These differences can be sorted into distinct groups that existed along an “institutionalization continuum”—specifically, those who were supporters of traditional institutions, those who were members of new abolitionist political parties and denominations, and those anti-institutionalist abolitionists who rejected all forms of human empowerment.16

At one end of the spectrum of antislavery views regarding institutionalization were evangelicals who supported traditional structures. These were the abolitionists who endorsed existing churches and traditional politics. They decided to remain within the
established denominations and parties in order to reach their goal of the immediate end to slavery.

Abolitionists who were institution-supporting felt that slavery was merely an evil blemish that needed to be removed from a generally healthy society. They thought that by advocating antislavery from a position of power they could raise the religious consciousness of the people within their churches and political parties. Many of them were concerned about achieving realistic, practical results which, they hoped, could be obtained more readily by working within established structures than by staying aloof from power structures in an attitude of self-righteous purity.17

Institution-supporting abolitionists were convinced that human principalities and powers were ordained by God. People need to be controlled by coercive governments until the millennial government of God puts an end to inherent human sinfulness. Furthermore, following the dictates of Romans 13, citizens must submit to their civil leaders as instruments of God’s law on earth, for the external human law is equivalent to the law of God.18 Since institution-supporting abolitionists thought that God ordained the existing political organizations, they were dedicated to working through these extant structures, hoping that they could change the laws to conform to abolitionist goals.19 Evangelical leaders in the major denominations and political parties believed that human structures were a pragmatic means to a desirable end. Since such structures would never be perfected, significant social change would occur only when religious people were willing to compromise their utopian principles. As a Whig partisan explained: “Politics is a game of expediency.”20

Other abolitionists took a middle stance between institutionalism and anti-institutionalism.21 They formed new abolitionist denominations, such as the Wesleyan Methodist Connection.22 They also formed an avowedly evangelical political pressure group called the Liberty Party, the first political party to be unequivocally committed to the elimination of slavery. Liberty Party leaders believed that democratic governments in church and state were divinely-established institutions, a part of God’s moral government. God’s influence, they asserted, is exerted “through the instrumentality of human governments.” Yet, while they affirmed the divine intention for human government in general, they also condemned the existing governments as immoral. Liberty leaders contended that the established systems of power needed to be reorganized to conform to the standards of God’s government. Their opponents were accurate when they asserted that the Liberty Party “invoked Divine authority to justify a use of political power in...reforming the state.” These political abolitionists were resorting to means that relied on a form of power (the legislative compulsion of other people) while at the same time challenging the existing power structures.23

Contrary to those who maintained traditional institutions, Liberty leaders felt that political parties and churches must be rigorously altered so that the organizational power of human structures was carefully limited. But contrary to the anti-institutionalists, Liberty leaders felt that there was a need for Christians to exert some power within social structures so that society could function in an orderly manner. Their tactic was to come out from existing “despotic” institutions and to literally “re-form” them along sanctified lines. They described their strategy as “secession and re-organization.” In their view, it was pos-
sible to exert a limited degree of democratically-elected power while still maintaining their distance from those who used power in an arbitrary or capricious manner.24

Liberty Party leaders began with the premise that human cooperation with God was essential for the successful establishment of the divine government on earth. One Liberty man asserted the importance of human initiative in the form of a rhetorical question: "Are not Christians themselves a part of those means which God makes use of to carry forward his moral government?" On the societal level, this synergistic theological concept led to the view that some human institutions were divinely-ordered, but that such institutions needed to be democratically reorganized and carefully circumscribed. The Liberty Party agreed with anti-institutionalists that existing human governments (both civil and religious) were corrupt. At the same time, they agreed with the supporters of institutions that some power structures should not be destroyed, but maintained. They believed that human governments should be reordered to correspond with God’s democratic moral government. When that occurred the millennium would commence, for God’s government would be coterminous with human government: a “perfect state of society” would exist.25 In both ecclesiastical and political matters, the members of the Liberty Party were trying to hold a delicate balance between their desire to renounce institutional tyranny and their perception of the need for some structure. They thought that it was important for abolitionists to find a “middle ground.”

At the other end of the abolitionist spectrum of views regarding the use of institutional power were the followers of the prominent antislavery advocate, William Lloyd Garrison. The Garrisonian abolitionists asserted that the only legitimate strategic measure for religious reformers was moral suasion. These nonresistants, as they were called, believed that coercive actions of any kind were sinful. Since human governments are based on the premise that legalized compulsion could be used to back up their legislative actions, nonresistants defined such structures as inherently sinful. “Political action, by voting, even for the abolition of slavery, under a civil government based on physical force,” was regarded as sinful by the Garrisonians. Their religious consciences were to have no involvement with partisan politics.26

According to the Garrisonians, it was fruitless to attempt to legislate change, because human institutions (both civil and ecclesiastical) would never be purified. God’s moral government would be actuated in God’s time, and only through the agency of individual moral influence. According to Garrison, “political reformation is to be effected solely by a change in the moral vision of the people, not by attempting to prove that it is the duty of every voter to be an abolitionist.”27

The Garrisonians shared a common assumption: the radical sovereignty of God’s rule over human behavior and institutions made external human law superfluous. Human institutions such as religious denominations, political parties, and even the government of the United States, all of which mediated between God and humanity, were unnecessary if Christians would completely obey God’s law. Since the Garrisonians believed that God’s law could be perceived directly and comprehended adequately by any unrestrained individual, no other person or human institution could or should attempt to define that law. In fact, divine law was intended to supersede and replace all mortal laws, rules and institutions. The interposition of any human element whatsoever between an individual and
God was considered an unwarranted assumption of divine authority. Human authorities were considered wrong because they were coercive. External human law required restraint in order to force compliance, and thus denied an individual complete freedom of conscience. Slavery was the prime example of a coercive institution. Once slavery was viewed in this paradigmatic way, it was not difficult for Garrisonian abolitionists to believe that tyrannical institutions of any kind, and especially those connected with slaveholding, were the source of society’s imperfections. They understood the “the disorder, confusion and misery, which every where prevail” in society as caused by worldly power exercised by unnatural, artificial, sinful institutions. Church polities, in particular, were problematic, because “the present organized church associations and organizations, as they are, are not only in the way of humanity...but in the way of Christianity itself.”

All of the abolitionists believed that human society could and should approximate the millennium—the eventual and inevitable rule of the government of God on earth. This millennial rule would be established by the incremental perfection of individuals until the entire society was perfected. But according to the Garrisonians, human structures stood in the way of the establishment of the divine order; therefore, those structures should be abolished in preparation for the millennium. Continued adherence to human institutions among Christians impeded the consummation of God’s millennial rule, and, according to Garrison, “whatever the gospel is designed to destroy at any period of the world, being contrary to it, ought now to be abandoned.” The only appropriate response for a Christian was to “come out from among them, and be ye separate.” For Garrisonians that meant severing all connections with human structures, including support for political activities or local Christian congregations, since they imposed unnatural restraints upon individuals.

According to the Garrisonians, any attempt at reforming or restructuring human organizations was not only wrongheaded, it was wicked. A somewhat improved situation brought on by reforms would only delay the eventual necessary destruction of all human devices, and thus delay the harmonized society of the millennium. The type of government that they proposed was to be “immediately exercised by God” rather than organized by humans, since such a human structure would inevitably be based on coercive restraint. The harmony of this divine government would result in a new society in which individual self-mastery held sway and in which the moral law was obeyed on a purely voluntary basis. Eventually, the Garrisonians withdrew from human institutions. They developed a strong antipathy toward all those who continued to support the established structures. Since “government is upheld by physical strength, and its laws are enforced at the point of the bayonet,” the nonresistants repudiated “all human politics.” Churches, which were shams of true religion, were also to be discarded. Organized religion was to be replaced by each individual’s own religion of the heart, unmediated by any creed or clergyman.

Violence versus Nonviolence: The Problem of Coercion

Coincident with the problem of institutional power was the problem of coercion. Initially, the majority of abolitionists were pacifists; they viewed all war as unjustified
aggression—similar in its barbarism to the enslavement forced upon African Americans. The abolitionists’ pacifist position became most forcefully articulated in the mid-1840s during the Mexican War. The Mexican War was a baldly expansionistic enterprise that soon became a divisive domestic policy issue within American society. In response to the War’s proponents, who hoped to extend slave territory by confiscating Mexican land, the abolitionist Liberty party took a firm stand against the conflict.34

Likewise, abolitionists within the evangelical denominations used the widely-perceived immorality of the Mexican War as a springboard for their declarations of disgust toward all wars. The Rochester Annual Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection (an abolitionist denomination), declared in 1847 that “the gospel of Christ is eminently the gospel of peace,...whereas war in its spirit and practice is antagonistic to the gospel.” In this vein, they resolved “to maintain [a] high and uncompromising opposition to war as an inhuman and anti-Christian practice and as one of the sins in the sisterhood of evil now rife throughout our common country and desolating our poor fallen world.” Even more strongly worded was their statement of 1852, in which they resolved

that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is opposed to all forms of war, that every war is the crime of the nation or people that wage it, that every battle is a bloodstained blot, that every victory is a loss, and that we will do all in our power to oppose war, and to promote the principles of peace, until the time shall come in which we have good hope, when men shall beat their swords into plow shares and their spears into pruning hooks, and learn war no more.

As late as 1860, they reiterated their ever avowed principles upon the inhuman system of war. We regard it to be in direct conflict with the first principles of Revealed Religion—as having its origin in selfishness, lustful, and revengful [sic] passions—a relic of a barbarous age, and the stronghold of despotism and slavery.35

It was during this same time period, however, that abolitionists (including the Wesleyan Methodists) were becoming increasingly involved in the Liberty Party, which was an attempt to use political power to extirpate slavery.36 As these abolitionists became more and more comfortable with the idea that the exercise of political power was justified during the (supposedly) limited interim before the millennial government of God was established, it became easy to slide down the slippery slope of coercion toward other forms of empowerment, such as civil disobedience, the armed insurrection of slaves and, eventually, the necessity of war in order to crush the rebellious slavocracy of the South.37 Consequently, over the years that led up to and beyond the Civil War, evangelical abolitionists significantly altered their former posture of unconditional pacifism.38

By 1863, for instance, at the height of the Civil War, the Wesleyan Methodist’s Rochester Conference declared that they were “for God and our country, and this without evasion, condition or exception.” The Conference resolved, in an abrupt about-face from their earlier explicit opposition to all war, that “while regretting, the necessity of an
appeal to arms...yet we justify such appeal, and offer...our prayer for the further success of our arms. Similarly, in 1864, the Wesleyans stated:

We stood for coercion when Sumpter [sic] was fired upon, and the history of this War for the Union has taught us that Subjugation needs to take the place of coercion...While [we] regard...War as in itself undesirable, and even an evil—yet as a part of a great National Police System, we hold it legitimate; and in defense of imperiled rights fully justifiable. Our present War being provoked for the Support of Constitutional Freedom, and the rights of man, has our unqualified approbation, and our Prayers for its success in suppressing [sic] Rebellion.

At the end of the war, the Wesleyans reveled in the presumed divine implications of the Union victory. They declared that they were “doubling [their] diligence” for social reform work now that the imminent day was close at hand when “God shall break every chain and let the oppressed go free that we may sing literally, ‘The year of Jubilee has come.’” As historian James Moorhead has stated, Yankee Protestants such as the Wesleyans were convinced that the Civil War was the final apocalyptic shedding of blood needed to atone for America’s original sin of slavery—a necessary evil in order to bring about the conditions requisite to inaugurate God’s millennial government.

As the century wore on, the Wesleyan Methodists moved even farther away from their previous pacifism. During the Spanish-American War—America’s imperialistic foray into Cuba (and elsewhere)—the Rochester Conference resolved that, although they were opposed to war for aggression or conquest, and depreciating a necessity of a resort to arms, yet seeing in the present crisis, or issue, our beloved land reaching out the hand of help to the suffering Cubans, illustrating the great principle of human brotherhood, we hereby, place ourselves on record as endorsing the statesmanlike, patriotic and above all Christian attitude of our Chief Magistrate, and pledge our loyal support, and earnest prayer, in his, and our Nation’s behalf of larger conception of human relationship, and Christian civilization.

In this resolution, the Wesleyans were affirming the right of the United States to conduct a war in order to extend the so-called ‘white man’s burden’ of Christian civilization. They even went so far as to “pledge [their] unswerving loyalty to our government” during war, certainly a far cry from their earlier statement that they were “opposed to all forms of war, that every war is the crime of the nation or people that wage it.”

**SUCCESS VERSUS NONSUCCESS: THE PROBLEM OF MOTIVES**

A final problem facing evangelical reformers in the nineteenth century was the tension that existed between achieving success for their cause and maintaining the purity of their principles. This tension was felt most acutely by the Liberty Party. The party was composed of politically inexperienced Christians who wanted to explore the potential use of electoral power in order to obtain a righteous objective. In the end, however, many of them were uncomfortable with their involvement in the exercise of that power. How could they succeed politically, they asked themselves, and yet remain pure, without becoming immersed in the muddy waters of partisan campaigning?
On the one hand, those Liberty men with a practical bent were convinced that in order to assure eventual victory it would be politically shrewd for the Liberty Party to compromise its radical views and soften its strident moralism. After several years of relatively poor performances at the polls, the dilemma within the Liberty Party became clear: in order to reach their goal of establishing a government that was pure, it seemed necessary for Liberty men to make concessions regarding their own purity. Evangelical abolitionists stressed holy motives and each individual’s uncompromising attitude toward all sin. Yet they also emphasized practical moral action and the tangible achievement of social justice. Eventually the stress on sanctified means seemed to preclude the achievement of the party’s ends, since political victory required compromise with those of dubious religious credentials and impure political motives. The choice for Liberty leaders became the practical achievement of a reduced goal using impure means, or the continued espousal of uncompromising means with only the vague hope of an eventual divine consummation (especially with the continued disappointment of the Party at the polls). How does one persevere in the arduous work of establishing a millennial society, they asked themselves, when the promised inevitable outcome does not seem to materialize?

On the other hand, there were some antislavery reformers (a minority of the Liberty Party) who cared less about political success than they did about the prophetic challenge that abolitionism attempted to deliver to the structures of society.

That this [Liberty] Party will be popular, we do not claim. That corrupt men—men, who are more for numbers than principles—for ballot-box victories than for truth—will approve of it, we do not expect....That God will be on its side is our firm belief:—and, humbly and fervently, do we pray, that He will condescend to make it a means of hastening the time, when oppression and war shall be unknown,...when “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

These principled activists of the party would not support candidates of questionable moral qualifications or issues of popular interest merely for the sake of expediency. They were not willing to risk the use of unsanctified means even if those means might result in the possible fulfillment of sanctified ends. Gerrit Smith, for example, a prominent Liberty Party congressman, was alarmed by the “immodest self-advancement” represented by some of the pragmatists at a Liberty Party convention. He declared that true Liberty men were those who

profess to be conformed to what is right. With them, expediency is not the rule of right—but right the rule of expediency. The organization of the Liberty Party was a novel and bold experiment. To form a political party on the basis of an honest, uncalculating, adherence to the right and the true, was an undertaking so foreign to custom—so utterly unprecedented—that there is no wonder it was stared at as impracticable and fanatical. The experiment was well worth making, even if it had been made in the face of all probability of success.
For Smith and other abolitionists like him, faithfulness to righteous principles was infinitely more important than political success.

Similar to other Christians throughout the Church’s history, there were a few nineteenth century evangelical reformers who tried to be consistent in their application of the principles of nonpower, nonviolence, and nonsuccess. They refused to use unworthy means, even for what seemed to be worthy ends. These reformers existed as a type of “loyal opposition” to the American political and religious establishment, presenting a challenge to the “principalities and powers” of the era while simultaneously working to create new structures for a just society. In this way, they fulfilled the dual Christian responsibility to provide both (what John Howard Yoder has described as) “conscientious objection” and “conscientious participation” in the world.\textsuperscript{55} Such a twofold commitment was due to their belief that, by following in the radical way of Jesus, they were called to be a constructive—but dissenting—voice within American society.

