

PASTORAL AND SOCIAL ETHICS

Lecture Outline, part 1: Preface; Introduction and Apologetic Orientation

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Preface: Importance of Christian Ethics

1. A covenant servant of the Lord is one who has the word of God and does it, John 14:21.
2. All theological issues are questions of obedience and disobedience: What doctrine faithfully communicates the truth?
3. The purpose of Scripture is ethical: Rom. 15:4, 2 Tim. 3:16-17
4. Importance for our witness to the world: the obvious bankruptcy of non-Christian ethics, modernist ethics, in the face of great cultural preoccupation with ethical issues; witness of life, Matthew 5:16.

Part One: Introduction and Apologetic Orientation

I. Terminology (Not a matter of life and death, but important for clarity of communication)

A. Ethics and Theological Encyclopedia

1. Knowledge of God: A personal, covenantal relationship with God, involving awareness of His self-revelation, an obedient or disobedient response to that revelation, and the divine blessing or curse upon that response. [Biblical references in DKG connecting knowledge with the ethical dimension]
 2. Doctrine (*didache, didaskalia*): The word of God “in use” to create and deepen that relationship. Application of the word to all of life. The point of this is not to emphasize practice at the expense of theory, but to bring theory and practice together as different forms of application.
 - a. Theory is not the basis of practice.
 - b. Theory, as opposed to practice, is not theology par excellence.
 3. Theology: Doctrine.
 4. Systematic Theology: Approach to theology that asks and answers questions of the form “What does the whole Bible teach us about x?” As a theological discipline, it involves application of Scripture, of both theoretical and practical sorts.
 5. Biblical Theology: Approach to theology that asks and answers questions of the form “What can we learn about x from the History of Redemption?” Application of the history of redemption to the Christian life.
 6. Exegetical Theology: Approach to theology that asks “What can we learn about x from this passage?” Also applicatory.
 7. Ethics: Theology, viewed as a means of determining which human persons, acts, and attitudes receive God’s blessing and which do not.
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- a. Not a branch of theology, but equivalent to theology; for all theology answers ethical questions. Often, however, theologians fail to emphasize adequately the ethical dimensions of their work. Hence, ethics as a distinct discipline. But it’s best not to think of it as distinct.
 - b. Alternative Definitions: “Study of right and wrong,” etc.

- i. Advantage: Such definitions include non-Christian ethical systems within their scope. It does seem odd to say, as our definition implies, that Plato and Aristotle were not teachers of ethics.
- ii. Reply: There is nothing wrong with using a broader definition of ethics in certain contexts. For this course, however, I prefer a definition which sets forth the essential nature of Christian ethics, and which exposes non-Christian substitutes as debased, not only in content, but in method and general concept as well.

B. Value-terms

1. Moral, ethical

a. These terms will be used synonymously in this course.

b. Each may be used in two ways:

i. Descriptively: Pertaining to the discipline of ethics (“That is an ethical, not an aesthetic question.”)

ii. Normatively: Conforming to ethical norms (“There is an ethical politician.”)

2. Immoral: Ethically bad or wrong.

3. Amoral:

a. Without moral standards.

b. Unwilling to think about moral issues in making life decisions.

4. Non-moral: Not a question of morality.

5. Moralistic: a very ambiguous term, which I shall almost never use. It tends to have little purpose other than expressing disdain.

a. Trite or provincial in ethical attitude.

b. Self-righteous.

c. Legalistic: putting law in the role reserved for grace. (Legalism is also a term that is often used imprecisely and as a club to beat up on others who merely want to express a positive appreciation for God’s law.)

d. Putting too much emphasis on ethics or on the law.

e. Preaching ethics without adequate appreciation for the History of Redemption.

f. Failing to follow the methodology of biblico-theological extremists (as expressed in publications such as the *Kerux* journal). Such extremists teach that

i. In preaching or teaching you should never use a biblical character as a moral example.

A) But in my judgment Scripture often intends its characters to be exemplary, as in Heb. 11.

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B) We must, of course, remember that every biblical character save Jesus is fallible, not exemplary in every respect.

ii. You should never try to “apply” a biblical text to ethical issues, but should let the Holy Spirit do that in the hearts of your hearers.

A) But Scripture’s purpose is application, John 20:31, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

B) All biblical writers and preachers seek to apply biblical teaching to the lives of their hearers. How can we exclude this emphasis?

C) All preaching and teaching necessarily is application, whether it be relatively theoretical or relatively practical. Its purpose is to answer

human questions, to meet human need.

D) The goal of the preacher should be the goal of the Holy Spirit. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility work together.

iii. You should always make soteriology and eschatology the primary themes of your teaching, whatever the text.

A) In my judgment, this approach leads to many arbitrary, even bizarre interpretations of Bible texts.

B) Preachers who follow this method also tend to miss many other themes of Scripture, particularly the ethical ones.

6. Value: Quality of worth or merit

a. There are many kinds of value: economic, aesthetic, etc., of which ethical value is one.

b. Thus ethics is often regarded as a subdivision of value-theory.

7. Virtue

a. Worth, value, ground of praise for someone or something.

b. Non-moral virtues: efficiency, skill, talent, etc.

c. Moral virtue: morally good character.

d. "Virtue ethics:" focusing on the virtues, rather than norms or consequences.

8. Good: General adjective of commendation

a. Non-moral uses — to refer to non-moral values or virtues

i. "Teleological goodness": good for something; e.g., "good hammer".

ii. Skillful, e.g., "good plumber"

a) Although occasionally such an expression will carry a moral nuance, it is usually assumed that one can be a good plumber, teacher, businessman, etc., without being morally good.)

b) Of course, moral issues affect skills. A plumber who gets drunk on the job will not be a good plumber even in the non-moral sense.

iii. It is important to recognize analogies between moral and non-moral goodness

a) In both cases, God determines the grounds of commendation and the means of achieving it.

b) Both kinds of goodness are teleological in a broad sense: even moral goodness is "good for" the kingdom of God.

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c) Both kinds of goodness involve capacities or skills.

d) Even non-moral values and virtues should be used to the glory of God.

So ethical and non-ethical goodnesses interact in important ways.

b. Moral goodness: A human act, attitude or person receiving God's blessing.

9. Right

a. Often roughly synonymous with "good": a "right" act is a "good" act.

b. Tends to be more legally colored than "good": "righteousness" and "justice" are close synonyms.

c. "Right" tends to be used mostly of actions, "good" of persons or attitudes.

d. Some philosophers make arbitrary distinctions between these terms for their own purposes.

10. Ought: Verb of obligation. Indicates an action mandated by an ethical norm.

11. Obligation, Duty: Something we ought to do.

a. Prima facie duties: falling under a general norm that has some exceptions. (“Thou shalt not kill” allows for killing in just war and proper capital punishment.”).

b. Actual: Our actual obligation, taking all exceptions into account.

c. Present: duties we must perform at this moment.

d. Eventual: duties that can be postponed, but are nevertheless mandatory.

12. Justice

a. Moral rightness.

b. Fairness, equality.

i. Conservatism: equality of opportunity.

ii. Liberalism: equality of condition.

13. Ethical Justification: reasoning attempting to show the rightness of an action.

a. Subjective: the reason we believe our action is justified.

b. Objective: the reason why it is actually justified (in the sight of God).

i. Prima facie

ii. Actual

14. Levels of Ethical Justification

a. Obligation, duty, obedience to command (*must, ought, should*).

i. Corporate

ii. Individual

b. Prohibition: a negative obligation.

c. Permission

i. By approved biblical example.

ii. By express permission (eating meat).

iii. By biblical silence (when the act is not in a category that Scripture declares to be sinful).

d. Commendation, praise

i. As David’s mighty men, the widow’s mite, the sharing of Acts 4.

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ii. Are such acts obligatory?

A. Scripture does not seem to command them for every person. Nobody should be charged with sin for failure to perform acts of moral heroism.