NOTES


University Press, 1987).


11. See, especially, Lyman Beecher’s A Plea for the West (Cincinnati, OH: Truman & Smith, 1835).


13. The Friend of Man 3 (17 October 1838): 278. This is not to say that individual abolitionists had not been active in politics, but in their capacity as officers of abolition societies, they had not been political.


17. See Perry, Radical Abolitionism.


22. Other “comeouter” antislavery church groups included the Union churches, the Free Congregational churches, the Franckean Evangelic Lutheran Synod, the Yearly Meeting of Congregational Friends, the Free Baptists, and others. See Douglas M. Strong, Perfectionist Politics: Abolitionism and the Religious Tensions of American Democracy (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999).


24. Christian Investigator 1 (December 1843): 87; The Union Herald 6 (9 September 1841): 76.


27. Goodell, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, pp. 458, 521; Birney, A Letter on the Political Obligations of Abolitionists, pp. 23, 30, 32. See also Perry, Radical Abolitionism, p. 131.


31. In direct contrast to the view of the institutionalists, Garrison felt that the Bible’s silence regarding the proper form of human government indicated “that the kingdom which Christ has established on earth is ultimately to swallow up or radically to subvert all other kingdoms.” Wendell Phillips Garrison and Francis Jackson Garrison, William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of His Life Told by His Children (New York, NY: The Century Co., 1885), p. 150.


35. These excerpts and those that follow are taken from the records of the Rochester Annual Conference, as transcribed in Stanley W. Wright, etal., One Hundred Years of Service for Christ in the Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1844-1944 (n. p.: n. d. [1944?]), p. 18. The original records are located in the Wesleyan Church Archives, Indianapolis, IN.


37. An example of the abolitionist progression in accepting ever-increasing degrees of coercion can be seen in the career of Wesleyan Methodist leader Luther Lee. See Donald Dayton, ed., Five Sermons and a Tract by Luther Lee (Chicago, IL: Holrad House, 1975), pp. 11-14.
38. Demos, pp. 518, 522-26. The abolitionist alteration of views regarding the appropriateness of coercion was due to such events as the increasing mob violence against abolitionists, the armed defense of the abolitionist martyr Elijah P. Lovejoy, the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law against those who harbored runaway slaves, and armed insurrections such as “bleeding Kansas” and John Brown’s raid.


41. Wright, et al., pp. 18-19.

42. Liberty Party, Proceedings of the National Liberty Convention, Held at Buffalo, N.Y., June 14th and 15th, 1848 (Utica, NY: S.W. Green, 1848), p. 32.

43. The Liberty Press 3 (29 December 1844): 30; ibid. (1 March 1845): 65.


This essay will present and assess Hans Küng’s theological ethics. Küng is now retired from the University of Tübingen, but he continues to write prolifically. The first part of Küng’s career was devoted to ecumenical concerns between divided Christians. The middle stage saw a broadening interest in ecumenical issues between Christians and the world’s religions. Now, as his last legacy, Küng is occupied with an even greater ecumenical challenge between the world’s religions and the world’s political ideologies. The thesis of his latest project is stated tersely in this way: world survival depends upon a global ethic; a global ethic is not possible without religious peace; and religious peace is dependent upon interreligious dialogue.

This proposal requires that Küng somehow combine specifically Christian ethics (the ethics of Jerusalem) with non-Christian and non-religious ethical systems (the morals of Athens).

The plan here is to first sketch the specific Christian component of Küng’s ethics. What makes Küng’s ethics ‘Christian’? Then, Küng’s proposal for a global ethic will be presented. Can there be a consensus between religious and non-religious peoples about a minimum of shared ethical principles? Afterwards, attention must be given to the components by which Küng connects these seemingly disparate ethical visions. Just how does Küng hold his ethical vision together? Remarks will be made along the way critically assessing Küng’s theological ethics.

1. THE ETHICS OF JERUSALEM: JESUS AND THE NEW HUMANISM

1. If we ask, “What makes ethics ‘Christian’?," Küng would simply reply, “What is specifically Christian ... is the fact that all ethical requirements are understood in the light of the rule of the crucified Jesus Christ ... Jesus, to whom we are subordinated once and for all in baptism by faith, must remain Lord over us.”

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specifically Christian criterion for all ethical behavior. This position follows directly from Küngr’s theological methodology, where Jesus is heralded as the norma normans (normative norm) for Christian theology. For Küngr, all Christian moral reasoning and practice must be derived from the Gospel narratives and centered on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. It is, therefore, important to give a profile of Küngr’s Jesus before proceeding to how Küngr’s christology functions in making ethical proposals. The connection between christology, ethics and ecclesiology should also be noted. The praxis of the Church in any age or culture, Küngr maintains, should be grounded and guided by the pattern of radical discipleship modeled in Jesus of Nazareth. Küngr employs the notions of “loyal opposition” and “critical catalyst” to depict the Christian relationship to the Church and the world. The ideas of “loyal opposition” and “critical catalyst” flow out of Küngr’s reading of the Gospel narratives and his interpretation of Jesus.

A. Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of a New Humanism

If all ethical requirements are to be understood in the light of the crucified and resurrected Jesus, as Küngr argues, the question arises, “Which Jesus?” Küngr’s Jesus is derived from a narrative reading of the “characteristic features and outlines of Jesus message, behavior, and fate.” He is confident that historical-critical methods of interpretation provide a relatively adequate record of Jesus from the NT documents. Küngr observes two essential features about the “real” Jesus from his investigation of the Gospels. First, Jesus was Jewish and was loyal to the Jewish tradition. Second, Jesus was opposed to the way Judaism was practiced.

Küngr’s “real” Jesus is essentially an apocalyptic Jewish prophet who preached the kingdom of God, taught a radical ethic of love and showed solidarity with moral failures, the exploited, the marginalized, the non-religious, the demonized, children and sick people. Küngr sums up the teaching of the “real” Jesus as: “Jesus made the cause of the God of Israel his own, governed by the typically apocalyptic expectation of living in an end-time, in which God himself will very soon appear on the scene and impose his will, establish his rule and realize his kingdom. Jesus wanted to announce in advance this kingdom, this rule, this will of God, with a view to human salvation. This alone he made the criteria.”

Küngr goes on to summarize the ethical component of Jesus’ teaching in this way: “So he [Jesus] called not only for the renewed observance of God’s commandments but for a love which in individual instances extends to unselfish service without hierarchy, to renunciation even without receiving anything in return, to boundless forgiving. It is a love which even includes the opponent, the enemy: love of God and love of neighbor in accordance with the criterion of self-love (as yourself).” Jesus did not preach himself, but the cause of God, the will of God, God’s program. God’s program, Küngr maintains, is absolutely congruent with the cause of humanity. It was not a “new law” which may be reduced to Halakah nor separated from Hagadah. God’s program, in fact, becomes the basis for a radical new humanism where being a Christian means being fully human, not less human.

The life and message of Jesus were opposed by the leading Jewish options within Judaism. Jesus functioned as a “critical catalyst” within his own Jewish social context because he did not belong to any of the reigning ecclesiastical groups of his day. Küngr
expresses it this way, Jesus was “caught in the cross of co-ordinates of options within Judaism.” What is meant is that Jesus is not presented in the NT as a priest of the religious-political establishment like the Sadducees; nor as a political revolutionary like the Zealots; nor as some kind of ascetic monk like the Essences. Moreover, the NT does not situate Jesus within the company of the devout moralists, the Pharisees. So, Küng concludes that: “It shows considerable understanding of Jesus if we do not attempt to integrate him within the quadrilateral of establishment and revolution, emigration and compromise: He fits no formula. He is provocative, both on the right and on the left: apparently closer than priests to God. At the same time freer than the ascetics in regard to the world. More moral than the moralists. And more revolutionary than the revolutionaries.”\(^{10}\) Jesus’ life and teaching led to his crucifixion. Despite Jesus’ loyalty to the house of Israel, he was crucified as a criminal of the State. Nonetheless, the cross became a summons to discipleship, to a life of self-giving and service to others. In fact, according to Küng, the cross is now the normative element and pattern for determining what is Christian about ethics.

B. The Call to Discipleship: “Follow Jesus!”

Küng maintains that the entire practice of individual Christians and Christian churches should be oriented toward the message and behavior, the cross and resurrection of Jesus as the model for what is Christian. Following Jesus in one’s moral life, therefore, is basic to Christian discipleship. Küng heralds Jesus as the standard, the supreme norm, the chief source and final criterion for what it means to be Christian—not an infallible pope, the magisterium, church councils, church tradition, natural law or canon law. Küng departs from traditional Roman Catholic moral theology at this point. While it is not the theme of this essay, it must be said here that the parallels between Küng’s Jesus and his own stance toward the Roman Catholic Church are unmistakable. It was Küng’s christology, not his ecclesiology, that ultimately led to the removal of his missio canonica, his official license to teach Roman Catholic theology.\(^{11}\)

The specific Christian norm, then, is the concrete, historical person, Jesus of Nazareth, not some abstract ethical system or universal moral code. Küng points out that what distinguishes Jesus from the founders of other religions or ideologies is that the person and teaching of Jesus cannot be separated. He says, “the following of Christ is what distinguishes Christians from other disciples and supporters of great men, in the sense that Christians are ultimately dependent on this person, not only his teaching, but also his life, death, and new life.”\(^{12}\) Jesus was more than a rabbi or teacher. Jesus was the living, normative embodiment of the cause of God. In fact, Küng asserts that there was a harmony of will and revelation between Jesus and God without any contradiction. The one who proclaimed the kingdom, also embodied the kingdom. On this basis, Christians are able to justify and substantiate a new attitude, a new way of life, a new approach to life as well as a different set of values and a radical new humanism. The focus upon Jesus, Küng argues, is much more convincing than an impersonal idea, an abstract principle, a universal norm or a purely theoretical system of ethics. Indeed, the genius of Christian ethics, Küng maintains, is that it is rooted in a concrete, historical person. For, the person of Jesus possesses an “impressiveness,” an “audibility” and a “realizability” that is lacking in eternal
ideas, abstract principles, universal norms, conceptual systems and in unattainable, unreal-
istic ideals. 13

To say that Jesus is the specific, supreme norm of Christian ethics, however, needs to
be qualified in order to be more precise about how Jesus functions as the norm of
Christian ethics. Küng argues: ‘... it is of little use to appeal to absolute norms and simple
rules, deduced from natural law or Scripture, in order to solve the apparently almost insol-
uble problems and conflicts of humanity....’ 14 Küng does not think that Jesus gives
absolute answers to every moral dilemma humanity faces. The formation of Christian
ethical norms and moral attitudes occurs within the larger context and process of social-
ization within the Christian community. This means that the specifically Christian aspect
of ‘following Jesus’ must be worked out tensively in one’s own existential situation and
not by universalizing or absolutizing some particular ethical demand of Jesus. Technically,
Küng suggests, we are not called to ‘imitate Jesus’ but to ‘follow Jesus’ (nachfolgen). Jesus
illuminates our situation. Our situation, however, shapes how we are to apply the norm
of Jesus. The ethical process, therefore, is reciprocal, not one-sided. What is essential is
that the Christian look to Jesus and allow him to inform and shape his or her action in a
given situation. The context where the Christian learns this process is the Christian com-
munity. The role of the Church, however, is not to dictate or mandate moral action. The
Church’s role is simply to teach and preach the Gospel and model Christian behavior.

C. Is Something Missing from Küng’s Christian Ethics?

Two specific remarks need to be made regarding Küng’s specifically Christian ethics.
First, I applaud the fact that Küng’s theological ethics are essentially christocentric. The
norm of Christian moral behavior is located in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.
While questions may be raised about aspects of Küng’s historical reconstruction of the
“real” Jesus, he is right to place Jesus within the context of Palestinian Judaism and stress a
fundamental continuity between Jesus and Judaism. Küng also correctly points out that
Jesus had serious tensions with Judaism due to unfaithfulness to the higher things of the
Law. Küng’s Jesus is an apocalyptic prophet calling for love, justice and mercy, a reversal
of values and non-violent resistance that led to his crucifixion (very similar to the Jesus of
E. P. Sanders’ 15). It is this historically reconstructed Jesus that is the norma romans
of Küng’s theological ethics. Herein lies a problem. Küng’s historically reconstructed Jesus,
“real” or not, is too fragile and too narrow a foundation to build a robust Christian under-
standing of the moral life. It is fragile in that historical inquiry can only yield tentative and
conflicting results, whereas ethical living requires a high degree of moral authority and
conviction to motivate and sustain moral action. I agree with Richard Hays’ comment
that: ‘...it makes sense to claim modestly that New Testament ethics will find a more sta-
able starting place if we begin with the moral visions of the individual texts than if we try
to begin by reconstructing Jesus.’ 16 Moreover, Küng’s reconstructed Jesus is a narrow
foundation in that Christian ethics is bound not only to the Gospels but to the entire NT
witness as canon. Hence, the full canonical text of Scripture is missing in Küng’s theologi-
cal ethics.

Second, while Küng emphasizes following Jesus and the cross as normative for
Christian discipleship and ethics, there are ethical components of Christian doctrine that
are either muted or completely ignored. For example, one does not find in Küngr's discussion any extensive treatment of the ethical implications of human bondage to sin, God's power to liberate us from the power of sin, or God's provision for the possibility of obedience through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is for Küngr a concrete moral example and he challenges us to follow Jesus in our concrete discipleship. One gets the impression, however, that Küngr's call to follow Jesus is an unconditional ethical demand that Christians can simply apply to their situation and live successfully from their own human resources. Jesus is our external model, norm and standard for discipleship and ethics. But something more than an external model is needed for humanity to act and behave after the pattern of Jesus. The same Spirit who empowered Jesus is available to moral failures to help them do what they cannot achieve in their own strength. As Gordon Fee correctly observes, "truly Christian ethics can only be by the Spirit's empowering."17 The Spirit's empowering presence is fundamental to any Christian ethic. Without the Spirit, we are powerless and weak to overcome our sinful nature and habits by our own human resources.

2. The Morals of Athens: Search for a Global Ethic

Some aspects of Küngr's Christian ethics sound as if an Anabaptist ethicist could have written it. But things get more complex when we turn to his project for a global ethic. Hans Küngr's interests have always been world scale and comprehensive. Even in Küngr's early period, when he wrote predominately on ecclesiology and received the Nihil obstat and Imprimatur, Küngr never lost sight of the world horizon or the fact that the Church exists "...in the world for the world."18 This is true of Küngr's theological ethics, as well. He is not content to write as a Christian theologian exclusively for the Church. Nor has Küngr aspired to be a "theologian's theologian," one who writes to assure the exclusive interests and inquiries of the academy. Küngr is a practical theologian. He writes programmatic theory with concrete and pragmatic ends in view. The proposal for a global ethic is an extension of the fact that Hans Küngr is self-consciously a "catholic" (i.e., universal) theologian. We will first deal with the development of Küngr's global ethic as a programmatic agenda. Then, we will see how Küngr's proposal for a new world ethic developed into a declaration about the world's religions. Finally, we examine how Küngr's global ethic addresses global politics and economics.