B. Yet the ultimate standard of obligation is the self-giving love of Christ (John 13:34-35).

C. Do you doubt that David’s mighty men *felt* an obligation?

D. We should be thankful that we are saved by grace, rather than by carrying out God’s ethical standards!

C. The Triangle (Structure of Part One of the course)

1. The “Lordship Attributes”: Characteristics of God that define His covenant relationship to us. (Note “Yahweh” treaty pattern).

a. Control: Works all things according to the counsel of His will.

b. Authority: His word is unconditionally binding.

c. Covenant solidarity or presence: “I will be with you;” “I will be your God and you shall be My people.” God commits Himself to us so that we live in His presence. Results in blessing or judgment.

2. Lordship and Ethics: How does God govern our ethical life?

- a. Control: He plans history so as to determine what means are conducive to His ultimate purposes, our ultimate blessing.
- b. Authority: He speaks to give us the norms for behavior.
- c. Presence:
 - i. He, Himself, is our example of righteousness.
 - ii. It is His presence by which we gain the power to become righteous.
- 3. Necessary and Sufficient Criteria of Good Works

“Problem of the virtuous pagan”: Non-Christians do conform to the law externally at times. Why does Scripture declare them to be depraved? Because they altogether lack the following (WCF 16.7):

 - a. Right Goal: The glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:23; Matthew 6:33).
 - b. Right Standard: Sin is lawlessness, and obedience is the criterion of discipleship. John 14:21, 1 John 3:4, etc.
 - c. Right Motive: I Corinthians 13; Romans 14:23 [faith / love], by grace, by God’s Spirit.
- 4. Factors in Ethical Judgment: World, Law, Self [Consider yourself in a counseling session]
 - a. What is the situation, the problem?
 - b. What does God’s Word say?
 - c. What is my attitude? Do I have the maturity to make the right decision, the spiritual capacity to apply God’s Word to the situation?
- 5. Ethical teaching of Scripture itself
 - a. Appeal to the events of redemption, imitation of God, Jesus, and others: John 13:34-35, Rom. 6:1-23, 13:11-12, 1 Cor. 6:20, 10:11, 15:58, Eph. 4:1-5, 25, 6, 32, 5:25-33, Phil. 2:1-11, Col. 3:1-4 (and judgment, 2 Cor. 5:10), Heb. 12:1-28, 1 Pet. 2:1-3, 4:1-6
 - b. Appeal to commandments (of the OT law, Jesus, and Paul): Matt. 19:18-19, Luke 10:26f, John 14:15, 21, Rom. 12:19, 13:8ff, 1 Cor. 5:13, 14:34, 2 Cor. 8:15, 9:9, Eph. 4:20-24, 6:1-3, 1 Thess. 4:1, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, Tit. 2:1, James 1:22-25, 2:8-13, 1 Pet. 1:16, 1 John 2:3-5, 3:24, 5:2
 - c. Appeal to the Spirit, who gives new life within: Rom. 8:1-17, Gal. 5:16-18, 22-26, Eph. 5:8-21.
- 6. Perspectives on the Discipline of Ethics: In general, ethical judgment always involves the **application** of a **norm** to a **situation** by a **person**. [May be useful to structure your paper like this]. One can look at the discipline from any of these three vantage points.
 - a. The Situational Perspective (*teleological*)
 - i. Focuses on nature and history as under God’s control.
 - ii. Notes relations of means to ends in God’s economy.
 - iii. Asks “What are the best means of achieving God’s purposes?”
 - b. The Normative Perspective (*deontological*)
 - i. Focuses on Scripture as the source of ethical norms.
 - ii. Asks “What does Scripture teach about this question?”
 - c. The Existential Perspective (*existential*)
 - i. Focuses on the self in confrontation with God.

ii. Asks “How must I change if I am to be holy?”

7. Interdependence of the Perspectives

a. The “situation” includes Scripture and the self. You don’t truly understand the situation until you see it in the light of Scripture and until you see its bearing upon yourself.

b. The “norm” must be applied to the situation and to the self, or else it is not adequately understood. (No difference between “understanding” and “application”.) Scripture is rightly seen only when it is properly related to the world and to the self.

i. Does someone understand the meaning of the eighth commandment if he does not know how the commandment applies to embezzling or tax evasion? Not adequately, at any rate.

ii. Every attempt to “understand” or to “find meaning” is an attempt to answer some question or meet some need.

c. The “self” cannot be rightly understood until seen in the context of its situation and rightly interpreted by the Word of God.

d. Each perspective, then, necessitates consideration of the others. None of the perspectives can be treated adequately unless the others also are considered.

Thus, each “includes” both of the others.

e. Each perspective, then, is a way of viewing the whole of ethics.

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f. The faithfulness and sovereignty of God insure that the three foci will be consistent with one another. A right interpretation of the situation will be consistent with a right interpretation of the law and of the self, etc.

g. Though the perspectives are ultimately identical, they do view the whole from genuinely different angles. Thus they provide us with checks and balances.

i. Wrong interpretations of the situation can be corrected by right interpretations of the law.

ii. But the opposite is also true. Wrong interpretations-applications of the law can be corrected by right interpretations of the situation.

iii. This is not relativism, but only a reminder about the importance of right interpretation. The law of God is our absolute norm, but it must be rightly understood. We are not responsible to do what we falsely imagine Scripture to teach.

8. Apologetic Use of the Perspectives

a. Non-Christian ethical systems tend to lose the balance of the three perspectives. Only Christian ethics brings these together in a mutually enriching manner.

i. Teleological ethics: (utilitarianism) absolutizes a wrongly conceived situational perspective.

A) Tries to derive norms from empirical study of the situation.

B) But Hume’s question is important: how do you get from “is” to “ought?” The naturalistic fallacy (Moore).

ii. Deontological ethics: (e.g., Kant) denies the situational perspective in the interest of a wrongly conceived normative perspective (and existential).

iii. Existentialist ethics: Absolutizes a misconceived existential perspective and

virtually denies the other two.

b. Contrary to some critics, Reformed ethics need not be a mere “ethics of law.” The genius of the Reformed faith is its view of the comprehensiveness of God’s covenant lordship. This view implies a broad vision of the many elements of the ethical situation, of the many factors influencing ethical judgment and action.

i. A strong view of biblical authority, clarity, and sufficiency (normative).

ii. A strong view of general revelation (situational).

iii. A strong view of the importance of self-knowledge (existential). Calvin’s *Institutes*, 1.1.1

c. Reformed ethics can account for all the nuances, the subtleties involved in ethical decision-making, without compromising the straightforward, simple unity of our obligation, namely obedience to God as He has revealed His will in Scripture. Unity and diversity.

D. The Square

1. Purpose

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a. Pedagogical device to explain and illustrate Van Til’s teaching concerning the dialectical structure of non-Christian thought: one / many; rationalist / irrationalist; determinism / autonomy, etc.

b. Another way to summarize the basic character of Christian ethics in contrast with non-Christian systems.

A C

B D

2. Basic Structure

a. Left side (A, B) represents Christian views.

b. Right side (C, D) represents non-Christian views.

c. Upper corners (A, C) represent views of transcendence—i.e., recognition that the source of moral obligation is in some sense “beyond” man.

d. Lower corners (B, D) represent views of immanence—i.e., recognition that moral norms are in some sense relevant to, involved with human life.

e. Diagonal line AD represents direct contradiction between the Christian view of transcendence and the non-Christian view of immanence. Similarly BC, *mutatis mutandis*.

f. Line AC represents formal similarity between the two views of transcendence: they can be expressed in similar language, even fortified with the same Scripture texts. Same for line BD in respect to immanence.

g. Line AB concerns the relation of assertions within the Christian system, and CD same for the non-Christian assertions. The latter are mutually contradictory, while the former are not, mysterious as their relationships may be.

3. Interpretation

a. Transcendence and Immanence

i. Christian transcendence: The God of Scripture is Lord over all factors in the moral situation. He is the controller of situations, the supreme moral

authority, the ultimate cause of all human righteousness.

ii. Christian immanence: This Lord is covenantally with us. Thus he is deeply involved in all created events, he reveals his law clearly, he works in us and among us to perfect holiness in his people.

iii. Non-Christian transcendence: The non-Christian either denies that there is any God or else deifies something created. The former alternative can be

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stated as a sort of belief in transcendence: no final answers in morality are available to man; they are entirely beyond us.

iv. Non-Christian immanence: The latter of the alternatives noted under iii. can be stated as a belief in immanence: the truth is available to us, because we ourselves (or something in creation) are the final authority, the final controllers of moral situations, etc.

v. Compare 3a with 2 to see how the various statements are related.

a) AD contradictory: God is Lord / something created is Lord.

b) BC contradictory: God reveals his will clearly / he does not.

c) AC formal similarity: both speak of ethics as sublime, beyond human devising, frustrating all human attempts at manipulating, modifying, using to selfish advantage.

d) BD formal similarity: both speak of ethics as relevant, practical, as engaging human responsibility.

e) Note inconsistency of CD, harmony of AB.

b. Irrationalism and Rationalism: The square may also be interpreted from a more epistemological point of view. Epistemology is also an important area for ethical discussion. Epistemology may be regarded as an aspect of ethics (a study of what we ought to believe, granted certain data—cf., “Doctrine of the Knowledge of God”), or *vice versa* (ethics in that case being one particular area of knowledge).

i. Christian irrationalism (A on diagram): God, not man, determines truth and falsehood. Thus our knowledge is always subordinate to his authority.

Thus man’s reason is limited in what it can achieve; it can never be the ultimate source of truth.

ii. Christian rationalism (B): But God has spoken to us and given us a sure and certain knowledge upon which we may and must base all the decisions of our lives.

iii. Non-Christian irrationalism (C): There is no sure and certain knowledge; no final truth.

iv. Non-Christian rationalism (D): There is a sure and certain knowledge, because we (or something else in creation) are the ultimate judge of truth.

c. Absoluteness and Relevance of the Moral Law:

i. Christian absoluteness (A): The moral law is absolutely binding because God is its author.

ii. Christian relevance (B): The law is relevant to human life because God, the author of both, has fitted human life to suit his standards, has revealed those standards clearly, and has given us the ability to apply them.

iii. Non-Christian absoluteness (C): The law is binding insofar as it is

unknowable, transcendent. (Note later examples in Plato, Kant.)

iv. Non-Christian relevance (D): The law is relevant insofar as it is derived from creation and therefore non-absolute.

d. Sovereignty and Responsibility:

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i. Christian sovereignty (A): God is sovereign as creator and controller of all aspects of moral life.

ii. Christian responsibility (B): Because God is sovereign, he rightly imposes upon us the responsibility to obey, and he sovereignly uses our choices as significant, meaningful historical forces.

iii. Non-Christian sovereignty (C): Ultimately the world is governed by fate or chance, and so human choices don't make any difference.

iv. Non-Christian responsibility (D): We are responsible because we are the creators of morality. We create our own moral meaning. There is no sovereignty over us.

e. Objectivity and Inwardness:

i. Christian objectivity (A): The meaning of the moral law does not depend on my response to it, but wholly upon God's word.

ii. Christian inwardness (B): The law is revealed in my inmost being and demands obedience at the most profound level—obedience from the heart.

iii. Non-Christian objectivity (C): The good is so far beyond us that it can never be known, described or attained.

iv. Non-Christian inwardness (D): Since we are the ultimate judges of moral good, there can be no standard external to ourselves.

f. Humility and Hope:

i. Christian humility (A): We have no claim on God in ourselves. As creatures and sinners we do not deserve blessing.

ii. Christian hope (B): But God has redeemed us by his sovereign grace. Blessing is assured in Christ.

iii. Non-Christian humility (C) [despair]: There is no redemption, no hope of ever achieving blessing.

iv. Non-Christian hope (D) [pride]: We can save ourselves through our own efforts.

g. Freedom and authority in society:

i. Christian freedom (A): Since God is the only ultimate ruler, all human authority is limited. The sovereignty of God thus guarantees human freedom.

ii. Christian authority (B): Yet God has clearly revealed that kings, fathers, ministers, etc. have genuine, though limited, authority in their respective spheres.

iii. Non-Christian freedom (C): Since there is no final truth, I owe allegiance to no one (anarchy).

iv. Non-Christian authority (D): Since we are the creators of moral obligation, we may demand absolute allegiance from others in all spheres of life (totalitarianism).

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II. Survey of Non-Christian Ethical Systems

A. More Explicitly Religious

All non-Christian systems, even the purportedly secular ones, are religious in the sense of being governed by “basic commitment”. Some, however, are more explicitly religious than others, employing alleged revelations, liturgical rites, etc. These we consider here.

Three themes appear particularly prominent:

1. Ethics Based on Impersonal Cosmic Law [Ancient Egyptian *maat*, Babylonian *me*, Greek *moira* or *ate* (fate), Confucian *tien* (heaven)].

a. The law is beyond gods and men. Both gods and men must look beyond themselves to ascertain the content of the law. In this sense, the law is transcendent and objective (cf. above).

b. In Confucian and some expressions of Greek religion, the law is powerful in its own right, working vengeance against those who defy it. In Egypt, Babylon, and some other Greek sources, there is more emphasis upon enforcement of the law by gods and human rulers.

c. In the latter two, and to some extent in the others, there is a tendency toward hierarchicalism—a chain of authorities from the law to the gods through various human authorities. The Egyptian Pharaoh is the link between heaven and earth, the absolute arbiter of right and wrong.

d. In general, the ethical precepts of these systems remind one of the Scriptural precepts; this is to be expected on the basis of Romans 1 and 2. However, “fate” is often something less than a distinctively moral force, and in some systems (Egypt, animism), the cosmic forces can be manipulated by men (magic) for their own selfish purposes. Relation between the moral law and these non-moral forces is unclear.

e. How do we get to know the law? Through human experts (the Pharaoh, above, c; the Confucian scholar). How do they know it? By observing its workings in human experience. In this sense the law is more immanent than transcendent. Formulation of it boils down to man’s analysis of his own experience.

f. Critique:

i. Autonomous analysis of experience will not yield precepts which are universal and necessary (i.e., ethically obligatory). Cf. above material on rationalism.

ii. Even if the universe is programmed to reward certain actions and punish others, why does this fact impose any obligation upon the individual? Why would it not be virtuous to struggle (even if vainly) against this impersonal tyranny?

iii. These systems tend toward authoritarianism because they have lost the balance between one and many found in Scripture.

iv. Summary: Not clear how this scheme furnishes an ethical norm, or how we can know it. The knowledge offered by human expertise provides only a relative norm, or one arbitrarily said to be absolute.

2. Ethics as a Quest for the Transethical

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a. This emphasis is particularly characteristic of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and ancient Gnosticism. Hinduism and Taoism also have strong elements of the first emphasis (Hindu, karma, caste, the Taoist way of nature) as do most all religions in their less sophisticated forms.