A. The Proposal for a New World Ethic

The concept of a "world ethic" (Weltethos) developed gradually in Küngr's thought. The first stage of formation was the connection Küngr made between world peace and interreligious dialogue. World peace, Küngr realized, is contingent upon establishing peace among the world's religions.19 At an interreligious conference at Temple University in 1984, Küngr condensed his thoughts into programmatic theses: "No world peace without peace among the religions, no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions, and no dialogue between the religions without accurate knowledge of one another."20 These theses were the driving force behind Küngr's two major books on interreligious dialogue, Christianity and the World Religions21 and Christianity and Chinese Religions22. As Küngr reflected further upon the world situation, he was convinced that
these theses must be developed into a formal program, one that could make a significant contribution towards world survival. He tested his initial proposal for a global ethic twice before UNESCO (1989, 1991) and once before the World Economic Forum (1990). The latter meeting included a dialogue with Küng, Hans Jonas and Karl-Otto Apel.

The project for a new world ethic was programmatically presented in Küng’s book, *Projekt Weltethos* (1990). It has the English title, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic*. The word “ethos,” translated here as “ethic,” does not so much denote a system of ethics as a way of life. The first part of the book outlines the paradigm shift from modernity to postmodernity and deals with the threat to world survival and the need for a global ethic. He explains that after the failure of “State socialism,” “neocapitalism” and “Japanism,” we are at an end of the great modern humanistic ideologies of “political-social revolution” and “technological evolution.” The ideology of progress has been “demystified” in this century of two world wars and the Holocaust. The survival of the world is now threatened by proliferating military aggression, hunger, extinction of animal life, world economic catastrophe, depletion of rain forests and increased global warming. Concomitant with these issues, Küng assesses that the world is in moral crisis. Many people no longer know a basis from which they may make moral decisions. Consequently, they are confronted with personal and social nihilism in every facet of human existence. The paradigm change from modernity to postmodernity is disruptive.

Given this analysis of the world situation, Küng proposes that what the world needs is some kind of “minimal basic consensus” that affirms core values, norms and attitudes. Otherwise, there can be no possibility of peaceful coexistence, let alone any real democracy. What is needed is an ethic that is global in perspective and mandates “planetary responsibility” as a Kantian categorical imperative. Küng acknowledges that this task is too great for any one religious tradition. It requires, by its very nature, a coalition between believers and non-believers, religious and secular people alike. Everyone has a stake in world survival; so everyone is responsible to work to achieve it. The world’s religions play a particularly important role in providing the foundation and resources for a global ethic. Küng’s proposal for a new world ethic and global responsibility requires a transcendent ground, a ground that is not itself conditioned. Küng is confident that such a transcendent ground may be discovered among the world’s religious traditions. He queries, “...who would be better suited today than the world religions to mobilize millions of people for a world ethic? To mobilize them by formulating ethical aims, presenting key moral ideas and motivating them both rationally and emotionally, so that the ethical norms can also be lived out in practice?”23 The world’s religions, then, serve as the source and foundation from which a basic consensus of universal moral values, norms and attitudes may be derived. But will the world’s religious traditions accept Küng’s proposal for a new world ethic?

B. The Declaration of a New World Ethic

After much experience in interreligious dialogue and extensive research into the world’s religions, Küng was convinced that the world’s religions could supply the moral basis and spiritual resources needed for a new world ethic. But how could Küng make his programmatic agenda for a new world ethic concrete and realizable in a global con-
text? He could only do so if leaders in the world’s religious traditions would embrace and promote the idea of a global ethic. But where was there a forum to present the idea of a new world ethic to a wide variety of religious traditions and their leaders? Küng found that forum at the Parliament of the World’s Religions which met in Chicago in 1993. He was invited to draft a declaration for a common ethic that could be adopted by the various religious traditions attending the Parliament. 24

Küng’s draft was discussed by the Council of the Parliament and by others from various religious traditions. Eventually, Küng’s text was accepted by the Board of Trustees (with some minor revisions) as what would become the “Declaration Toward a Global Ethic.” The delegates attending the Parliament would discuss and debate the prospects for a global ethic and be asked to endorse the declaration formally. The real test for Küng’s global ethic was whether or not such diverse groups as Muslims, the Fellowship of Isis, Greek Orthodox Christians, Shintos, the Theosophical Society and neo-pagans could come to a consensus about a minimum of shared ethical principles. After a number of objections were considered, the “Declaration Toward a Global Ethic” was signed by the majority of the delegates, including the Dalai Lama, the Roman Catholic Cardinal of Chicago, the Vatican representative, the representative from the World Council of Churches and many other wide ranging groups and individuals. Evangelical and conservative Christian groups did not attend. They were suspicious of the syncretistic nature of the Parliament. Moreover, Evangelicals and conservative Christians had serious problems participating in some of the planned activities (such as neo-pagan moon worship).

As for the declaration itself, it began by citing the need for a global ethic in our contemporary world and by calling for commitment to “a minimal fundamental consensus concerning binding values, irrevocable standards, and fundamental moral attitudes” as a basis for a global ethic. 25 A basic demand of the declaration is: “Every human being must be treated humanely.” The declaration then put forward some “irrevocable directives” of human behavior to promote a more humane world. The minimal ethic proposed for a global ethic is summed up in the following general principles of the Declaration:

1. Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life.
2. Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order.
3. Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness.
4. Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women. 26

Each of these directives is followed by explications and representative examples of how to live out the directive in concrete human experience. The conclusion of the declaration calls for a fundamental “transformation of consciousness” whereby all men and woman are encouraged to commit themselves “… to a common global ethic, to a better mutual understanding, as well as to socially-beneficial, peace-fostering, and Earth-friendly ways of life.” 27 Küng was encouraged by the interest in and support of a global ethic by those attending the Parliament of World Religions and by the serious consideration it received in the aftermath. 28 Yet it remained for him to be more specific as to how a global ethic could be applied to our world situation. To address this, Küng turned his attention to the practical domain of global politics and economics.
C. The Application of a New World Ethic

Küng selected the arenas of global politics and economics to demonstrate the applicability of his proposal for a new world ethic. His book, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*\textsuperscript{20}, reads more like a book from a political science or economics professor than from a theologian. The first section deals with global politics while the second treats global economics. In both sections, Küng surveys and analyzes the historic background to the present world situation. In typical Küngian fashion, he posits two extreme positions and suggests a via media. His proposed paradigm of politics and economics is centered around the theme of responsibility. In conclusion to each section, Küng suggests several specific proposals indicating how a global ethic could benefit global politics and economics. Küng adds a chapter discussion to the section on global politics that indicates the positive role the world’s religions could play in the practice of diplomacy and the peace process. Space is available only to give a summary sketch of how Küng’s new world ethic applies to global politics and economics respectively.

Küng envisions two opposite poles in global politics. One side of the pole emphasizes realism and power politics. This is represented by the power politics of Henry Kissinger, the Machiavellian politics of Cardinal de Richelieu, the practical Realpolitik of Otto von Bismarck and the power management theory of Hans J. Morgenthau. At the other pole is the idealistic politics of Woodrow Wilson, who sought to subordinate politics to morality. Küng proposes an ethic of responsibility where the “political calculation” of realistic politics is combined with and tempered by the ethical judgments of an idealistic politics. Küng bases his thinking here on the ethics of responsibility outlined by Max Weber and Hans Jonas.\textsuperscript{30} His logic is that a global society needs a global ethic where some consensus on moral values, criteria and attitudes inform our global political decisions. Without a global ethic informing global politics, democracy in the global village will not survive Machiavellian power politics. But where do we find global ethical standards? He gravitates toward the political theory of Michael Walzer, and away from those of Rawls and Habermas. Walzer, like Küng, seeks to find a via media between realist and idealist politics by building upon a “core morality,” a “minimal” or “thin” ethic.\textsuperscript{31} Küng, however, goes beyond Walzer to suggest that a more universal ethic for politics is the golden rule (“do to others what you want them to do to you”), which is expressed in different ways in various traditions. In addition, Küng suggests that the four general ethical directives of the Declaration Toward a Global Ethic (noted above) would also provide moral orientation for global politics.

Next, the global economy is divided up into two opposite poles as well. Küng believes that the globalization of the world economy is “unavoidable,” “ambivalent,” “unpredictable” and able to be “controlled.”\textsuperscript{32} His logic in economics is the same as that in politics. If the world is moving toward a global economy with global businesses and technology, then the world needs a global ethic based on a basic ethical consensus to guide honest business practices and a just distribution of wealth. On the one side of this pole is the failed welfare state system. Sweden provides Küng with an example of a welfare state in shambles with poor economic growth, high unemployment and weak currency. Küng does not want to abandon the welfare state system totally, however. His idea is to restructure it for greater effectiveness. At the other pole is the neocapitalism of the USA
and England. Küng does not think that neocapitalism, with its emphasis upon the profit motive, has produced a better model for responsible economic life than that of the welfare state.

After examining the American situation, Küng agrees with the analysis of Zbigiew Brzezinski, former Security Advisor to President Carter, that the balance sheet on neocapitalism reveals major flaws: financial indebtedness, trade deficit, low savings, noncompetitiveness, low productivity, poor health care, deficient public education, decaying social infrastructure, a greedy upper class, heightened litigation, race and poverty problems, pervasive crime and increased violence, a massive drug culture, social helplessness, sexual license, moral corruption through the media, divisive multiculturalism, decline in civil consciousness, political gridlock and spiritual emptiness. In the light of this list, Küng concludes that economic policies need moral direction. Küng pleas for responsible economic policies that work toward more just social conditions and ones that factor in environmental concerns.

In addition to collaboration between cultures and shared commitments of those cultures to human rights and democracy, Küng points to the moral and spiritual values of the world’s religions as an indispensable resource for a responsible global economics. The religious traditions speak in one way or another about serving others, a commitment to a just economic order, dealing honestly and fairly in business and prohibiting theft. Küng implores businesses, business managers and business ethicists to tap into the ethical resources of the world’s religions. He offers this parting piece of advice: “In the long term an immoral way of doing business does not pay.”

D. Is Küng’s Global Ethic Project Plausible?

Hans Küng must be commended for his efforts toward a global ethic. Who can disagree with the ideal of world peace, treating people more humanely, just economic distribution, responsible attitudes toward the environment or more friendly relations between the world’s religions? The world is in moral crisis. Human society certainly needs help. Küng is to be credited not only for these efforts but also for alerting statesmen and political leaders to the positive value and role that religion can play in reaching these moral goals for society. Nonetheless, there are two aspects of Küng’s project that present plausibility problems.

First, Küng’s quest for minimal values, norms and attitudes from particular religions and cultures that are at the same time universally binding ethical values, norms and attitudes is strained. Küng hopes to discover common categorical imperatives that are trans-national, trans-cultural, universally binding ethical values, norms and standards from a consensus of religions and cultures as the minimum foundation for a global ethic. In addition, Küng seeks to ground these common ethical values, norms and attitudes in a transcendent ground, which he calls “God.” Without this ground, he admits, ethics and morality are at best relative. Yet, Küng also says that he is not seeking absolute standards of morality or a unitary ethical ideology, but only a sober and modest way to address the needs and worries of the modern age by striving for “a new basic consensus of integrative humane convictions.” Küng here backs away from absolute, universal moral standards grounded in a transcendent reality and retreats to the notion of human “consensus.” The dilemma is that it is
impossible to derive divinely grounded universal standards of morality from relative human consensual convictions found in world religions and cultures. Religions and cultures are relative. Thus, Küng is looking for universal standards, norms and values among relative standards, norms and values. To acknowledge that universal, trans-national, trans-cultural categorical moral imperatives exist and need to be grounded in a transcendent reality is to concede that some particular objective, absolute standard of moral truth exists, is knowable and is to some extent known in human history. This is exactly what the Jewish and Christian traditions claim. But this is certainly not the moral understanding of “consensus” thinkers in Western culture. Nor is it the teaching of many world religions. Küng’s talk of “consensus” suggests that he is vulnerable to the same criticisms he made against Habermas and Rawls. Here, I agree with the critique of Nicholas Rescher, who forcefully argues that consensus “is not a criterion of truth, is not a standard of value, is not an index of moral or ethical appropriateness, is not a requisite for co-operation, is not, in and of itself, an appropriate ideal.” While the ideals of Küng’s project are worthy, “consensus” is not a valid ideal upon which to found universal ethics. It is, therefore, difficult to see how Küng’s project provides a plausible framework for a global ethic by setting the foundation for universal moral imperatives upon the shifting sands of human consensus.

Second, the four irrevocable directives for human behavior in the Declaration Toward a Global Ethic are so general that as each tradition interprets these directives, there is little real gain on “consensus.” The problem is that as we shift from the general principle to more specific definitions, interpretations and concrete applications of the directive in the specific religions and cultures, then irreconcilable differences begin to emerge. For example, the first irrevocable directive suggests a commitment to a “culture of non-violence and respect for life.” This is based upon the religious-ethical prescript “Thou shalt not kill!” or, stated positively, “Have respect for life!” We are told that “armament is a mistaken path; disarmament is the commandment of the times” and that humans, animals and plants deserve “protection, preservation, and care.” There is no consensus among Christians, let alone the other world religions, on what “Thou shalt not kill” or “Have respect for life” means. One need look no further than the death penalty and abortion issues in the USA to realize that this directive itself is not sufficient to settle heated and sometimes violent disagreements among Christians. Moreover, is not this directive admittedly easier for Theravadin Buddhists than for Shi’ite Muslims and most Christians (with the exception of the Anabaptist tradition)? And what does it mean practically to protect, preserve and care for animals and plants? Does this mean that animals and plants are not to be killed for food, clothing, medical testing or other human uses? If not, what practical guidelines are given for ethical treatment of animals and plants? These and other such problems can be raised about the four irrevocable directives of the Declaration Toward a Global Ethic. Due to their very general formulation, the irrevocable directives lose moral force as they are interpreted and contextualized.

With all this emphasis upon global ethics, world religions, politics, and economics, some might be wondering if Küng has forgotten a specific commitment to the Christian faith. In the middle of his book on global politics and economics, however, Küng offers this personal confession: “in the face of all the darkness of the world and the Church, Jesus Christ stands as ‘the light of the world’, ‘the light of men’, as ‘our light’: ‘The light of
life) shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it’…. In company with many others I openly concede that during the long decades of my life as a theologian I personally would hardly have survived so long in the face of so much darkness in the world and the Church without this light, which in my fragile humanity has always been for me ‘the way, the truth and the life’.”

It is from this Christian center that Küng has sought to construct a global ethic. He meets the world on its own turf and in its own terms. Küng does so, however, as a Christian theologian. But how does Küng relate this project for a global ethic to his specific Christian ethics and following Jesus? This question is the theme of the next section.

3. Bridging the Gap between Jerusalem & Athens

Küng is conscious of the apparent disparity of combining the ethics of Jerusalem (specifically Christian ethics) to the morals of Athens (non-Christian and non-religious moral thinking). He finds no contradiction, however, in joining these two into a unified ethical vision. In addressing this issue, Küng comments: “Clearly a universal human ethic and a specifically Christian ethic are not mutually exclusive.”

But the question of how Küng couples a general, universal ethic to a specifically Christian ethic is not clear. On what basis does he bridge the gap between Jerusalem and Athens? And how does he retain a unified ethical vision?

There are at least five features of Küng’s theology that serve as bridge components between his specifically Christian ethics and his global ethic project. Küng nowhere presents these features of his theology in a coherent system. However, these components are entirely commensurate with his thinking and aid in understanding how he unifies his ethical vision. The five bridge components are derived from aspects of Küng’s natural theology, anthropology, theological method, conception of truth, and his employment of Hegel’s dialectical method. These five components are likened to a bridge with five planks. A brief exposition of how each functions will reveal that these bridge components are the essential components that provide cohesion to Küng’s theological ethics.

A. The Natural Theology Plank

The first bridge component of Küng’s theological ethics is derived from his natural theology. Küng takes neither a strong “foundationalist” approach to natural theology characteristic of Vatican I nor a “fideistic” approach along the lines of Karl Barth. God, as the creator of the world, may be discovered in a limited way from creation. This means that God’s self-revelation and human experience of that revelation are not antithetical. Revelation occurs through human experience, not apart from it. Küng finds support for a “soft” natural theology within Scripture (Rom 1:18-21, 2:14-16; Acts 14:17, 17:27; John 1:9; Hebrews 11). His conclusion is that a true, but limited, knowledge of God may be derived from creation apart from the special revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Knowledge of God, therefore, is, in principle, universal in scope and can be a resource for ethical principles as well as provide a basis for moral action. Belief in God is nourished by an ultimately justified fundamental trust in reality. God is not only the guarantor of the reality of reason and the rationality of reason, but also is the ground upon which ethics and the moral life are ultimately founded. He says, “The very last and first reality, God,
must be assumed if a person in the last resort wants to live a meaningful moral life. God’s reality is the condition of the possibility of a moral autonomy of man in secular society.” Künß maintains that theonomy is the essential condition for the possibility of moral autonomy. In this way, a “soft” natural theology provides one plank of continuity between specifically Christian ethics and a universal global ethic.

B. The Humanum Plank

The second cohesive bridge component is Künß’s conception of the humanum. He believes that there is a continuity between being Christian and being human. While he does not simply equate being human with being Christian, Künß thinks that being Christian does not mean that one is less human. Being human and being Christian are complementary and mutually beneficial to one another. True religion, Künß affirms, and true humanity exist in dialectical tension. He remarks, “True humanity is the presupposition for true religion” and “true religion is the fulfillment of true humanity.” The concept humanum denotes human dignity, worth and value. It is the central ethical criterion by which Künß evaluates and determines what is good and bad, true and false, valuable and valueless in the world’s religions and ideologies. If something promotes and protects human dignity, value and worth, then it is regarded as true, good and valuable. If, however, something destroys or suppresses human dignity, value and worth, it is false, bad and valueless. The concept of the humanum functions in this way as a general ethical criterion for all religions and ideologies. As a result, Künß views the humanum (human dignity, value and worth) as a universally binding and unconditional ethical criterion. Moreover, the general ethical criterion, the humanum, is not regarded by Künß as being in conflict with the specific ethical criterion for Christians, Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus Christ is considered the supreme concrete example of the formal category the humanum.” Jesus Christ gives an impressive, audible and realizable quality to the abstract notion of the humanum. Since Jesus provides the supreme example of human dignity, value and worth, there is no disjunction for Künß between Christian ethics and a global ethic oriented toward the humanum.

C. The Correlation Method Plank

The third bridge component that brings cohesion to Künß’s theological ethics is his theological methodology. Künß’s theological methodology stands in the tradition of revisionist theologians Paul Tillich, David Tracy and Edward Schillebeeckx. Each of these, in different ways, employs the method of correlation. The method of correlation suggests two main sources for Christian theology: divine revelation and human experience. This method also posits a basic continuity between divine revelation and human experience. This basic continuity, however, does not imply that divine revelation and human experience never conflict. What it does suggest is that there is a relative harmony between the revelation of God in creation and the revelation of God in scripture. The method of correlation, therefore, is congruent with a “soft” natural theology and accounts for why Künß takes seriously the world horizon within Christian theology. The world situation with its varied human experiences is viewed as a potential source for the knowledge of God. Künß’s theological method, however, departs from the correlation tradition in one very
important respect. It includes alongside a “mutually critical correlation” space for a “mutually critical confrontation.”\footnote{Assessing Hans Kung’s Theological Ethics \hspace{1cm} 113} Divine revelation and human experience, Kung maintains, are not always compatible. What is one to do if there exists a critical confrontation between divine revelation and human experience? This is an interesting problematic for any theological method, but especially for methods of correlation. How exactly does one adjudicate the truth of conflicting moral claims between divine revelation and human experience? Kung argues that Christian theologians must opt for the norm of truth found in Jesus Christ in a critical confrontation. He says, “What then should decide the issue in the crucial first-and-last questions affecting man and humanity? The biblical experiences, the Christian message, the Gospel, Jesus Christ himself. For this Christ Jesus is in person the ‘essence of Christianity, the ‘Christian message, the ‘Gospel’ itself, indeed God’s ‘Word,’ ‘made flesh.’”\footnote{Assessing Hans Kung’s Theological Ethics \hspace{1cm} 113} Kung’s theological method of correlation, even while affirming Jesus as the ultimate norm for assessing truth, advocates a basic continuity between the moral truth in Jesus and moral truth found in human experience.

\section*{D. The Differentiated Truth Plank}

If Jesus Christ is the norm of moral truth, how is he related to the moral truth found in the global context? This question leads to the fourth bridge component of Kung’s theological ethics, his differentiated conception of truth. Kung discusses his conception of truth while formulating ecumenical criteria for determining truth in the world’s religions. The question of truth is important to him because the issue of conflicting moral truth claims arises in the search for a moral consensus among believers and non-believers. Kung is of the opinion that truth is ontologically unified. He maintains: “The truth cannot be different in the different religions, but only one: through all the contradictions, we have to seek what is complementary; through all the exclusions, what is inclusive.”\footnote{Assessing Hans Kung’s Theological Ethics \hspace{1cm} 113} There is no consensus on what criteria could be employed to adjudicate the conflicting moral truth claims among the religions. Nonetheless, Kung assembles a set of criteria for evaluating truth in the world’s religions. The criteria he employs are: (1) the general ethical criterion of the \textit{humanum}; (2) the general religious criterion of the authentic or canonical; and (3) the specifically Christian criterion—Jesus Christ. The first criterion is ethical in nature and has already been discussed above. In sum, a religious claim or behavior cannot be true if it does not promote human dignity, value and worth. The second criterion suggests that for religious beliefs and practices to be true, they must at least measure up to their own authoritative teachings or canons. The third criterion, Jesus Christ, applies to Christian believers only.

These three criteria are augmented by two perspectives of truth, which results in a “differentiated” conception of truth. The first dimension of truth is the external or outside perspective. From this standpoint, the “objective” outsider view, there are many different true and good religions. The external dimension of truth is correlated with the search for a global ethic where the general ethical criterion of the \textit{humanum} and the general religious criterion of the canonical function as “minimal requirements” for the truth of any religion. From this perspective, Kung comments, “As a religion Christianity appears in world history just as relative as all other religions.”\footnote{Assessing Hans Kung’s Theological Ethics \hspace{1cm} 113} There exists, however, another dimension of truth. Kung calls this the internal or inside perspective from the Christian point of view. This corresponds to Kung’s specifically Christian ethics and the specifically Christian criterion of
Jesus Christ. From the Christian standpoint, there is only one ultimately true ethical criterion—Jesus Christ. Küng is quick to add that the truth of Christianity does not monopolize or diminish truth in other religions. That is, as long as Christian truth claims are not flatly contradicted. Küng does not mean to suggest by his differentiated conception of truth that truth itself is pluralistic or differentiated. He means that our human perceptions of truth are relative in nature. Only God has an objective, undifferentiated view of truth. Because human perception of truth is differentiated, Küng reasons, true ethical teachings within Christianity may be combined, although not completely harmonized with, the moral teachings and ethical practices found in the world’s religions toward a world ethic.

E. The Hegelian Dialectic Plank

The fifth and last bridge component to consider is Küng’s use of Hegel’s dialectical method of “sublation.” Hans Küng is a theologian of the via media. Hegel’s dialectical method is one of his favorite devices for navigating the via media and has been employed in each of the four bridge components above either explicitly or implicitly. This fact is key to understanding how Küng combines a specifically Christian ethic with universal-global morality from the world’s religions and secularist thought. The Hegelian dialectical method of sublation is Küng’s primary tool for resolving conflicts and incompatibilities in interreligious dialogue. He says: “...the goal of interreligious dialogue is not a compounding of various features from various religions, nor a mingling of gods (theocracy), nor a fusing of religions, but, rather, a dialectical ‘transcending’ (Aufheben) of conflicts through inner mediation, which at once includes affirming, denying, and overcoming antagonistic positions.”7 What is said here about interreligious dialogue applies equally well to how Küng couples his Christian ethics to his project for a global ethic. The link is Hegel’s dialectical method of sublation.

The word “sublation” is derived from the German Aufhebung, which is very difficult to translate into English. Küng nowhere explains the concept in detail, but comments that sublation means more than the combination of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. He suggests that sublation is “the affirmation of a truth that turns into a denial and then again into a transcending of both affirmation and denial.”8 Edward Quinn, one of Küng’s translators, thinks that “sublation” is best understood as something that cancels, preserves, elevates and transfigures all at the same moment.9 The dialectical method requires that no proposition be wholeheartedly denied or uncritically affirmed without qualification. Moreover, sublation has the positive aim of mediating polar opposites. It is easy to understand why Küng employs Hegel’s method of sublation in his global ethic project. For by it, he hopes to take all the moral teachings found in the world’s religions and secularist thought, affirm the relative truth found in each, deny the absolute claims of each, and, then, transcend and elevate each into a unified global ethic. Each of the bridge components above is contingent upon the success of Hegel’s dialectical method of sublating opposites and rendering antinomies compatible.

F. How Stable Is Küng’s Bridge?

Küng is an ecumenical theologian par excellence. What makes him such is his keen insight into what divides Christians, the world’s religions and secular worldviews. He is
quick to get to the heart of issues. Künig’s mind habitually locates the central antinomies between views. In fact, most of his books deal with problematics that are construed as polar opposites. It is also Künig’s natural impulse to formulate a mediating position between polar opposites. The assumption that underlies Künig’s mediation impulse is that God is the ultimate source of all truth and our capacity for knowing anything at all in the world stems from God. It is from this viewpoint that Künig can affirm a fundamental continuity between natural and revealed revelation, between being human and being Christian, between divine revelation and human experience and between truth in the world and ‘Christian’ truth. There is much to agree with here. However, space only allows for two critical remarks regarding these bridge components between Jerusalem and Athens. It is possible to cross from Jerusalem to Athens on the planks provided. But it is much like crossing over a great chasm on a wobbly rope bridge with two very weak boards. The two major weak planks are Künig’s conception of truth and his use of Hegel’s dialectical method.

First, Künig’s differentiated conception of truth has two major flaws. The first major flaw is that his conception of truth is contingent upon a false distinction between “objective” (the outside perspective) and “subjective” truth (the inside perspective). The subject-object debate has been long standing in epistemology, especially since the Enlightenment. Künig himself has criticized at length the Enlightenment view of truth as “objective” mathematical certainty and acknowledges the subjectivity of all human reason, including scientific rationalism.90 There is no realm of rationality that is privileged to “objective” knowledge, while all others must be relegated to the status of “subjective.” All objects of rational inquiry are related to knowing subjects, which means that one’s knowing faculty cannot be separated from the willing, feeling, imagination, temperament, emotions and passions of the person doing the knowing. In addition, Künig has argued that the rationality of reason must be presupposed by a “prior act of trust” in order to execute any rational inquiry. This pre-scientific decision that precedes all rationality is classified in Künig’s thought as “fundamental trust.”91 Moreover, if finitude and sin are factorized into human knowing, then it is extremely difficult to say that some perspectives are “objective” and others are merely “subjective” in nature. The other major flaw of Künig’s differentiated conception of truth is that it is difficult to see how it evades the charge of practical relativistic perspectivalism. As noted above, Künig himself does not think that truth itself is relative, differentiated or pluralistic in itself. He definitely believes in one ultimate reality, which he calls “God.” He also affirms that truth cannot be different in different religions. It, therefore, defies logic for Künig to say that Christians possess a criterion for truth (Jesus Christ) that is not at the same time a criterion for truth in other religions and ideologies.

Second, Künig’s use of Hegel’s dialectical method of sublation to resolve antinomies does little to explain how polar opposites are mediated. Künig’s writings are brimming with appeals to Hegel’s dialectical method of sublation as the key to mediating antagonistic positions. There is no question that the dialectical method of sublation has the positive aim of mediation of opposite positions. Yet Künig nowhere provides a nuanced definition or explanation of the inner dynamics of sublation other than appealing to the very general formula that it involves an affirming, denying and overcoming of both affirmation and denial in some kind of nondescript mediation. Without some kind of explanation of how
antinomies are mediated and at the same time preserved, Künig's conception of truth and his dialectical joining of antagonistic positions suffers the same problem of Hegel's philosophy. Hegel's dialectic conceived of God and truth more dynamically, to be sure. However, it is virtually impossible to distinguish truth from the process of human history or God from the world and human consciousness in Hegel's philosophy. This is due to Hegel's use of the dialectical method of sublation. In a similar way, it is difficult to distinguish an essential difference in Künig's thought between being Christian and being human, between Jesus and the humanum, between revelation and human experience, between modernity and postmodernity, between specifically Christian ethics and global ethics, between Jerusalem and Athens. The reason is that Künig employs Hegel's dialectical method of sublation to mediate these antinomies. In the end, it is hard to avoid the critical judgment that Künig's employment of Hegel's dialectical method of sublation as affirming, denying and overcoming is little more than a crude and mechanical way to sweep unraveled theological loose ends under the proverbial carpet.

Conclusion

There is no question that Hans Künig has made significant contributions to theology during his career. He will be remembered as one of the distinguished theologians of the twentieth century. Künig is reviewed as "a unique phenomenon is twentieth-century theology" for "no other theologian has been published, translated and read so widely in this century; no other theologian has been the focus of such a major controversy; no other contemporary theologian has covered such a broad spectrum of theological themes." Hans Künig is essentially an ecumenical theologian. And it is perhaps in the field of ecumenics that Künig has made his most significant contributions. This has led John Cobb to exclaim that "Hans Künig has contributed more than any other Christian to interreligious dialogue." Moreover, even though we have found significant theoretical problems with his Christian ethics, his global ethic project and the components by which he bridges the gap between the two, Künig remains an outstanding example of a thoughtful and imaginative Christian theologian. He desires to engage the world in order to make a pragmatic and responsible impact. He does so unashamedly as a committed Christian. Future ecumenical theologians in the Third Millennium are not only indebted to his ecumenical research, but even more to his ecumenical passion.

Notes

6. John P. Meier is critical of Küng’s use of the term “the real Jesus” and charges that Küng uses the terms “real,” “true,” “original,” and “historical” in a confused manner, A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1991), p. 35.
8. Ibid., p. 33.
13. Ibid., pp. 544-49.
26. Ibid., pp. 24-34.
27. Ibid., p. 36.
28. See the proceedings from the conference held at Columbia University, October 7, 1994, The United Nations and the World’s Religions: Prospects for a Global Ethic, eds. Nancy Hodes and


23. Ibid., p. 67.
24. Ibid., p. 95.
26. Ibid., pp. 181-82.
27. Ibid., p. 272.
35. Küng, Global Responsibility, p. 22.
42. Küng, Global Responsibility, p. 91.
44. Küng, “Paradigm Change in Theology and Science,” in Theology for the Third Millennium, p. 168.
45. Küng, Christianity and the World Religions, pp. xviii-xix.
31. Ibid., p. 140.
50. Ibid., pp. 1-125.
During the 1980s, many in the Christian community were characterizing AIDS as a punishment from God and stigmatizing people with AIDS (however they contracted the disease) as modern-day lepers. It was against this backdrop that Robert W. Lyon wrote the jarring article, “Becoming the New Testament Church to Serve These ‘New Lepers,’” in the journal Engage/Social Action. It challenged the Church to be radically different from the rest of the world by exhibiting vulnerability and fostering love toward the neediest. Many in the Church were deeply moved by this challenge, and during the years that followed, numerous ministries and ministry proposals appeared.

Directly serving people ravaged by HIV infection and AIDS, though, was just the first step. It was an essential first step, because without it the Church would have no credible basis for asking anything significant from society at large. However, with many members of the body of Christ now willing to join Christ in associating with those commonly despised, the time has come to examine more carefully what the Church needs to be saying to a society that controls the majority of monetary resources potentially available to help those who have or could contract HIV/AIDS. Professor Lyon has long persuasively argued that the ethics of God’s Reign (or “Kingdom”) tends to place believers at odds with their societies as well as their ecclesial cultures. If that is true, then an ethical challenge not only to the Church but also to society at large must be expected in a full account of the ethics of God’s Reign.