- b. This sort of thought is essentially monistic. i.e., it holds that ultimate reality is one, not many.
- c. The pluralities of our experience, the distinctions (including the distinction between good and evil) are ultimately illusory. On this principle, all elements of ethics in its normal sense are eliminated:
- i. Normative perspective: the distinction between good and evil is ultimately illusory. Reality is beyond good and evil, transethical.
 - ii. Situational perspective: the world as experienced by the senses does not exist. History is an illusion. One seeks detachment from things, not a Godglorifying use of them.
 - iii. Existential perspective: the self also is illusion, and other selves are illusory as well. Thus the concepts of personal and social ethics are ultimately meaningless.
- d. Ethics enters as part of man's quest for union with the One. Right living is part of the discipline by which one escapes the continuous cycle of rebirth and achieves Nirvana, that union with the ultimate which is also characterized as annihilation.
- i. Often this principle puts ethics on a thoroughly egoistic basis, though in some cases (e.g. Mahayana Buddhism) there are elements of altruism (the Buddha, about to achieve Nirvana, returns to the world to help others). It is not, however, clear in these systems why one ought to be altruistic.
 - ii. Though ethics plays an important role in these systems, it is ultimately negotiable. Our goal is to reach a state of mind in which ethical distinctions no longer have meaning.
- e. Ethical standards on these views:
- i. To a great extent [as was the case with #1] the concrete norms resemble the laws of Scripture.
 - ii. The overall goal, however, in these religions, is detachment—from things, the world, other people. This theme contrasts sharply with the biblical teaching that love is the central commandment.
 - iii. The stress on detachment plus the exaltation of nature to the status of ultimate ethical authority (particularly in Taoism and Hinduism) often leads to a passive acceptance of natural and social evil.
 - iv. The vagueness of detachment as an overriding ethical norm is illustrated by the differences among Gnostics, who also held to a monistic worldview.
 - A) Some were ascetics (wishing to get free of the body and its wants),
 - B) Others libertines (feeling that what happens to the body is of little importance).
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- v. The sense of "oneness with nature" found in these religions has been praised by contemporary ecologists. However, the *laissez-faire* attitude toward nature is as dangerous as the grasping, exploitative attitude common in the West. India's problems with disease, starvation, overpopulation are compounded by the attitudes of Hinduism toward cattle, insects, etc.
- f. Summary

i. Monism leads to an empty absolute—an ultimate reality with no rational or ethical character.

ii. Ethics is subordinate to metaphysics. Man's quest for metaphysical union with the One takes precedence over all ethical considerations. Salvation is metaphysical transcendence, not redemption from sin.

iii. As such, there is no basis for ethical action or ground for ethical hope.

3. Ethics as Law Without Gospel

a. All religions except Christianity are religions of works-righteousness, religions in which one seeks to gain stature through his good works. Even religions that resemble Christianity greatly in their view of God and Scripture (unlike those above) may be faulted in this area.

b. Under this category we include non-Messianic Judaism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, many cults, as well as the religions noted above.

c. The principle of works righteousness feeds man's pride on the one hand and his despair on the other. One either deceives himself into believing that he is keeping the commandments perfectly, or (with clearer self-understanding) he loses hope of ever meeting God's standard.

d. Having said all this, it must be recognized that Judaism, Islam and similar religions do often derive their ethics from (alleged) word-revelation of a personal God. In these and other ways they are influenced by Scripture.

i. However, denial of the Gospel of Christ drives a wide chasm between these and Christianity.

ii. The consequences of Unitarianism must also be noted:

a) The elimination of distinctions in God leads to a god without moral character (liberal Judaism and Christianity) in many cases.

b) The governance of God over the world is fatalistic, more mechanical than personal, in Islam. There is a tendency there to make God an abstract principle as in Eastern religions. Fatalism is devastating to moral responsibility.

c) Note also the tendency toward statism in Islam due to the primacy of the one over the many (Rushdoony, *The One and the Many*).

B. Less Explicitly Religious ("secular" ethics)

1. Major Tendencies

Ethical systems (Christian and non-Christian both) attempt to do justice to various concerns of which the following are prominent. Generally a thinker will try to incorporate more than one of them into his system. Although these matters are of

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concern both to Christians and non-Christians, both being in contact with God's law, the non-Christian systems are inevitably unsuccessful in implementing these concerns without distortion and conflict.

a. Deontological (focusing on the normative perspective)

i. The ethical norm must be transcendent, sublime

a) It must be beyond ourselves, not a mere expression of our self-interest.

It must be capable of motivating self-sacrifice—the opposite of selfish concern.

b) It must not be derivable from mere sense-experience. Sense-experience can tell us facts, but from those facts alone no obligation may be

derived. (The claim that facts imply obligation is sometimes called the “naturalistic fallacy”.) The basis of duty must come from somewhere “beyond”.

ii. The ethical norm must be authoritative, must bind us, must impose duty upon us. We must have no right to disobey. There is no excuse for disobedience. Else there is no ethical norm, properly speaking.

iii. The ethical norm must be universally binding. A principle that binds me must be binding also on anyone else in the same situation. If it is wrong for me to rob a bank, it must be wrong for you also. Ethics is no respecter of persons. Obligation does not change when the only variable factor is the person involved.

iv. Summary: Ethics is something God-like. It comes from above, calls us all to account.

b. Teleological (focusing on the situational perspective)

i. Immanence: Ethical obligation is part of ordinary life, not something spooky, or something that appears only in crisis situations. We make moral decisions every day, moment by moment.

ii. Practicality: The content of the ethical norm is clear, definable.

iii. Doing good brings happiness. It is in our best interest, at least in the long run. The moral life is the good life.

iv. One may even answer moral questions by determining the consequences of an action—the happiness produced, etc. Happiness is the end; the moral task is to determine and accomplish the means to that end (teleology).

v. Specificity: The moral law applies to each specific case and takes the distinctive nature of each case into account.

vi. Righteousness is never merely internal. It gets involved in the world as much as it is able, adapting means to ends (the tree and its fruits).

vii. Righteousness is part of the causal order of nature (cf. iv.). Moral goodness is not an arbitrary decision arising in the soul by chance, but is a response to situations as reasons. The best people are consistently, predictably good.

c. Personalist (or “existential,” focusing on the existential perspective)

i. Immanence: Ethics is something profoundly inward, a matter of the heart.

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a) True righteousness is never hypocritical—never merely pretending to do the right.

b) To do what appears right with a grudging, hating inner motive is always wrong.

c) Thus it is wrong to judge people merely on the basis of external conduct.

d) The ethical norm must be affirmed from within, or it does not produce goodness. The moral law must not be merely external; it must become my law, my standard.

ii. Ethical behavior is self-realization. It expresses what I am.

a) An expression of human nature (Aquinas, etc.).

b) An expression of human freedom (Sartre, others who deny that man

has any nature).

iii. Responsibility implies freedom. My ethical choices are not simply determined by my heredity or environment or by my past choices.

iv. Persons are ends in themselves—not to be sacrificed for principles or things.

d. Problems

i. Though some of the above formulations may generate some controversy, I believe that most everyone will see some truth in all of them.

ii. Non-Christian thought, however is unable to integrate these concerns without conflict. Conflicts lead to redefining or denying one or more of these propositions.

a) How can the law be beyond us [a.i.a); a.iv.] and also in our midst [b.i.] or even within us [c.i.]?

b) How can obedience be unselfish [a.i.a)] and also in our best interest [b.iii.] and self-expressive [c.i.d); c.ii.]?

c) How may we determine ethical obligation from circumstances [b.iv.] when it is neither derivable from sense-experience [a.i.b)] nor external to ourselves [c.i.]?

d) How can the norm be authoritative [a.ii.] over me if its taking effect presupposes inward acceptance [c.i.d)]?

e) How can the norm be universally binding [a.iii.] if it must take account of the distinctive nature of each particular case [b.v.]?

f) How can its content be clear and definable [b.ii.] if it comes from beyond our experience [a.i.]?

g) How can righteousness be both profoundly external [b.vi.] and profoundly internal [c.i.]?

h) How can moral conduct be both free [c.ii.b); c.iii.] and also rationally and causally motivated [b.ii.]?

i) If the moral law is God-like [a.iv.], why should persons not be sacrificed to it [c.iv.]?

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e. Christian Response

i. Cf. “the square”. Problems are generated because of false concepts of transcendence and immanence.

ii. Specific replies to problems under d.ii.:

a) The law is beyond us because God is beyond us as Lord; it is near because God is near and his law is near (Deuteronomy 30)

b) Obedience is in our best interest because God has created and directed history to make it so. When we give up our own schemes to serve him, we gain happiness and fulfillment, and *vice-versa* (Matthew 10:39; 16:25, parallels).

c) We may derive ethical obligation from circumstances because we presuppose the normative interpretation of those circumstances given in God’s Word.

d) The norm is binding whether or not I accept it; but unless I affirm the law from the heart, nothing else I do will be truly obedient.

e) Scripture presents God’s will in such detail that its teaching is

applicable to all situations.

f) The law comes from God who speaks it clearly in human experience.

g) God has created men in an organic relationship with the world and other men. Individual purity of heart coincides with outgoing love for others in the world.

h) God has organized the moral order so that acts are motivated, but so that man's environment and past choices never constitute excuses for sin.

i) The moral law is itself personal—the word of the living God. Our attitude toward it is our attitude toward him. The law, further, never requires, ultimately, a sacrifice of person to principle. Obedience is happiness and fulfillment [e.ii.b)] (cf. Mark 2:27).