This article represents an attempt to look beyond the Church and to ask what an ethics of God’s Reign can contribute to current social struggles to determine what resources should be expended in behalf of present and future persons with HIV/AIDS. Accordingly, it concentrates on the social dimension of the demands of love—what the Bible often refers to as “justice.” Shortly after Jesus summarizes God’s
expectations for people as loving God and loving neighbor (Luke 10:27-28), he is pictured challenging the Pharisees to love God and do justice (11:42). Justice lies close to the heart of what loving one’s neighbors entails.

As I explain at greater length in Life on the Line, justice has a prominent place in the ethics of God’s Reign. When the psalmists reflect on God, they recognize that God “loves justice” (Ps 99:4) and that justice characterizes God’s own actions in the world (Ps 10:18; 35:10; 76:9; 103:6; 146:7-9). Rooted in the character of God, the importance of justice does not wane with time. In his day, Jeremiah insisted that knowing God necessarily entails knowing the importance God attaches to doing justice (Jer 9:24; 22:15-16). Jesus similarly insisted that those who overlook the doing of justice have tragically misunderstood God (Matt 7:21-23; 25:34-45). Justice, then, is central to what God expects of people in the social order.

Needless to say, the notion of justice is not a purely theological term; it is widely acknowledged in society at large. This familiarity is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing in that society is at least to some degree receptive toward considering the merits of anything that purports to be a requirement of justice. However, it is also a curse because what society means by justice and what Scripture means by justice are not the same. Such a predicament comes as no surprise—the Bible repeatedly warns people about “the wisdom of the world” (1 Cor 1:20) and “human arguments” (Rom 3:5). People are not wise to “lean on” their own understanding (Prov 3:5-6; cf. 14:12), for God, who loves all, has different values and views than human beings, whose minds are unavoidably biased by self-centeredness.

Justice in the hands of self-centered individuals all too easily becomes a sword to fend off the claims of others so that our rights can be protected to the full. It is more a “just us” attitude than what the Bible terms “justice.” Nowhere is this unbiblical outlook more evident than in the arena of AIDS. Those with HIV/AIDS are “someone else”—perhaps to be feared, more likely to be forgotten when it comes time for us to pursue the resources we need and want for our own concerns.

When AIDS-related resource allocation decisions are being made, a “just us” orientation predisposes decision-makers, along with the public who elects them, to underestimate the resources that should be provided. This same orientation undoubtedly skews allocation decisions in other arenas as well. So, although it will not be possible here to balance the funding claims of HIV/AIDS against all other legitimate claims, an examination of the AIDS arena will underscore the difference between a justice and a “just us” perspective as the basis for society’s distribution of its limited resources. The examination taken here will begin with a consideration of various arguments for justice and assumptions about justice, and will conclude by probing several aspects of justice.

Arguments for Justice

“Arguments for justice,” as this term is used here, refers to reasons why the notion of justice should be central to the issue of resource allocation in the midst of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Such reasons are rooted in the close relationship between justice and human need. In the biblical writings, God is repeatedly observed to have great concern for those in need (e.g., in Exod 22:21-25; 23:6; 1 Sam 2:8; Ps 107:39-41; Prov 14:31; 19:17).
Their basic needs are to be met as a matter of justice (Job 29:14-16; Ezek 18:5-9). Such needs can include food, clothing, and shelter (Deut 10:18; Isa 58:7) as well as the land essential to sustain the meeting of those needs (Isa 5:7-8). Whatever the need, the underlying principle of justice is the same: as people have need, so they should receive (Acts 4:35; 2 Cor 8:13).

The more important the issue at stake, the more relevant justice as a governing concept becomes. Concern is rarely expressed, for example, when the glass of water that one person receives at a restaurant has a minute amount more in it than that received by another. However, if people’s lives and financial well-being are found possibly to depend upon that amount, the notion of just allocation suddenly becomes much more important. Questions of justice are at the heart of the AIDS pandemic for the same reasons: the predicament is expansive—fatally affecting vast numbers of people—and quite expensive as well.

The predicament is expansive. Consider first the expansive nature of HIV infection and AIDS. By the beginning of the year 2000, 18.8 million people had already died from AIDS, and another 34.3 million people were living with HIV/AIDS. In 1999 alone, 2.8 million of those deaths occurred and 5.4 million people were newly infected. “These data represent a ‘best-case’ scenario and may underestimate actual death rates. Because AIDS may kill several members of a household, it can destroy households completely, with the result that some of the deaths will not be captured in subsequent household surveys.”

One of the tragic results of such widespread death has been over 13 million orphans (who have lost their mother or both parents to AIDS before they reached the age of 15)—a number projected to double in the next ten years.9

Certain parts of the world have been especially hard hit. In India, some four million people are infected with AIDS. In Russia, the number of HIV-infected people has doubled in the past two years. In the Caribbean and much of Latin America, AIDS numbers are rising “to frightening levels.”10 However, the crisis in Africa is unparalleled. Every minute 11 people worldwide are infected with HIV—and 10 of those are in sub-Saharan Africa. Annually, the world’s wars kill only one tenth as many people as AIDS kills in Africa.10 Of the world’s children orphaned as a result of AIDS, 95% currently live in Africa. More than 12 million sub-Saharan Africans have died of AIDS—two million last year alone—6,000 more just today.11

There are now 16 countries in which more than one-tenth of the adult population aged 15-49 is infected with HIV. In seven countries, all toward the southern end of the continent, over one-fifth of the adults has the virus.12 The country of Botswana is particularly hard hit, with 35.8% of its adult population infected. Rather than the life expectancy of 71 years that its citizens would have without the disease, life expectancy has dropped to 39, and is expected to drop to only 29 in the next 10 years.13 In Namibia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, one third of the children will be orphaned by 2010.14 Uganda, with the highest number of AIDS orphans in the world (1.1 million) already has some areas in which this is the case.15

The scope and seriousness of the problem are immense. “This is undoubtedly the most serious infectious disease threat in recorded human history,” notes Oxford University’s Roy Anderson.16 Moreover, in the words of the recently-released report “Children on the
Brink 2000," “The HIV/AIDS pandemic is producing orphans on a scale unrivaled in world history.” The predicament is indeed expansive. But it is also expensive.

The predicament is expensive. In the United States, for instance, annual costs of HIV disease have long crossed the $50 billion mark. Such figures have included approximately $13 billion in direct costs and $38 billion in indirect costs (the value of lost productivity due to sickness and death). The public health care sector has been especially hard hit. Because of the health and insurance profile of patients using public hospitals, public hospitals lose more than twice as much per AIDS patient per year as do private hospitals. In recent years, the federal government has directly spent $6.8 billion–$1.8 billion for research, $5.4 billion for prevention, and $1.2 billion for treatment, in addition to $3.3 billion for AIDS care under Medicare and Medicaid. AIDS is draining whatever private resources many individual patients have. As a result, whereas patients have used private physicians more often than hospital clinics before they developed the illness, once they have develop AIDS the number of persons with AIDS who need to resort to hospital clinics has been almost five times as great as the number of those who have been able to continue to see their private physicians.

In some respects the public impact on other countries may have been even greater than it is in the U.S. One study, for instance, documents that patients with AIDS have tended to be hospitalized significantly longer in Europe than in the United States. Less developed countries, with far fewer resources available for health care, typically have experienced an even greater financial burden. To date, Africa has been especially hard hit. The majority of all people with AIDS have lived there, but less than 2% of the money spent on AIDS globally has generally been expended there. Of the $1-2 billion needed specifically for AIDS prevention in Africa, only a small fraction of that amount is being spent. National health services in Africa have been swamped. One recent study of 16 African countries has found that public health spending for AIDS alone has exceeded 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 7 of the countries—a staggering figure in countries where total health spending accounts for 3-5% of GDP.

During the years ahead the predicament will only get more expensive. Not only will the number of people affected continue to grow, but newer treatments will also add additional costs to the care of HIV-infected persons. Experience with drugs such as AZT has been instructive. People with HIV have been able to live longer due to prophylactic treatment with these drugs, which can postpone the onset of AIDS and also lengthen life after AIDS develops. The amount of hospital use over the course of a patient’s lifetime, however, does not appear to be reduced by the use of such drugs. The HIV/AIDS predicament, then, is both expansive and expensive—two compelling reasons why a just allocation of resources is critical.

Assumptions about Justice

With these two arguments for justice in view, two assumptions about justice can now be clarified: 1) that justice is comprehensive, and 2) that justice is collaborative. These assumptions are at least implicit throughout the biblical writings.

Justice is comprehensive. To observe, first of all, that justice is comprehensive is to underscore its far-reaching character. The word in the biblical texts is often a translation of the
Hebrew *sedeq* or the Greek * dikaiosyne*, both of which can also mean “righteousness,” with its stress upon rightness and right relationship. A just situation is one in which everything important has been taken into account and placed in proper relationship with everything else. Justice is typically invoked when it is perceived that the interests of some are being duly considered, while those of others are not.

A just allocation of resources so understood must take into account a much broader array of considerations than at first might appear relevant. It is not concerned merely with medical care for those with AIDS but also with preventive efforts such as the provision of drugs, vaccines, and information that are required in order to render that care unnecessary (at least for a while). It is concerned about the research needed to improve both medical care and preventive efforts.

Moreover, from the comprehensive perspective of justice, medical care will include not only physician care but also multidisciplinary teams to address the broad range of needs that arise in the context of AIDS. It will include palliative care as well as curative care—enabling patients both to die as well as possible and to live as well as possible. To inpatient care will be added in-home care, with attention to the full range of psychological, family, social, employment, financial, legal, and other services needed by the patient.

Justice calls on a society to do more than provide necessary funding. A just allocation of resources calls forth the outpouring of time and energy and tears that many patients may need more than anything money can buy. In fact, without such a personal commitment, even a just financial allocation is not likely to occur.

Justice is more than a mere abstract ideal. It is a moral mandate striving to be heard above the clamor of a thousand injustices at work in any situation. Implementing justice entails locating and silencing those injustices as much as it does promoting a just way forward. So a just allocation of resources in the face of AIDS requires addressing the larger context of health care. If tens of millions of people are without health insurance, as in the United States, or the level of care available to people differs significantly in different sections of the country, as in many countries of the world, then justice will constantly be urging attention to the broader picture with its many injustices when making allocation decisions about a particular disease such as AIDS. Justice also mandates that other diseases be given due consideration, and that allocation decisions not depend, for example, on what disease happens to capture the media’s attention at the moment.

Justice is collaborative. Implicit in the assumption that justice is comprehensive is a second assumption: that justice is collaborative. When only one person is in need of something, the concept of justice has little relevance. It is when the needs of various people come into conflict with each other that justice becomes so important.

Justice provides a way for people to live together. It presumes that people ought to live together, and suggests concrete ways to enable community to exist. It is concerned about the needs of all, recognizing that at one time or another, in one way or another, everyone is in some way vulnerable. So it endeavors to protect people at their weakest points as an integral part of facilitating the flourishing of all.

It is here that the close link between justice and love becomes particularly evident. Love seeks mutuality in community. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. What this means in practice is self-sacrifice, because we are constantly prone to think of ourselves...
more highly than is warranted (Mark 7:21-22; Rom 12:3, 16; 1 John 3:16-18). But the goal is interdependent community. Paul commends Jesus' self-sacrifice (Phil 2:6-8), yet interprets its message to believers as follows: “each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (v. 4). The needs of all are to be met in a community in which “your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality” (2 Cor 8:14). Moreover, community is to be understood inclusively, embracing those usually considered to be “different” (Luke 10:29-37; John 4:9, 27; Col 3:11).32

While enabling the community to serve the individual, justice also gives the community itself an excellence that warrants service on the part of the individual. From this perspective it is unfortunate to subordinate the community to the individual in any general sort of way, as is sometimes done in the United States, or to so subordinate the individual to the community, as is sometimes done in more communitarian nations.33 As fundamentally collaborative in nature, justice works to bring together not only the needs of various individuals, but also those of the individual with those of the community. There are, however, potentially conflicting understandings of the ways that justice pursues this task, as will be examined later.

Because justice is collaborative, the language of justice is also collaborative. Accordingly, it contrasts sharply with much of the language that is common in the context of AIDS. Much AIDS language is riddled with metaphors such as those of crime, sin, war, and the divided society—inherently divisive metaphors that undermine a sense of community.

The last of these metaphors is the most explicit in this regard, present every time there is talk about what ‘we’ (those without AIDS) must do about “them” (those with AIDS). The motivating concern here appears to be more “just us” than justice. Achieving a just approach to resource allocation does not require ridding language of metaphor—an impossible task in any case. However, it does require taking care that the very language of the discussion does not subtly create a separation between those of us deciding how best to allocate resources and those of us with AIDS.34

That justice is collaborative as well as comprehensive means that it will strive to foster community at all levels. It is not unusual in the context of just resource allocation to think only nationally. Yet justice also has local concerns, e.g., regarding the just access of patients with AIDS to whatever limited number of intensive care beds (if any) are available to similarly sick patients.35

Similarly, justice has an oft-neglected international point of view. From the earliest days of the Church—and long before that—people have readily adopted a “just us” attitude when God’s blessings are at issue. Even Paul (Saul—Acts 9) and Peter (Acts 10) had a hard time accepting that all peoples of the world are cared for by God. But such is the case, as much so today as in the earliest days of the Church. Accordingly, were the rate of new HIV infections in North America and Western Europe to cease climbing, the implication for justice would not automatically be that fewer North American and Western European resources should be devoted to AIDS. Rather, justice would likely insist that the escalating HIV-related needs in less developed countries could now be attended to more aggressively.
ASPECTS OF JUSTICE

To this point two arguments for justice have been made—that the HIV/AIDS predicament is expansive and expensive—and two assumptions about justice have been suggested—that justice is comprehensive and collaborative. The concept of justice itself, though, has yet to be examined. This task is complicated by the different ways that people use the term “justice.” Each of these ways represents a different aspect of the concept. Since each aspect is not necessarily relevant in every situation, and those that are relevant may agree or conflict, a circumspect examination of each is necessary. Four major aspects will be examined here in turn: equality, liberty, responsibility, and efficiency.

Equality. One widely-held understanding of justice is that it somehow involves the notion that people should be treated equally. The notion of equality lies at the heart of justice in the biblical writings as well. The ultimate basis for the egalitarian treatment of people is that each is precious in the eyes of God. The concern for such treatment surfaces concretely in the Old Testament in the context of insuring that the original egalitarian distribution of land be preserved. Rooted in God’s unwavering love for all, this egalitarian vision remained alive through the centuries. In the time of Ezekiel, God was still directing that any return from exile be marked by an egalitarian distribution of land (Ezek 47:14). The ultimate hope, described by other prophets, was that all people would have their own vine and fig tree (Mic 4:4; cf. Zech 3:10).

In light of this background, it is not surprising that Paul should find a situation intolerable in which some people went without the basic necessities of life while others had more than enough. In 2 Corinthians 8:13-14 Paul explicitly invokes the notion of equality to argue that the Corinthians should share their resources with others. After all, God is not partial to some and satisfied that others should lack what they need to live. Moreover, true community is hampered when the lives of some are in effect valued more than the lives of others since some have access to life-sustaining resources while others do not.

In the context of AIDS an egalitarian understanding of justice often undergirds the concern that AIDS is receiving too much funding, compared with other diseases that afflict more people. If each person is to be accorded equal weight, it is assumed, then the disease affecting the most people should receive the most resources.