2. The Milesians: Thales: "All is water." Anaximander: "All is indefinite."

Anaximenes: "All is air." (6th century BC)

a. Denies creator / creature distinction.

b. Rationalism (man determines ultimate nature of everything); irrationalism (mind reduced to water, air, indefinite).

c. Thus moral distinctions also reduce to the chance developments of physical reality. Moral standards are mere movements of water, etc., which cannot obligate.

3. The Eleatics: Xenophanes, Parmenides, Zeno (6th and 5th centuries)

All reality is static, undifferentiated being.

a. Attempts to be purely rationalistic, but must invoke irrationalism to account for the appearance, or illusion of change.

b. On this view, too, moral distinctions disappear. The moral quest, the need for moral decision, is ultimately illusory. Cf. Eastern religions, [II.A.2.].

4. Heraclitus (535-475)

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a. Irrationalism: "Everything changes." "You cannot step in the same river twice."

b. Rationalism: The *logos* governs all by a constant, rational pattern. (Is this the one thing that does not change?)

c. Heraclitus is the first philosopher to have addressed moral issues specifically.

Ethics, to him, is living rationally, according to the *logos*. Self-discipline and constancy of character are his chief principles.

d. But how can this be done if "everything changes"? And how can we make any contact with the *logos* if everything changes?

e. In all of the Greek systems, ethics boils down to "living rationally." But there is no adequate recognition of the problematic nature of reason itself, nor reflection on the presuppositions on which reason must function.

f. On many ethical questions, there is no obvious, generally accepted rational answer.

5. The Atomists: Leucippus; Democritus (460-370); Epicurus (341-270); Lucretius (94-54)

a. Reality is reducible to tiny pieces of matter (atoms) in motion.

b. Knowledge begins in sense-perception, but must be refined by reason.

c. For Democritus (cf. later on Epicurus), ethics is living rationally, in search of the truest and highest pleasure (hedonism: pleasure as the supreme goal). An early form of teleological ethics.

d. The highest pleasures result from the moderating of desire.

e. Critique: cf. Heraclitus

i. What moral obligation is possible if all reality reduces to matter and motion?

ii. On what basis do we declare what is or is not rational?

6. The Sophists: Protagoras (490-???); Gorgias; Thrasymachus; others: the birth of existential ethics.

a. No objective standards of truth and falsity or right or wrong. There is no “objective truth,” only “truth for me.”

b. Thrasymachus: “Justice is the interest of the stronger.” Moral norms are devised by various people in society to gain power for themselves.

c. Thus there are no moral constraints; “Man is the measure of all things.”

d. The above represents irrationalism. Yet sophism is also rationalistic in that it claims critical discernment, claims to teach people how to be successful.

e. Thus sophism, like the other systems, denies all moral distinctions while claiming to maintain them in some form. The result is no moral guidance whatever.

f. All of these systems, however, rightly demand a basis for ethics, rather than blind adherence to tradition.

7. Plato (427-347): mostly deontological, though with some existential elements. Rejects teleology in ethics.

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a. Vs. Sophists: There is objective truth. Our knowledge is based upon our prebirth experience of the world of Forms, which is eternal and unchanging.

b. “Good” is the highest of the Forms. All reality partakes of goodness to some extent. Evil results from non-being. (Plato’s argument for the primacy of good over evil is not convincing.)

c. “Good,” therefore, is higher than any god. In *Euthyphro*, he seeks to discover what piety (and, by extension the Good) is in itself, apart from anything gods or men may say. Good is an abstract principle [cf. Ancient Religions, II.A.1.].

d. Only “the good” is truly good.

i. Lesser “goods” can be bad—some situations—pleasure, peace, boldness, etc.

ii. Apparent “evils” can sometimes be good—war, pain, sorrow, fear.

iii. So none of these fully capture the meaning of goodness as such. Only knowledge does this—for it is never wrong to act knowledgeably.

e. For man, virtue is knowledge and *vice-versa* (cf. earlier philosophers). No one ever does wrong knowingly. Again, here he engages in dubious argumentation.

f. Reason, therefore, must govern all other “parts” of the soul.

g. Pleasure is not an end in itself, but it does motivate us to live according to reason (consistent?).

h. Politics: As reason must rule the individual, so the most rational men (philosophers) ought to govern the state (*Republic*).

i. People are divided into different categories (cf. Hindu caste system) and

educated for the work of their class.

ii. For upper castes, communism, community of wives and children.

iii. Less totalitarianism in *Laws*.

i. Comments:

i. In seeking an objectively authoritative norm, Plato made it independent of gods and men, but he thereby also made it abstract, devoid of specific content.

ii. If all reality is good, how is good distinguished from evil?

iii. If the moral norm is the most abstract of principles, then its authority is proportional to its irrelevance. No specific norm is truly authoritative.

iv. Having made goodness an abstract principle, he was unable to show why we ought to emulate it.

v. Why, then, ought we to follow reason? And what does reason tell us to do?

vi. Note the connection between rationalism and political totalitarianism: If reason is to rule, and reason is defined by man, man must rule and rule with ultimate authority. The greater emphasis on freedom in the *Laws* corresponds with concessions to irrationalism.

8. Aristotle (384-322): For a non-Christian, Aristotle presents the best balance between deontological, teleological, and existential approaches.

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a. For Aristotle, the Forms are not found in some other world. They are found in this world, in things: The form of treeness is in every tree, etc.

b. Except for the divine Prime Mover, the forms always exist in things together with matter.

c. Aristotle, thus, “demythologizes” Plato—brings him down to earth. Similarly in ethics, Aristotle is less interested than Plato in the sublimity, the transcendence of the moral law, more interested in its immanence, its relevance. He is more “teleological” and “existential” while Plato is more “deontological,” though neither is a pure example of either tendency.

d. The highest good for any being is the realization, actualization of its particular nature (existential). Man’s highest good, therefore, is the life of reason.

e. Complete, habitual exercise of man’s rational nature constitutes “happiness” (*eudaimonia*). Happiness is not pleasure, though pleasure accompanies it as a secondary effect. Teleological.

f. The life of reason involves moderation in bodily appetites, ambitions, etc. Often this involves choosing the “mean” between two extremes—courage as the mean between cowardice and foolhardiness, etc.

g. This ethic is egoistic, in the sense that the highest goal is self-perfection, selfrealization.

Realizing one’s true nobility, however, will sometimes involve selfsacrifice, even giving one’s life for others.

h. The highest authority is the virtuous man—the rational man, to whom the things which appear honorable are really honorable, etc.

i. vs. Socrates, Plato: For virtue, it does not suffice to know what is right; one must also endeavor to do it. So laws, other inducements, are needed, as well as education.

j. The state is more important than the individual as in general the whole is more important than its parts. But the purpose of the state is to help individual citizens to lead a happy life.

k. Prefers aristocracy to tyranny, democracy: it recognizes differences in qualifications for citizenship, but rests on a broad base.

l. Comments:

i. As with Plato, goodness here is an abstract form, though found in things. All specific moral norms are relative to it; it alone is absolute, universal, necessary. Yet it has no specific content. Or rather, once one spells out its content, he is left with a relative norm.

ii. On what basis do we assume that our supreme good is to be governed by reason?

iii. If happiness is the end which we naturally pursue (as an acorn naturally becomes a tree because of its innate form), why must we be exhorted to seek it?

iv. Granted that it is our natural end, why ought we to pursue it? (“Naturalistic fallacy” argument)

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v. How are specific norms to be deduced from the concept of happiness? The relation of these is unclear in Aristotle. One ought to exercise moderation if one wishes to live a certain kind of life. But why ought one to make that choice? If one chooses otherwise, then other courses of action are more rational. Aristotle fails to recognize the presuppositions upon which his notion of “rational” is based.

vi. There are some statist tendencies in Aristotle as in Plato, and for similar reasons (cf. above, 8.j.). Though he balances carefully the concerns of the state and the individual, the state in the end has the priority.

9. Early Teleological Theories

a. Cyrenaicism (Aristippus, b. 435BC): crude teleological ethics.

i. Highest good: greatest amount of pleasure and avoidance of pain.

ii. Best pleasures are the most intense; quantity, not quality, is the significant variable.

iii. Hegesius the pessimist: For most people, there is more pain than pleasure. The more we seek pleasure, the more we attain boredom and frustration. Suicide is the most rational course.

b. Epicurus (341-270): more sophisticated teleological ethics.

i. General philosophy: atomism; [cf. 5. above]. Epicurus modifies the traditional atomism by saying that atoms occasionally “swerve” from their vertical path. This swerve explains the formation of objects and human free will.

ii. All people by nature seek pleasure and avoid pain; therefore these are the goals of life; these are what we ought to do.

iii. Unlike the Cyrenaics, Epicurus distinguishes among the qualities of pleasure: We ought to endure short-range pains for long-range pleasures; we should prefer mental to physical pleasures, etc.

iv. To make such judgments, we need to know the causes of things.

Philosophical contemplation, thus, is the highest pleasure (cf. Aristotle).

v. Society begins in a social contract—for mutual self-interest. There is no absolute justice apart from such self-interest.

vi. Laws are good if they are useful, if they protect, bring pleasure, etc. [Cf. sophists].

vii. One ought to avoid involvement in public affairs as much as possible.

c. Comments:

i. Same problems as in atomism, compounded by the notion of pure chance (“the swerve”).

ii. Does everybody seek pleasure and avoid pain? What about self-sacrifice?

iii. Or do we simply define pleasure as “what anyone seeks”? Then we have a meaningless norm, as abstract as Plato’s good.

iv. Granted that everyone does seek pleasure and avoid pain, why ought we? (Question of the “naturalistic fallacy”).

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v. Determining what to do in any situation seems hopelessly complex. There are so many different kinds of pleasure and pain to be measured against one another. Further, one cannot measure any of them until one knows their effects indefinitely into the future. (What future pains and pleasures will there be if I choose X?) The principle seems at first to be simple and practical, but on reflection it appears otherwise.

vi. Note, then, the tension between the meaningless absolute [iii.] and the hopelessly disjointed particulars [v.].

vii. Note also the lack of a revealed standard to set forth specifically and authoritatively the whole duty of man.

viii. Social contract idea leads to a dialectic of anarchy and totalitarianism: Absolute right of private self-interest on the one hand and collective selfinterest on the other.

10. Early Deontological Theories

a. Cynicism (Antisthenes, d. 366BC)

i. Virtue is knowledge (Socrates), and is worthwhile for its own sake, apart from any pleasure that may attend it. Doing good to achieve pleasure is morally worthless.

ii. Man must, then, become independent of the desire for pleasure.

iii. The Cynics sought self-discipline, renunciation of possessions, even rejection of civilization.

b. Stoicism (Zeno of Citium, 336-264)

i. Knowledge is based on sense-perception, conceptualized so as to reflect the rational order of the world itself (*logos*).

ii. Form and matter, body and soul, are all material.

iii. God is the world-soul (pantheism).

iv. Determinism, fatalism, eternal recurrence. Freedom is rational selfdetermination (vs. Epicureans).

v. Man’s goal: to act in harmony with the universal reason, to live according to nature. Self-realization.

vi. Pleasure, health, life, etc. are good only as they contribute to virtuous character. In themselves they are nothing.

vii. As there is one universal reason, there is one universal society of which all are members. Its laws are objective, universally binding (vs. Epicureans).

viii. All are brothers; all have equal rights.

ix. We ought to sacrifice ourselves for the general welfare.

x. It is our duty to participate in public affairs to promote the general good (vs. Epicureans).

c. Comments:

i. Why ought we to live according to reason? Pleasure has been rejected as a motive. What other is there?

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ii. Materialism, determinism, fatalism reduce ethics to physical, causal process. Cf. Milesians, Atomists.

iii. What is the demand of reason? Any specific norm is relativized with respect to the general demand of rationality. Thus it is impossible to say specifically what reason requires.

iv. Problems of philosophical empiricism, materialism, rationalism, pantheism.

11. Neoplatonism (Plotinus, 204-269 AD)

a. God is “the One” — devoid of all plurality and diversity — from which all reality emanates of necessity, like light from a lamp.

b. Man, therefore, is essentially divine. At one time he pointed toward God, contemplating the eternal mind (*nous*) in mystical intuition. He fell by directing his gaze toward the body.

c. Salvation comes through turning the mind away from sensuous life to thought, and thence to God.

d. Three stages of self-redemption:

i. Purification: moderation of impulses to the point of complete freedom from all sensual desire.

ii. Theoretical contemplation: Purification is only preparation for intuitive contemplation of ideas.

iii. Ecstasy: Transcends even the most exalted thought. Here one loses oneself entirely, becomes one with God.

e. Comments:

i. Philosophical monism and rationalism. In seeking exhaustive explanatory principle. Plotinus finds a God who is “beyond” all. He must be beyond everything in order to explain everything; but since he is beyond everything, nothing can be said about him. Classic picture of non-Christian transcendence.

ii. Non-Christian immanence: to the extent that anything is real, it is divine. To the extent that anything is distinct from God, it is unreal.

iii. Cf., therefore, earlier critique of religious ethical systems which annihilate ethical distinctions, persons, situations [(II.A.2.).

12. Transition to Modern Period

a. Since Medieval ethical philosophy is dominated by Christianity (with, to be sure, considerable synthesis with non-Christian thought), we will discuss them somewhat in connection with our exposition of biblical ethics.

b. The Renaissance marks a return to more unambiguous non-Christian patterns of thought:

- i. Recovery of and admiration for Greek and Roman thought, apart from their use in the church's ideology.
- ii. The spirit of autonomy over against all revealed truth.
- iii. Liberation, therefore, from the restraints of the "Medieval synthesis" by which the relative rights of individuals, rulers, church, God had been understood with relative clarity. Two directions:

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a) Individualism: authority derived from the individual person (nominalism - the many prior to the one).

b) Absolutism: the unlimited power and authority of the sovereign (from realistic or nominalistic assumptions).

iv. Influence of modern science and mathematics:

a) Reduction of all to physical causation.

b) Power of reason (unaided) to understand all phenomena of interest to science and philosophy.

13. Continental Rationalism (R. Descartes, 1596-1650; B. Spinoza, 1632-1677, G. W. Leibniz, 1646-1716)

a. Descartes wrote little directly bearing on ethics. He did develop a theory of the emotions in which the passions and their effects on the soul are described as stemming from physical causation and mental states. The soul has an inner satisfaction when it is virtuous, so that external influences have no troubling influence [Cf. Stoics]. Descartes maintained free will.

b. Spinoza's metaphysic culminates in ethics; the title of his major philosophical work is *Ethics*.

i. The overall system: rationalist, determinist, pantheistic in a way ("God or nature"), monistic.

ii. Ethics: egoism modified by rational judgment.

a) I have a right to do anything I have power to do.

b) But reason shows what is truly useful to me—rational contemplation, universal accord among men, knowledge of God ("God or nature," that is).

c) Hence social contract, voluntary relinquishment of natural rights for the sake of social existence.

c. Leibniz

i. General: the world consists of many indivisible, mind-like entities ("monads") which develop according to their own internal laws without mutual influence (some inconsistency here).

ii. Organisms, as opposed to other bodies, are organized around a "queen monad" or soul, with which they work in harmony.

iii. God is the supreme monad of the universe. His relation to the other monads is somewhat unclear.

iv. This is the best of all possible worlds. The evils are necessary to maximize the good. God could not have made a better world.

v. God and the other monads are bound by moral principles which are innate to them. Reason enables us to become conscious of them and to follow them, overcoming the corruption of evil appetites. "Intuitionism."

vi. Each monad is autonomous, constrained by nothing outside itself (free will); but it is fully determined by its own nature, which is programmed to operate in “pre-established harmony” with other monads (determinism).