Because of the moral significance of equality as a basic aspect of justice, this argument potentially has considerable force. However, an egalitarian approach need not merely adopt the perspective of today, i.e., “just us.” A more biblical perspective would also consider the situation over time. God’s love extends across time to all generations. So God is sensitive to injustices that become evident only when one takes a longer-term point of view. Over time, for example, some Israelites suffered economic hardship and lost their land. To protect the original distribution, God mandated a jubilee year every fiftieth year in which all land would revert to its original owner (Lev 25). In addition, every seventh year was to be a sabbatical year in which debts were canceled, even to the extent that those sold into slavery on account of their debts would be set free (Deut 15).

A longer-term point of view makes significant difference when allocating health-related resources. Since AIDS is a relatively recent disease, it has not received as much total funding over time (e.g., for research) as some diseases that now receive less annual funding than AIDS. The greater current funding for AIDS may, then, be justified in order to
achieve more of an equality over time. In fact, even further funding increases may be called for when a disease is infectious. The infectious nature of AIDS will most likely result in increasing numbers of people with AIDS for many years to come. The costs involved in these numbers will be disproportionately high relative to other major fatal conditions such as heart disease and cancer, in that AIDS deprives people, on average, of about 25 years of life more than does either of these conditions.\textsuperscript{10}

A perspective over time also reveals the uncertain factual basis of the egalitarian argument against increased funding for AIDS. There are a variety of reasons why the size of the AIDS pandemic is probably understated—at least understated in official national figures. Many AIDS cases are incorrectly diagnosed as something else because the immune deficiency underlying the more obvious disease present is not recognized. Women in particular have been overlooked because their symptoms have not fit the symptom profile defining AIDS, which was developed in the United States based on early experience with the disease there among men. Furthermore, many cases (an estimated 10\textendash 15\% in the U.S.) are never reported to governmental authorities. The effectiveness of antiretroviral therapies in delaying the onset of AIDS has also led to a sense that the numbers of people who are in the process of developing AIDS is smaller than it really is.\textsuperscript{91}

Equality, then, is an important aspect of justice that may at first glance suggest the appropriateness of limiting AIDS funding, at least if the focus is on today—on “just us.” However, a more careful examination of all that equality may entail over time reveals that an allocation of resources based on justice may instead entail increased funding.

\textit{Liberty.} A second aspect of justice is liberty. The Bible is filled with references to God’s commitment to human freedom (e.g., Deut 7:15; Ps 146:7; Isa 49:9; John 8:32; 2 Cor 3:17). One common understanding of liberty, particularly in the U.S. today, is that people should be as free as possible from society’s interference in their lives. According to this view, people generally live in societies primarily to protect their resources and their freedom to live their lives as they wish. Having AIDS is unfortunate, and it is commendable if some individuals and groups want to help patients in need. However, justice requires that no moral or legal demands be made on people’s resources in order to ameliorate the plight of others.

This so-called \textit{libertarian} view is one way of understanding the place of liberty in a just allocation of resources. But there is also a \textit{liberation} view which reveals that liberty has much more to say in the resource allocation debate. The liberation perspective observes that a libertarian approach is based on an unbiblical concept of freedom as “autonomy” (literally self-law), according to which there are ultimately no obligations that people have toward God or others. This approach to resource allocation merely protects the liberty of those who have resources at the expense of the liberty of those who do not. If justice is to pay special heed to anyone’s liberty, according to a liberation view, it should pay special attention to those who have traditionally been most marginalized in terms of access to basic resources. Justice, in other words, resists a liberty that is for “just us.”

This liberation view of justice is radically different from the prevailing mindset in society today, according to which the most marginalized people are the most readily and easily neglected.\textsuperscript{41} Commitment to liberation is rooted in Jesus’ understanding of what the Reign of God—and Jesus’ own ministry as a manifestation of that reign—are essentially
about: “good news to the poor... freedom for the prisoners... sight for the blind... release [for] the oppressed” (Luke 4:18). While a certain measure of freedom to control one’s own resources appears to be allowable, a state of affairs in which some people are left without basic life-sustaining resources is portrayed as intolerably unjust. As explained earlier when examining “arguments for justice” were examined, God is deeply distressed when people’s true needs are not met. That health is included in such needs is suggested among other ways, by the characterization of Jesus’ healing ministry as a justice ministry (Matt 12:15-18). A liberation understanding of justice, then, insists that the basic needs of the most marginalized in society require special attention if the freedom of all is to be respected in a meaningful way.

This understanding of the place of liberty in just resource allocation may point not to less funding for HIV/AIDS but to greater. One of the marginalized groups in society that has been most seriously afflicted by HIV disease is IV drug users. A commitment to liberation in this context would not merely involve support for more resources to care for HIV-infected drug users because of the disproportionate burden they bear as a group. It would even more energetically support providing the resources so desperately needed for better IV drug education and more widely available drug treatment in order to spare them the HIV burden altogether.

In some countries, certain ethnic minority groups are also disproportionately burdened by HIV/AIDS. Afro-American and Hispanic-American persons in the United States, for example, have had an infection rate that is several times as high as that for others, especially among their children. A recent report reveals 80% of women diagnosed with AIDS to be from these two groups. Compared with white women, the HIV incidence is 19 times higher for African-American women and 7 times higher for Latinas.

Poor people generally are at special risk of HIV infection. Without the opportunity for good health care or treatment of other sexually transmitted diseases, the risk for contracting HIV multiplies about eight times. As a result, AIDS incidence is highest among the very poor. AIDS, in turn, makes people’s poverty even worse by undermining economic productivity, creating huge numbers of orphans who tend to become malnourished and inadequately educated, and in some countries even dangerously depleting the young adult generation that normally would economically support children and elderly persons.

A liberation-minded justice perspective would seek the resources necessary to free disadvantaged minorities not merely from the disproportionate burden of AIDS, but also from those conditions so influential in creating that burden in the first place. It may also justify allocations for research in the more developed countries that go beyond what would seem appropriate merely in comparison with other national needs, because the hardest-hit lesser developed countries will not be able to afford such research in the near future.

Responsibility. Among those most critical of the liberationist outlook on justice are those who argue that people who use IV drugs or practice homosexuality are responsible for their illness. These critics emphasize not so much the equality or liberty aspects of justice as the responsibility aspect. Justice demands that people pay the price for their unwise behavior.
The notion of taking responsibility for one’s actions is a persuasive one, especially in light of the collaborative nature of justice discussed earlier. Moreover, the biblical writings from the early moral codes (e.g., Exod 21; Lev 5) to New Testament moral teaching (e.g., Rom 3:5-8) explicitly affirm the importance of personal responsibility. Nevertheless, the conditions under which this idea of responsibility is morally legitimate do need to be specified. One condition is that those involved must have been aware of the strong possibility that their actions would produce the negative result in question. In the case of AIDS, many people with the disease today actually became HIV infected before there was much public education about AIDS, or they are part of populations (e.g., homeless persons) who are not effectively reached by standard forms of education. Another condition on the notion of responsibility is that people with one disease (e.g., AIDS) not be punished for their contributing lifestyle choices if there is no intention that people with other diseases (e.g., heart or lung diseases) be punished for theirs.50 No such intention is apparent at present.

Were these and other such conditions to be satisfied, responsibility would seem to point in the direction of limiting the resources allocated to HIV/AIDS—at least as long as the focus remains on the single patient as the responsible party. A different picture of responsibility begins to emerge, however, when the focus widens (as the comprehensive nature of justice requires) to include the responsibility of society. Again, the difference between a justice and a “just us” mentality comes to the fore.

The question now becomes: Which of the various parties potentially involved has some responsibility for the action through which the HIV was transmitted? The cases where the proportion of the infected person’s responsibility is clearest appear to be those in which that person has virtually no responsibility—e.g., infants born infected and people infected through blood transfusions. Women intimidated by men into having sexual intercourse without the use of condoms is at least an ambiguous case.51 Even an activity like IV drug use is not so simply a matter of personal choice, at least not when the user has previously been abused by a life of poverty and discrimination. As time goes on, many who are able to alter risky behaviors are doing so. One result is an increasingly large proportion of those infected with HIV who are infected because of the irresponsibility either of other individuals (e.g., parents of newborns) or of society at large.52

It is bad enough, as some international observers have noted, that people governing various less developed countries devote such substantial amounts of their countries’ limited resources to protecting the blood supply—the source through which they themselves most fear becoming HIV infected. The tragedy is compounded, however, if the citizens at large are then held accountable for infections that are as much products of grinding poverty, limited opportunities for happiness, and little access to protective measures as they are products of free personal choices. In more developed countries it is similarly morally dubious whenever people are not only victimized by poor social conditions but also denied treatment for their addictions because sufficient resources have not been allocated—and then held entirely responsible for their predicament.

If responsibility is to be invoked as an aspect of justice, both the responsibility of the society and that of the single patient need to be considered. In the current context of AIDS, the result is not likely to be a merely punitive justice, in which people are punished
for their individual actions. A restorative justice, in which people are recompensed for the ill they have received at the hands of society, is the more probable outcome. That people should be well-compensated when they have been wronged is an expectation voiced repeatedly in the Old Testament (e.g., Exod 22:1-14, Lev 6:1-7; Num 5:5-8; 2 Sam 12:6; Prov 6:31). The same expectation is implicit in the New Testament, for example, in the exemplary conversion of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-9). Anyone whom he has cheated in his capacity as an agent of the government (tax collector) he pledges to repay fourfold.

Restorative justice entails a special claim on the part of those with HIV now and those most at risk of infection—a special claim to a society’s finances, to its problem-solving capabilities, and to its compassion. Not only does this form of justice involve liberty from ongoing burdens, as in the case of liberating justice, but it also entails recompense for past wrongs done. Affirming restorative justice, moreover, does not release individuals from personal responsibility—a point that needs to be emphasized—for justice is collaborative. Rather, this affirmation recognizes that the ethical context for holding people responsible to the needs of society is one in which society is duly responsive to the needs of the individual. Within such a context, educational efforts stressing the individual’s responsibility to live a healthy lifestyle are bound to be more persuasive than they would be otherwise.

Efficiency: Many of those who resist the claim of people with AIDS to special treatment appeal to a still different aspect of justice, that of efficiency. Their concern is that not too much money should be spent on any one group of people. The good of the whole, they insist, must be kept in view. A sort of utilitarian “greatest good for the greatest number” perspective seems to be at work here.

The emphasis on the importance of the common good is laudatory. However, this way of thinking can be dangerous if it is not tempered by other aspects of justice. The greatest efficiency of all may be to rid society of certain types of people considered undesirable by those in power. History can attest to the horrors of such “just us” thinking.

If a concern for efficiency, however, is joined with a commitment to the needs of all, including those most looked-down-upon in society, then efficiency may direct resource allocation in a very different way. Instead of sanctioning spending less it may actually justify spending more. Sometimes spending more in the near term can produce better, more efficient results in the long term. Accordingly, the child endures painful discipline now for a happier life later (Prov 22:6), the man spends everything he has to buy a field now so that he may have its hidden treasure later (Matt 13:44), and believers give up home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields knowing that they will receive a hundred times as much back (Mark 10:29-30). (They will also receive persecutions in this age, but in the age to come they will receive something much better: eternal life—cf. 1 Cor 15:30-32.)

In the struggle against HIV/AIDS, spending more in the near term may accordingly be justified, particularly in certain areas. For example, more funding for research may be more efficient in the long run than less funding, since a vaccine or cure would reduce dramatically the resources required for medical care. Some funds are likely to continue to be allocated to research until a vaccine or cure is found. So postponing funding does not necessarily save money; rather it subjects the eventual costs to inflation and allows the pandemic with all its costs to continue longer. It is also counterproductive in that it post-
pones access to the wealth of knowledge about viruses, cancer, the brain, and the immune system that is being gained through AIDS-related research.\textsuperscript{54} At the same time, however, efficiency necessitates carefully monitoring plans for increased spending to be sure that there is sufficient research capacity (labs, scientists, good proposals, etc.) to use all allocated funds productively.

Other examples of increased spending that efficiency might sanction include larger allocations for prevention, home care, and perhaps even comprehensive health care. Prevention (e.g., through the provision of education, protective measures, or prophylactic drugs) can not only keep the initial HIV infection from occurring, but can also forestall the progression of HIV infection to full-blown AIDS or at least minimize the disability and pain caused by AIDS. Home care is less expensive and, at times during the course of AIDS, more comfortable for the patient than hospital care—as long as sufficient coordination is provided among hospital-based, community-based, and home-based services.\textsuperscript{55} And providing comprehensive care for patients with AIDS may not be as expensive as it might seem, even in a de-centralized health care system like that of the United States. Some element of the system, often Medicaid in the U.S., ends up assuming many of the costs anyway. Moreover, there are great savings to be gained in better coordination of services, avoidance of the expensive practice of cost-shifting, and better protection of the sexual partners of those who would now have a greater incentive to be tested for HIV infection because of the improved health care available.\textsuperscript{56}

The efficiency aspect of justice, then, might seem to imply spending less on AIDS and HIV infection. However, spending more in the present, if spent well, can lead to less spending in the long run.

In sum, then, justice is crucial in resource allocation because the HIV/AIDS predicament is expansive and it is expensive. Justice is influential in resource allocation because it is comprehensive and it is collaborative. And justice is controversial in resource allocation because there are competing notions of equality, liberty, responsibility, and efficiency at work in it that can easily stymie allocation decisions.

Yet, the voice of justice in the midst of the current pandemic may not be so ambivalent or unsupportive after all. Whereas each aspect of justice, viewed from the perspective of “just us,” can be construed to justify limiting the resources allocated to this arena, the view from the Reign of God is quite different. A more generous allocation may well instead be warranted.

Professor Lyon is right. In many ways a person with AIDS today is like the leper of Jesus’ day—despised, feared, avoided—certainly not “one of us.” Jesus met lepers’ needs without distinction—needs of Samaritans (who deserved their fate in the eyes of many) as well as Jews, unbelievers as well as believers (Luke17:11-19). How likely is the justice of God’s Reign to demand less of people today?

Nevertheless, the tentativeness of the language throughout this discussion has been intentional. As explained at the outset, many of the arguments presented here in the context of HIV/AIDS could also be marshaled in behalf of resources to meet other basic human needs, especially where a “just us” mentality has limited resources available to date. In other words, the justice orientation characteristic of God’s Reign challenges a variety of current allocation priorities—not only those related to HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, the
HIV/AIDS arena has been so riddled with “just us” thinking that it represents an excellent place to illustrate the need to attend more carefully to the justice that God requires.

NOTES


3. The present discussion will often refer jointly to people with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) disease and to persons with AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), since those with HIV disease typically develop AIDS eventually and there is no cure for or vaccination against either HIV infection or AIDS.

4. Following Stephen C. Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1982) and others who are concerned about the overly male connotation that the term “Kingdom” has for many, I will use the term God’s Reign where God’s Kingdom has traditionally been employed, out of a desire to communicate effectively to all.


6. Moreover, those who underestimate the importance of justice thereby indicate that they have failed to understand the essence of people as creations of God whose needs matter greatly to God. See David C. Thomasma, “The Basis of Medicine and Religion: Respect for Persons,” in On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics, eds. Stephen Lammers and Allen Verhey (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 228-92.


11. UNAIDS. “Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic.”

12. Ibid.


32. For more on the community orientation of ethics in the Bible, see Bruce C. Birch, and Larry L. Rasmussen, Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 1989), chap. 2.

33. For illustrations of the individualism characteristic of the United States, see Robert N. Bellah,


36. The impartiality of God is attested in a number of different contexts, some of which are explicitly justice-related. See Deut 1:17; Matt 5:45; Rom 2:11.


49. Various proponents of this position are identified and discussed in Timothy F. Murphy, “Is AIDS a Just Punishment?” Journal of Medical Ethics 14 (September 1988): 154-160.