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d. Summary: note rationalism, autonomy. Sin tends to be rationalized as mere failure to understand, inner conflict between reason and appetite.

14. British Empiricism

a. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

i. Some rationalistic tendencies often separate him from the later “empiricists”. The label does not matter much.

ii. Knowledge begins in the senses, but seeks the causes of things, universal and necessary properties.

iii. All can be explained as bodies undergoing various sorts of motion.

iv. Cf. Spinoza: We have the right to do anything that we are able to do.

v. Man by nature, thus, exists in a “state of war” with all others. In such a state, “justice,” “law” have no meaning. But in that state, man cannot preserve himself.

vi. Thus man relinquishes his natural right, agrees to claim only equal liberties with others, for the sake of self-preservation.

vii. Once such a covenant is made, it must be enforced by threat of punishment; else the state of war remains. Hence the commonwealth.

viii. Sovereignty, once conferred by majority agreement, is absolute, though the right to self-preservation is inalienable.

ix. Moral philosophy discovers the laws of mankind’s self-preservation (natural laws, divine laws).

x. Comments:

a) Note deviations from Scripture: man’s fallen state Hobbes calls natural, man’s autonomous selfishness is called natural right, all obligations are bestowed by autonomous man.

b) Note anarchy (the natural state, which is always the basic state) and totalitarianism (the absolute sovereignty of the commonwealth).

b. John Locke, 1632-1704

i. Empiricism: the mind begins as a blank slate (*tabula rasa*), learns through experience. All knowledge is merely probable (irrationalism), but the principles of reason are more certain than any other alleged knowledge, such as revelation (rationalism).

ii. No free will, but the person is free from external constraint.

iii. No innate moral truths (as in Leibniz, e.g.). Moral knowledge is inculcated by parental and other teaching.

iv. This teaching, in turn, derives from the experience that virtuous conduct brings pleasure and vicious conduct brings pain.

v. Divine law, civil law, and “law of opinion” (informal social sanctions) enforce these rules with appropriate punishments.

vi. Man by nature can do as he sees fit, and is obligated not only to preserve himself, but others also, insofar as his own preservation is not endangered.

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In the state of nature, he may and ought to punish violations of this

principle by others.

vii. The state of nature, therefore, is not a state of war as in Hobbes. It can be peaceful, kindly. But it lacks an established, known law and generally acknowledged, impartial authority. Hence: the social contract.

viii. The power of society extends no farther than necessary for protection of life, liberty, property, and no farther than is determined by the consent of the governed.

ix. Thus absolute monarchy is wrong; and even the legislative system must be kept from capricious and arbitrary power, though it is always superior to the executive. And the people are superior to the legislature.

x. Comments:

a) Note autonomy of the people, ultimately of the individual. Revelation plays a subsidiary role.

b) The derivation of rights and responsibilities on the basis of Locke's empiricism is dubious. "Naturalistic fallacy."

c. Later Empiricists

i. George Berkeley (1685-1753) said little of note in the field of ethics.

ii. David Hume (1711-1776)

a) Developed empiricism to the point of skepticism on various matters. He denies "necessary connection" between cause and effect, but remains a determinist because of the "constant conjunction" observed between causes and effects.

b) One major contribution to ethics is his argument on "ought" and "is," for which see G.E. Moore, below.

c) He was skeptical on the notion of a "social contract" as the basis of government.

d) He bases all ethical judgments on feelings of approbation and disapprobation. But this destroys normativity.

iii. See Mill below in the discussion of nineteenth century utilitarianism.

15. Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) "Romanticism"

a. Deistic religion, demonstrable by reason, but based on feeling—a matter of the heart, not the head.

b. By nature, man is innocent and good (the "Noble Savage"). Ethics, like religion, is essentially the outworking of the good will, the good feelings that we have toward one another (existential perspective).

c. By nature, all are equal.

d. Evil comes through social institutions (such as property), corruption of our natural feelings through civilization. (Note reversal of the evaluations of Hobbes.)

e. Though we cannot eliminate social institutions, we ought to purify them by cultivating natural feeling.

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f. Civil states ought to be based on the will of all the people, not merely the bourgeoisie, but also laborers and peasants.

g. Freedom lies in obedience to self-imposed law. We must learn to conform our desires to the "general will" which alone is ultimately authoritative.

h. Comments:

- i. Note extreme egalitarianism, coupled with totalitarian tendencies. Much of this influences Marxism and other later thought.
- ii. Note denial of the doctrine of the Fall, the autonomous authority of the masses.
- iii. Note attempt to do justice to the positive role of feeling. In some ways this is good (cf. existential perspective); but an ethic based on autonomous feeling alone loses normativity. Cf. above under Hume.

16. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

- a. Recall phenomena / noumena distinction: the world of appearances (exhaustively knowable) vs. the world as it really is (utterly unknowable).
- b. Despite the skepticism implicit in the above distinction, Kant defends science and mathematics by basing them in categories which the mind imposes upon its experience. Similarly in ethics, Kant derives moral truth from the autonomous moral self.
- c. Kant is one of the purer examples of deontological ethics. There is also a large element of “existential” ethics in Kant, due to the role played by the moral self. At any rate, he has little sensitivity to the concerns raised by teleological ethics, little appreciation for the situational perspective.
- d. He argues that the only thing that is good unequivocally, i.e., good at all times and places, is a good will.
- e. A good will is a will which does its duty for duty’s sake—i.e., neither from personal inclination nor for its own benefit (here Kant’s deontologism comes to the fore.)
- f. Duty always involves obedience to a categorical imperative.
- i. The categorical imperative is distinguished from hypothetical (“if . . . then”) imperatives, e.g., “If you want to build a cabinet, you must have nails,” or even “If you want happiness, you must keep your promises.”
- ii. If morality were derived from merely hypothetical imperatives, in Kant’s view, it could not be absolutely and universally binding, for it would be subject to conditions that might or might not exist.
- iii. Therefore duty is not derivable from experience, any more than the basic truths of mathematics and science are so derivable. Like them, the truths of ethics are based on synthetic *a priori* judgments—judgments held prior to experience.
- g. An ethical principle is categorical if it is meaningful for someone to will its universal application.
- i. Example: you cannot will that everyone should make lying promises. If everybody did, no one would believe anybody, and thus the whole concept

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- of a promise would become meaningless. To make a promise while rendering meaningless the whole concept of promising is contradictory.
- ii. Nor can you will universal cruelty, for this would involve willing cruel treatment for yourself, desiring the undesirable, which is a contradiction.
- iii. Summary: Act so that you can want everybody to follow the principle of your action.
- iv. Another Summary: Act so as to treat each rational creature as an end in

itself, not merely as a means. (It is contradictory to want this for yourself while denying it to others.)

v. A Third Summary: Act so that your principles could be used to govern the whole universe of rational persons.

h. Autonomy of ethics: In ethics, the self acts as an autonomous legislator [cf. g.v.]. The moral law is essentially self-imposed.

i. Implications of ethics:

i. Since the ethical self is autonomous [h], and since obligation implies ability, we may assume that the moral self is free. This fact cannot be proved, for in our experience (phenomena) all events are caused. But the nature of morality leads us to suppose that freedom exists in the real (noumenal) world.

ii. God and immortality: Reason teaches that the good will deserves happiness. Since virtue and happiness are not always linked in this life, there must be a perfectly good, wise and powerful being who apportions fitting rewards and punishments in a later life. A future life is also needed so that the end of morality, the attainment of holiness, may be achieved. God and immortality, like freedom, are not known to exist, only supposed.