50. These and other difficulties with the notion of responsibility for disease are discussed in Kilner, Patient Selection, pp. 167-173; Daniel Wilder, “Who Should Be Blamed for Being Sick?” Health Education Quarterly 14 (Spring 1987): 11-25.


53. On utilitarianism as an approach to justice, see Karen Lebacqz, Six Theories of Justice (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1986); Lebacqz, Foundations of Justice, p. 156.

54. These benefits are discussed in an interview with June Osborn, chairwoman of the U.S. National Commission on AIDS, in Naomi Freundlich, “No, Spending More on AIDS Isn’t Unfair,” Business Week 4 (17 September 1990): 97. Osborn explains, for example, how cancer research has been affected by a better understanding of how to boost the body’s defenses.

55. Sisk, “Trends and Economic Implications.”

LOYAL OPPOSITION AND THE EPISODEMOLONY OF CONSCIENCE

WILLIAM J. ABRAHAM

A crucial question which generally faces all rational minorities or individuals who do not fit into the intellectual mainstream is this: how do they justify the moral claims that they advance in the face of opposition and even ridicule? In other words, how do they make good their claims in the teeth of widespread contrary opinion?

In this exploratory paper I shall argue that one of the best ways to respond to this is by a theory of conscience. En route to this I shall attempt two other tasks. First, I shall briefly indicate why it is a good thing to have some kind of theoretical base for our minority reports. Second, I shall draw attention to the weaknesses of four common ways of dealing with the epistemic status of minority opinion. On the other side of my proposals concerning conscience, I shall conclude with a brief comment on the role of conscience in the empowerment of Christian minorities.

I

In posing the issue in the sharp manner represented by my opening question, I am not assuming that what is right is determined by majority opinion. That thesis is so obviously mistaken that there is no need to argue the negative case involved. What is at stake is more subtle than this, and it is more profound. What we want to know revolves around a series of concerns which are naturally directed towards those who stand outside the mainstream. How do they know they are right? What warrant do they have for their proposals? What ground(s) do they have for their confidence?

A clear example that comes to mind is the predicament faced by John Wesley and the early Methodists who challenged the prevailing theology, spirituality, morality, and evangelistic practices of the Anglican tradition of the eighteenth century. Wesley and his friends faced a barrage of objections which sooner or later had to be

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SPRING 2001 VOL 56 NO 1
answered. Once this process began, they were driven to deal with the whole range of fundamental questions which lie below the surface of the initial controversies. This is far from being a merely political or prudential operation, for in time new insights emerge or old truths are rediscovered; invariably a whole new tradition arises to enrich our ecclesial and cultural life. 

To be sure, a good case can be made that all opinions must face this kind of query sooner or later, for majorities as much as for those in the position of the loyal opposition. Moreover, there is a long and distinguished school in epistemology which has insisted that we can know nothing, including nothing in the field of morality, unless we have first established our position on a sound basis. Hence foundationalists of one kind or another have long maintained that nobody, not even an intelligent majority, has the right to claim they are correct unless they can logically trace their position back to adequate foundations represented by self-justifying or secure premises, axioms, first principles, and the like. Immanuel Kant’s categorical imperative and John Stuart Mill’s principle of utility seek to provide precisely such a secure foundation. Hence on at least one reading of our epistemic situation, everybody, and not only minorities, is required to explain and justify their position.

However, no such theory lies behind the present request for warrants. Moreover, it would be question-begging to rest on such a set of assumptions. What some minorities rightly will want to challenge is this whole approach to the foundations of morality. It is precisely this challenge against a central feature of the modern Enlightenment which puts them outside the mainstream in the first place. Hence they will correctly protest that their position is the kind of radical position that calls this line of inquiry into question. We had better have other reasons for pressing the issue before us than merely an appeal to some kind of classical foundationalism.

It is also worth noting that in some quarters the very idea of suggesting that minorities of any sort should be asked to give an account of their proposals of the kind envisaged here is otiose. We are all aware of the extent to which it has become fashionable to see this kind of request as a disguised form of oppression or violence; such questioning is perceived as a type of dominance in which those in the majority make demands of the minority as a means of keeping challengers out of the discussion and eventually out of positions of power.²

Not all minorities are prepared to take up this kind of defensive posture. For example, it is more than significant that many Evangelicals are extremely reluctant to play a card of victimization by oppression. There can be no doubting the historical reality behind their systematic exclusion from the academy and from crucial centers of power within mainline Protestant churches. Mature observers can readily identify the academic, political, and theological ideologies which have been developed to provide intellectual explanations for such exclusion. In these circumstances there is great temptation to take on the status of the victim and seek to gain power on the basis of past discrimination and exclusion. Some have succumbed to this strategy, but I suspect that it is thoroughly uncharacteristic of the Evangelical tradition as a whole. At least two important convictions underlie this hesitation.

First, Evangelicals deep down are committed to the search for truth as a logically distinct value or good which cannot be reduced to political or social interest. This is deeply incom-
patible with any move which would make the formal commitment to truth equivalent to a quest for power. To be sure, Evangelicals are only too aware that the reality is often different. Human beings, especially those in positions of power, all too easily can dress up the quest for dominance and power in the form of a quest for truth. Any tradition which takes sin seriously will be aware of such possible self-deception. However, the very claim that such self-deception is possible or actually has happened is a claim to truth which cannot be reduced to one more quest for power if we are to take it seriously. Hence any global theory of truth which reduces truth itself to power is self-referentially destructive.

Secondly, Evangelicals have learned over the years that the social institutions of the church and society depend on confessional claims which need to be sustained across the generations. These confessional claims are held to embody not just the reality of majority victory or the attainment of raw power; they are taken to embody nothing less than the revealed truth of God. Hence Evangelicals have very deep theological warrants for refusing to play the ideological card of victimization when they are hard pressed to do so by the example of other minority groups in the neighborhood.

Why, then, do we raise this deep question of warrant at all and present it as especially acute for minorities? On a general level we raise the matter because a rejection of foundationalism does not for one moment mean the end of the debate concerning the justification of moral claims. All it signals is that one way of resolving this complex matter has been abandoned. Moral foundationalists, like Kant and Mill, are sometimes wont to be perplexed by the rejection of their position. Somehow they think that if we reject their position we have rejected morality proper and maybe even epistemology proper. Worse still, they may think that we have automatically embraced some sort of relativism or nihilism. This is an illusion. All we have abandoned is one family of solutions for questions about the deep structure and justification of morality. We have simply rejected an important and illuminating alternative in the debate about the foundations of morality. Consequently, what we have before us is a tremendous moral and epistemological challenge. We now have to work out an alternative to what has stood as a prevailing consensus in the field.

As to the special case of minorities, there are three considerations which relate to their responsibilities. First, because they stand outside the mainstream, the onus of proof falls on them in the dynamic of debate. At the very least there is psychological and social pressure to explain their position. Indeed it is this sort of pressure which makes minorities such a valuable part of the social order. Often they provide the alternatives which are needed when the mainstream becomes exhausted. They constitute a kind of monastic renewal for the wider world they inhabit. Moreover, the vigor and urgency with which they usually present their claims can open up the issues and provide new perspectives in a refreshing manner.

Secondly, the courtesies of debate require that they explain the deeper convictions that lie behind their position. After all, the majority hold the territory in part because in years gone by they won the debate about the field as a whole. They earned the right to be heard because once upon a time they delivered the relevant goods. Indeed at one time they probably were the minority opinion. Hence the onus is now on the relevant minority to come through with the intellectual goods.
Thirdly, without some kind of critical check or some kind of reasoned account of their position, those in opposition repeatedly fall into various forms of fanaticism. They simply end up in the position of the dogmatist or zealot who requires us to take what they say as correct merely on their word. This helps nobody in the debate. It puts the opposition in the awkward position of having nothing substantial to say beyond repeating the point at issue; it prevents the majority from benefiting from the serious discussion of an alternative scenario; and, worst of all, it misses a golden opportunity to advance our understanding of the logic and justification of moral claims.

Christian minorities have an additional incentive to develop their position. They owe it as constitutive of their love of their neighbor. To misuse a standard text in apologetics, they have a duty to give a reason for the hope that is within them. They are called to think through and share their convictions so that the God they serve may be glorified and honored. In the past they have generally seized on this option gladly.

This does not mean that it is easy. There is always the temptation to take the line of least resistance and find an excuse to avoid answering hard questions or to short circuit the debate by turning the whole issue into an affair of sociology and politics. The latter is all too visible when the debate is transformed into a power struggle to be resolved by votes, caucuses, intrigue, and the like. Political action is always inescapable and sociological analysis is generally invaluable; yet without the patient attending to the moral, theological, and philosophical considerations which swirl around the discussion, the results can be socially disastrous. Such debate is not a substitute for war or violence; it may at times be part of the cure for our social and ecclesiastical strife.

II

Let me pursue now our query in a quasi-historical manner. How might a loyal opposition resolve the question of the warrants for its position? Let us look very briefly at four possibilities. They involve in turn an appeal to one’s identity in a community, to divine revelation, to intuition, and to empowerment.

In the first case we envisage that the grounding of one’s decisions go back to one’s formation in a community. Thus the minority may simply appeal to its membership in a community; it appeals to its identity in a particular tradition, group, or class. On the surface this appears a hopelessly simplistic solution to our problem. However, it would be a mistake to take it simplistically. What usually underlies the appeal to community is a much wider story about the human condition, about the formation of our moral identity, about the nature of human community itself, about the character of morality, and about the virtues and vices identified by a community in the pursuit of its preservation and welfare. It is precisely because the appeal to community can be spelled out to embrace such a rich network of material that it has become exceedingly attractive of late.

Unfortunately, this richness does not begin to deal with the fundamental objection that is naturally lodged against it. The chief problem with this proposal is that we want to know how we can be sure that our favored community is right. Explaining in great detail the various elements which are buried in this option does not begin to grapple with this problem, for the same question will break out with respect to these claims too. All along the line the critic will want to know: “What are the warrants for the particular claim or set
of claims proposed by the community in question?” Clearly this takes us right back to where we started.

Alternatively, as a second possibility, the minority might appeal to divine revelation. In this instance one’s position is grounded in what God has revealed, say, in Scripture or in Christ. The warrant is the fact that God has spoken definitively and has made known what we should morally do; or, less strongly, we can infer what we ought to do from what God has told us to do. However, in this case, too, problems immediately surface.

First, questions will arise as to which revelation should be used. Which of the many putative revelations available should one accept as genuine? Unless this question is resolved, one will be at a loss as to how to proceed. Secondly, and more importantly, even if this issue is resolved, we will have to face the age-old question developed in tanta-

lizing fashion by Plato in the Euthyphro. Granted that we now know what God requires of us, does God require action ‘x’ because it is good, or is ‘x’ good because it is required by God. If we take the first option, then morality is logically independent of religion, and we do not need to appeal to divine revelation to ground our moral claims. If we take the second option, the foundations of morality become purely arbitrary, for our moral claims are decided by the whim of the deity without there being any moral constraints on what can be deemed as required even by God.

If we cannot appeal to community or revelation as the way ahead, then what about an appeal to intuition? Here we meet a third epistemic scenario. This would fit very naturally with our quest, for it is characteristic of minorities to take a stand at a very deep level on their convictions. In the end they often claim just to see the truth of what they are pro-

claiming. There is nothing below their claim on which it rests. As the legendary Luther put it in his famous phrase, “God help me, I can do no other.” This strategy would fit nicely with the reluctance to argue. In this analysis there is no argument; arguments presuppose fundamental premises or axioms which in the nature of the case are taken for granted; so it would be futile to argue for their acceptance. In other words, it is the very expression of these fundamental premises or axioms which are at issue on this reading of the situation. These are seen to be true intuitively; they need no demonstration or support.

Once again it is not difficult to identify the difficulties with this sort of strategy. As the history of the debate about the value of intuitionism shows, critics have latched on to two primary objections. First, intuitionists are generally divided on the kind of propositions which they profess to see. Some see particular instances and then from these attempt to build general rules. Others claim to intuit the general rules and then apply them to partic-

ular cases. If intuition is a reliable faculty, there should be no such deep disagreement between those committed to its use. This defect in the formalities of what is perceived is then further compounded by the second objection. When we move from the formal to the material content of the supposed perceptions, we find even more disagreement. Intuitionists notoriously see different propositions to be true, whether the propositions have as their subject general rules or particular cases. They cannot agree on which cases genuinely count as examples of good or evil action or on which rules embody good or bad principles. In these circumstances, it is extremely tempting to look for non-rational causes of the beliefs of intuitionists, say, in terms of gender or class analysis.

A fourth alternative is to ground one’s proposals in the fact that they will be instrumental
in bringing about the empowerment of the oppressed or the marginalized. Here one argues that the ultimate norm or warrant for action is the potential changes embodied in the moral action proposed; the envisaged changes are constituted by the liberation or full personhood of the victimized group. However, once again, difficulties meet us at every turn.

First, this proposal rests on projected predictions which are precarious in the extreme. Merely because someone says that a particular moral stance will liberate some group or other is no guarantee that such a moral stance will actually do the job envisaged. We need some sort of empirical generalization or evidence that things will turn out as we think. Secondly, this option surrenders the epistemic value of our moral claims. It treats moral proposals as purely instrumental, as a means to an end, thus stripping them of any categorical content. Finally, this alternative begs the questions from the outset. It already assumes that we know that the end in view is morally obligatory, and it does this without telling us why we should take this as a given. It does not secure this end as justified or warranted. Note that the objection here is not that the end may not be in fact morally obligatory; on the contrary, it may well be morally required. The objection is that we have not advanced one whit in knowing whether the proposed liberation is morally obligatory.

The obvious lesson to be learned from this review is that any account of the warrants for our moral claims are likely to be highly ramified. Even though I have raised questions about the viability of each option, I do not at all hold that they should be rejected in toto. To the contrary, I want to suggest that each of them may well have a contribution to make to any comprehensive account of our moral existence. The challenge is to develop the kind of rich vision which will do justice to the relevant insights hidden in these proposals, while at the same time facing up to the epistemic queries with which we began our deliberations. Moreover, we need a central concept which can enable us to bring these insights together in coherent and natural manner. I suggest that we can make progress in this by deploying and developing the idea of conscience.

III

The root idea of conscience is that we are endowed by God with the competence to engage in moral discernment. In classical renderings of conscience such discernment has characteristically been constituted by our ability to see that we should do good rather than evil, a very formal first principle of morality, and by our ability to see what the good requires of us in various moral situations, the material content of morality.

Crucial to this understanding of conscience is the claim that conscience is a capacity given to us in creation by God. Minimalist descriptions of conscience as a moral sense, a faculty of the soul, the candle of the Lord, the voice of God, and the like, are really hopelessly reduced accounts of this very substantial metaphysical and theological proposal. Even less satisfactory are those accounts of conscience which reduce it to some abstract right to dissent from current orthodoxy or establishment opinion. In this case the appeal to conscience, seen in such expressions, “Well, I have a right to my conscience on this matter,” is simply the dogmatic claim of an individual to hold to the contingent opinion of the moment. It does not begin to do justice to the epistemic weight assigned to the concept of conscience in the pre-modern Christian world.

Few have captured the issue in modern times as forcefully as John Henry Newman.
His central points are laid out with characteristic forcefulness. To begin, conscience is rooted in a clear doctrine of creation.

I say, then, that the Supreme Being is of a certain character, which, expressed in human language, we call ethical. He has the attributes of justice, truth, wisdom, sanctity, benevolence and mercy, as eternal characteristics in his nature, the very law of his being, identical with himself; and next, when he became creator, he implanted this law, which is himself, in the intelligence of all his rational creatures. The divine law, then, is the rule of ethical truth, the standard of right and wrong, a sovereign, irreversible, absolute authority in the presence of men and angels;... This law as apprehended in the minds of individual men, is called ‘conscience’; and though it may suffer refraction in passing into the intellectual medium of each, it is not therefore affected so as to lose its character of being the divine law, but still has, as such, the prerogative of commanding obedience.6

For Newman this view is shared across denominational boundaries.

When Anglicans, Wesleyans, the various Presbyterian sects in Scotland, and other denominations speak of conscience, they mean what we mean, the voice of God in the nature and heart of man, as distinct from the voice of revelation. They speak of a principle planted within us, before we have had any training, although training and experience are necessary for its strength, growth, and formation. They consider it a constituent element of the mind, as our perception of our ideas may be, as our powers of reasoning, as our sense of order and the beautiful, and our other intellectual endowments.

Moreover, both Protestants and Catholics recognize the deep and fundamental role conscience plays in moral deliberation.

The rule and measure of duty is not utility, nor expedience, nor the happiness of the greatest number, nor state convenience, nor fitness, order, and the pulchrum. Conscience is not a long-sighted selfishness, nor a desire to be consistent with oneself; but it is a messenger from him, who both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil and teaches and rules us by his representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal vicar of Christ, a prophet in its informations, a monarch in its peremptoriness, a priest in its blessings and anathemas, and, even though the eternal priesthood throughout the church could cease to be, in it the sacerdotal principle would remain and would have a sway.7

This conception of conscience must be resolutely distinguished from the antagonistic accounts proposed by various philosophers.

We are told that conscience is but a twist in primitive and untutored man; that its dictates is an imagination; that the very notion of guiltiness, which the dictate
enforces, is simply irrational, for how can there possibly be freedom of the will, how can there be consequent responsibility, in that infinite eternal network of cause and effect, in which we helplessly lie? And what retribution have we to fear, when we have no real choice of good or evil? 

Equally it must be distinguished from the vulgar conception of conscience often found in the popular mind.

When men advocate the rights of conscience, they in no sense mean the rights of the creator, nor the duty to him, in thought and deed of the creature; but the right of thinking, speaking, writing, and acting, according to their judgment or their humour, without any thought of God at all... Conscience has rights because it has duties; but in this age, with a large portion of the public, it is the very right and freedom of conscience to dispense with conscience, to ignore a lawgiver and judge, to be independent of unseen obligations. It becomes a license to take up any or no religion, to take up this or that and let it go again, to go to church, to go to chapel, to boast of being above all religions and to be an impartial critic of each of them. Conscience is a stern monitor, but in this century it has been superseded by a counterfeit, which the eighteen centuries prior to it never heard of, and could not have been mistaken for it, if they had. It is the right of self-will.

Finally, despite the fact that one's conscience can be distorted and that the very idea of conscience can be easily misunderstood in the popular mind, Newman is adamant about the finality of the deliberations of conscience in the moral life. For Newman we have "a duty of obeying our conscience at all hazards." Even the authority of the pope, who for Newman is nothing less than the medium of divine revelation, must take second place to the authority of conscience. "Certainly, if I am obliged to bring religion into after-dinner toasts, (which indeed does not seem quite the thing) I shall drink, — to the pope, if you please, — still, to conscience first, and to the pope afterwards."

IV

We can see in these remarks of Newman some of the themes which caught our eye in our earlier survey of the options often developed by cognitive minorities in the face of opposition. More precisely, we can see a place in the development of our moral existence for intuition, for divine revelation, and for community and tradition. What is so attractive is the way in which these are held together in a compelling vision of morality. More especially, Newman's remarks open a door for the application of recent developments in epistemology which scarcely got a hearing in Newman's time. Before taking up this latter topic, I would like to restate in my own terms the crucial components of the moral vision suggested here by Newman. It has four central elements.

1. First, in moral deliberation it is impossible to escape the tracing of our moral deliberations back to basic moral principles, insights, and judgments which form the foundations of our moral arguments. In moral debate, there simply comes a point where either we see or do not see the rightness of what is before us, whether that be a principle, a particular
Loyal Opposition and the Epistemology of Conscience

state of affairs, or a particular moral judgment. There is no further reason or axiom which is more basic that we can summon in our attempts to persuade an opponent. We either see, or we do not see. This constitutes the natural resemblance there is between a theory of conscience and intuitionism. In both what is envisaged is a basic capacity, a fundamental competence, a non-reducible ability to know what is the case morally speaking.

2. In a developed theory of conscience, this capacity is construed in theistic categories. Conscience is understood as given by an all-good and almighty Creator who has made human beings in his own image and has thus transmitted to them his own capacity to know what is good and evil. This immediately provides a deep warrant for taking conscience with the utmost seriousness. Because conscience is given by God, to go against conscience is to rebel against the voice of God given to us by nature in creation. More positively, to obey conscience is to fulfill one’s destiny as a creature designed to operate in a certain way by one’s Creator.

Given the way that the nature of conscience is embedded in a theistic universe, it is not at all surprising that the very idea of conscience should become suspect or even be transformed beyond all recognition, once the theistic universe it inhabits is abandoned. Thus we should expect thorough-going secularists, whether Marxists or Durkheimians or Freudians, to provide a radically different construal of what theists will identify as conscience. They will see the deliberations of conscience as merely the outcome of economic, social, and psychological forces which have no causal relation to truth. Hence they will reject the deliberations of conscience as radically misguided. Now, to be sure, if we knew that these secularist positions were metaphysically correct, then this consequence would follow. In reality, however, these remain at best thoroughly contested proposals; a mature theist will have her own reasons for rejecting them or for accepting them only in a deeply modified form. Moreover, as a theist, she will have her own reasons for adopting a theistic conception of the universe. Hence the minimalist, reduced accounts of conscience so popular in current philosophical and popular circles will be rejected as radically inadequate.

3. In this account of conscience, conscience is construed in thoroughly dynamic terms. It is not an all-or-nothing capacity. It is a divinely given competence which clearly develops in infancy, through adolescence, and beyond. Conscience can be hurt and healed; it can be distorted and sharpened; it can be lost and regained; it can be dulled and renewed. Hence a full description of the growth and inner dynamic of conscience is an extraordinary achievement. Moreover, any attempt to plot the relation, say, between conscience, intellect, sentiment, guilt, remorse, and the like, will be a major undertaking requiring exquisite perceptual and conceptual skill.

4. Fourth, it is precisely because conscience is construed as a capacity or as a competence that it can be corrected and healed by divine revelation and rightly influenced, for good or ill, by tradition and community.

Thus Christian theists will insist that the ultimate norm of good is revealed in the life and work of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. In him are hidden the full riches of holiness. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, fellowship with Christ in the body of the church so heals and enriches human agents that eventually they share the very mind of Christ and see the world as he does. Hence the Christian looks to the saints of the church as models of enlightenment to be emulated and consulted on moral issues. In
these circumstances the inner voice of God enables one to discern the moral authority of Christ and his saints; in turn conscience itself is healed and corrected by the Word of God enshrined in the Scriptures and made fully manifest in Christ. In these circumstances, there can be no playing of conscience off against divine revelation. Special revelation in the Word of God confirms, corrects, and deepens the natural revelation given through the light which enlightens everyone who comes into the world. From the point of view of our moral experience, such transformation is not a quick and easy matter either for the individual or for the Christian community. Individuals may need years and the Christian church may need centuries before the rightness and wrongness of certain moral claims are recognized. Such moral development is entirely natural on this account of our competence in moral discernment.

V

We are now in a position to tackle the last segment of our project. The reader will recall that our fundamental concern was ultimately to address queries about warrants which naturally arise with the appearance of cognitive minorities. In terms of our vision of conscience the question which arises is this: How do we know that appeal to conscience provides us with adequate justification or warrant for our moral claims? To this we now turn.

The point of entry is Newman’s claim that conscience is “a constituent element of the mind, as our perception of other ideas may be, as our powers of reasoning may be, as our sense of order and the beautiful, and other intellectual endowments.” Newman’s suggestion is that we should construe conscience as similar to such other intellectual capacities as perception, memory, deductive and inductive reasoning, and the like. Thus, just as we have recourse to memory in making judgments about the past, so do we have recourse to conscience in making judgments about the moral worth of actions. How does this help us in developing our account of conscience so that it addresses the quest for knowledge?

In recent years epistemologists have been recovering and exploring an approach to knowledge in general which is especially pertinent to this issue. From the time of Descartes and Locke, the two great pillars of the Enlightenment experiment in epistemology, the general tendency has been to construe knowledge in terms of true, justified belief. The most troublesome element in this tradition has been the problem of securing justification. The favored approach to this matter has been to pursue the quest for justification in internalist categories. Thus a person is justified in holding to a particular proposition, p, if that person has good reason for holding p, and that reason is known to the person as a reason for p. On this analysis justification for a belief is secured by being aware of good propositional evidence for that belief.

An obvious difficulty which attends this proposal is how to secure the foundations of one’s beliefs. After all, every time one cites a reason for any belief, that reason itself constitutes a further belief, and questions will naturally arise about the status of that belief. Justification, on this view, becomes a chain of inference and argument which either goes on forever or which must come to a halt at an appropriate foundation. In moral theory intuitionism represents an attempt to stop the infinite regress of argument by insisting that at some point the agent just sees something to be the case. Not surprisingly, philosophers
have seen such a move as empty theorizing, as a kind of intellectual hand-waving to flag down questions. Equally, attempts to speak of a moral sense, of a faculty of discernment, and the like, have been construed as vacuous proposals which verbally fool their proponents into thinking that they are making epistemic progress. In this intellectual environment a theory of conscience will appear thoroughly dubious.

However, in recent years we have become acutely aware that all is far from well with this kind of internalist account of justification and its attendant account of knowledge. Thus many have turned of late to explore an alternative, externalist account of knowledge which proceeds in a radically different direction. The crux of the turn is this. Rather than look for propositional evidence, say, for our basic perceptual or memory beliefs, we ask a very different question. We ask if the practice of memory or the practice perception is a reliable one. If it is, then we can *prima facie* take the beliefs which arise from such practices as knowledge. This conceptual shift utterly transforms the way we think about knowledge and justification.

It also transforms the way we should weigh the epistemic status of conscience. On the old internalist model the question we asked was how we could find further propositional evidence for those beliefs arising from conscience. On this analysis the concept of conscience was useless. On the new externalist model we ask if we have good reason for taking conscience to be reliable. Once we ask that question, the answer is obvious. For the Christian theist the answer clearly must be yes. Conscience is a God-given capacity; it is a constituent part of our nature given by a gracious and loving God. Hence, other things being equal, conscience is a reliable medium of moral knowledge. It is this simple and revolutionary notion which makes manifest the extraordinary epistemic significance of conscience. *Prima facie*, conscience is to be trusted to yield knowledge because it is a basic competence given to us by God.¹⁹

A consequence of this analysis is worth noting. On the internalist account of knowledge, one can only know something if one also knows how one knows. Thus I know p, if and only if I believe p, if p is true, if p is justified, say, by q, if I know q, and if I know that q justifies p. The obvious problem with this analysis is that it eliminates a host of things which most normal people would insist they knew. For instance a child can know that it is raining, or my dog can know that she is about to go for a walk without satisfying such stringent conditions. On the externalist account one knows p if one has arrived at p through a reliable process. It is not at all essential that one also know how or why the process is reliable, although clearly knowing why the process is reliable may enhance one’s epistemic status. It is precisely this feature of our externalist account of conscience which shows why conscience has been taken so seriously in the Christian tradition. Even the conscience of the unbeliever, that is, the deliberations of one who may explicitly deny its divine origin, is to be taken seriously. The reason for this is that one may well know moral truth even though one may not know how one knows such truth. Just as through perception I may know immediately that it is snowing, even though I may not have a clue how to defend the reliability of perception, equally through conscience I may know immediately that it wrong to roast people for fun, even though I may not have a clue about where my conscience comes from or why it should be normally relied on in my moral deliberations.
VI

In conclusion we can now connect this account of conscience to the empowering of Christian minorities. We noted earlier that the concept of conscience has had a precarious place in the moral theorizing of the last two centuries. As Newman rightly suggested, both philosophical and popular conceptions of conscience in his day totally failed to convey the full force of the idea as developed in the Christian tradition. Since then the situation has not improved; on the contrary, the progressive secularization of Western culture has made talk of conscience even more precarious than it was in the nineteenth century. With the increasing secularization of the Church, it is now common to find the idea of conscience treated as a hostile stranger even within its sacred precincts. As Christendom collapses, and as mainline churches loosen their intellectual moorings from Scripture and tradition, then those committed to talk of conscience and to its healing by the grace of Jesus Christ will become even more of a minority than they have been in the past. The gap between the working conscience of serious believers and their neighbor is likely to grow wider and wider.

In these circumstances retrieving the riches of the tradition buried in and around the idea of conscience is a salutary exercise in at least two ways. First, it will help keep alive the Christian tradition in bleak and difficult times. One cannot take conscience seriously without also taking seriously a whole range of theological themes and convictions which naturally circle round it. Secondly, it will put heart into Christians as they live and witness in a hostile environment. At one level a sound grasp of the nature and role of conscience will give intellectual and spiritual protection from the moral degeneration which is so clearly visible in the world around us. At another level it will help Christians cultivate a deep respect for the neighbor. On the reading of the human situation proposed here, even enemies are to be respected and heard. Even though one’s opponents may be radically different in outlook, even though from a Christian perspective they may be corrupt in their conscience, and even though they may be totally opposed to a theistic account of conscience, they are to be treated as agents made in the image of God who can always be redeemed and transformed—or as Newman says, they are to be urged to obey their conscience against all hazards. In the meantime Christians can draw on the full resources of grace made available in the gospel and in the teachers and members of the church. Among the latter I am pleased to acknowledge my deep gratitude to Professor Robert Lyon whose strong and sensitive conscience as a scholar, as a teacher, and as Christian believer leaves so many of us in his debt.

NOTES
1. I limit my concern here to moral claims. Our question easily can be extended to encompass theological and other claims.
2. This is so much a part of the contemporary mainline academic scene that documentation would be superfluous. It has become so embedded in some circles that merely to question the new status quo will be seen in terms of backlash. See for example, Susan Thistlthwaite’s “Beyond dualism: Rosemary Radford Ruether’s New Women/New Earth,” The Christian Century (April 24, 1993): 339-402.
3. George Marsden’s work on the secularization of the academy and on the history of fundamentalism are especially helpful treatments of aspects of this theme. See George M. Marsden,

4. Note that I am using “intuition” here as almost a technical term in moral philosophy. I do not mean by intuition some kind of non-rational hunch. On the contrary, intuition is intended to signify the kind of rationality appropriate to morality.


6. Ibid., p. 246.
7. Ibid., pp. 248-249.
8. Ibid., p. 249.
9. Ibid., p. 250.
10. Ibid., p. 259.
11. Ibid., p. 261.
12. I leave aside for the moment any reference to empowerment.
13. Needless to say the account which follows will be much more Protestant in orientation and content than what one will find in Newman.
14. Some modern Protestant treatments of conscience all too readily succumb to the implications of entirely secular, non-theistic conceptions of human agents at this point. See, for example, C. Ellis Nelson, Don’t Let Conscience Be your Guide (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1978).
15. This is beautifully captured in Romans 12:1-4.
16. That we may be tempted to do this, that is, insist on one and only one source of moral enlightenment, in this case either conscience or Christ, is part of the legacy of standard Enlightenment epistemologies, such as we find in Descartes, which posit one final, certain source of moral inquiry. In a sense there is ultimately only one source for the theist, namely the creative activity of the living God. However, it is an elementary truth of Christian theology that the triune God’s creative activity is not confined to conscience.
19. It is worth noting that Descartes makes exactly the same epistemic suggestion with respect to ordinary perception. See for example his Meditations on First Philosophy (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1980), p. 94.