j. Comments:

i. Note sharpness of difference with Christianity

a) Autonomy of the ethical self—both freedom from causation and ultimate ethical authority.

b) God is not the ultimate authority of ethics, but the one who rewards those who obey their own autonomous will.

c) We do not even know that God exists, and Kant's system does not require the existence of God.

d) Kant's formulations and language suggest that the moral self ought to act self-consciously as if he himself were God—"legislating" principles not only for himself, but also for the whole universe of rational beings (implying omniscience).

e) In Christian ethics, we are not called to do our duty merely for the sake of duty. Self-interest, gratitude, love, etc., are also legitimate motives for ethics.

ii. The problems of Kant's overall dialectic (phenomena / noumena) invalidate his ethics as well. If the noumenal world is wholly unknown, then it cannot even be said to exist. If it does not exist, then it calls in question even our

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knowledge of phenomena (what are the phenomena really like?). If it does not exist, then there are no limits on reason at all, no means of restraining speculation.

iii. At best, Kant provides a law without a gospel [cf. II.A.3)]—a norm without power to make us obedient.

iv. Kant makes arbitrary assumptions all along the line without nearly enough argument to sustain them:

a) that only actions are right which are done for duty's sake,

b) that categorical duties can and must be derivable from the principle of universality alone

c) that morally right acts are always acts which are derived from universal principles, etc.

v. Unclarity of the categorical imperative.

a) In one sense, I can will, meaningfully, without contradiction, that everyone wear brown shoes. Does that mean that we have a duty to wear brown shoes? If so, may any number of trivial duties be derived from the categorical imperative?

b) I can also will, without obvious problem, that everyone refuse to wear brown shoes. Does the categorical imperative, then, lead to contradiction?

c) I can also justify obvious sins by careful phrasing: I can will that anyone with my name and social security number may steal (the “anyone” makes it a universal principle).

d) Is there some special kind of contradiction created by the above examples? It is not always clear what Kant regards as a contradiction.

vi. Kant intends his categorical imperatives to be strictly non-empirical and in particular not derived from the consequences of actions. But how can we tell whether keeping promises is a universal duty [above, g.i.] unless we know the consequences of not keeping promises? Is Kant, then, in a roundabout way, telling us after all to judge our actions by their consequences? Is it possible to have deontology without some teleology?

vii. Another way to put this point: We don’t really know what a promise is, apart from its applications. We don’t know the universal without the particulars. But we observe the applications, the particulars, in experience.

viii. Summary: The absoluteness of Kant’s norm is empty; it says anything we want it to say, and it says nothing. The immanence of the norm, the autonomy of the moral self, also lets us do whatever we want, provided that reason guides. Kant has failed to establish any principle which obligates us to transcend self-interest.

17. Idealism (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Green, Bradley, Bosanquet, Royce, Blanshard).

a. Rejects the Kantian noumenal (“thing-in-itself”). All of reality is interconnected in such a way as to be knowable by man.

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b. Morality is irreducibly personal. Only persons have obligations, obey or disobey.

c. In ethics, then, one is concerned primarily with developing that innate moral character. How one changes the world or relates to abstract principles are secondary considerations. When I paint a fence, what I’m really seeking is inward, satisfaction in completing a task.

d. Ethics, therefore, is essentially self-realization. (Cf. Aristotle). When we make a moral decision, we are seeking not so much to change the world as to change ourselves, to express ourselves in some way. As in Kant, the only unequivocal good is the good will.

e. Unlike Kant, though, idealists see the good will not as looking toward its duty in the abstract, but also as taking into account its inclinations and environment.

i. Would a truly good will ignore the consequences of its actions upon others

and upon the environment?

ii. Why must duty always be set over against inclination? Is it not better to enjoy doing good than to do it merely for duty's sake?

iii. Self-expression cannot be fulfilled unless external and internal barriers are removed.

f. Self-realization, then, involves relating oneself to the whole universe, to the "universal reason".

i. Individual and universal will are one. In willing the will of the universal reason, I am willing my own will, and thus am free.

ii. Freedom, then, involves absolute submission to the state and to the duties of my "station in life".

g. Wars are essentially conflicts of ideas. The stronger inevitably win out in the long run.

h. Comments:

i. A more balanced approach than many secular systems.

ii. Here, as in Kant, the self is an autonomous moral legislator.

iii. Since the moral self is ultimately one with the universal reason (God, the absolute), the moral self is deified in idealism.

iv. For idealism, we cannot know particular duties without relating them to the whole universal process. Thus we must be either omniscient or incapable of moral choice.

v. The doctrine of submission to authority [f.ii.] and the inevitable triumph of right ideology [g] suggests a kind of fatalism that is damaging to ethical motivation.

vi. The concept of war and political change [g] suggests that might makes right when motivated by superior ideology. One who is right can do anything he likes.

18. Karl Marx (1818-1883)

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a. The most basic forces in history, to Marx are not ideas, as Hegel thought, but economic relationships, specifically "relations of production" (relations between owners and workers).

b. The duality between owner and worker inevitably produces class struggle, since the interests of the two groups are incompatible.

i. Owners inevitably accumulate capital at the expense of the workers, who get poorer and poorer.

ii. The discrepancy provokes revolution of the lower class against the higher class, which in turn produces a new social order.

iii. Master-slave, Lord-serf, bourgeois-proletariat: past stages.

iv. The communist revolution seeks to bring about a dictatorship of the proletariat, and hence ownership of the means of production by the worker-state.

v. The ultimate goal is the classless society in which the state "withers away", no longer needed.

c. Ethical systems attempt to justify interests.

i. The upper class advocates and imposes standards that rationalize and promote its goals.

- ii. As the exploited class becomes self-conscious, it develops its own revolutionary morality. “Good” is what promotes the revolution; “evil” is what hinders it.
- iii. In the dictatorship of the proletariat, “good” is what promotes progress to the classless society; “evil” is what hinders it.
- d. As the interests of one’s class change, so morality changes. What is “good” today may become “evil” tomorrow.
- e. Christianity (and other religions) represent ideologies concocted to keep the workers in their place, to make them satisfied with their lot. Even the more “prophetic” moralists do more harm than good, since they postpone the revolution by kindling false hopes of reform.

f. Comments:

- i. Good insights into the process by which the poor are exploited in the fallen world. Traditional aristocracies are the best example, but to some extent western nations also stack the deck against poor and laboring people.
- ii. Confidence in the proletariat as revolutionary force, utopianism, often criticized by contemporary Marxists.
- iii. Ethical relativism in Marxism as among the Sophists [6., above]: “Justice is the interest of the stronger.”
 - a) This blunts the force of the Marxist critique of exploitation. If the “justice” demanded by the Marxist is simply a justice promoting his self-interest, why should his critique be listened to by anyone else.
 - b) The rejection of any objective meaning to “justice,” together with the impassioned use of the rhetoric of justice, shows the inseparability of relativism and absolutism, rationalism and irrationalism. To the Marxist, 31 the ethic autonomously developed by his class-interest is the only ethic, the absolute presupposition.
 - c) In the final analysis, no ethical norm. Man does what is right in his own eyes, and gives himself pseudo-absoluteness.
 - iv. Here as in idealism, might makes right. And unlike idealism, the progress of might in history is not accompanied by an objective process of thought; so the process is irrational.
 - v. The pseudo-absoluteness of class values leads to totalitarianism; the prominence of economics over thought leads to cultural impoverishment.
 - vi. The lack of private economic incentive also feeds the totalitarian impulse: if people don’t want to work, they must be forced to.
 - vii. We shall see that the biblical model of society is neither *laissez-faire* capitalism (with unrestricted accumulation of capital) nor totalitarian Communism. Exploitation of the poor is not only preached against in the Bible; there are institutional structures which, properly engaged, prevent such exploitation while maintaining a overall free society.

19. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

- a. Man’s most basic desire is not pleasure, but power—its possession and creative exercise. The ‘will to power’ is the basic drive to which all others are reducible.

b. Moral codes are subordinate to the will to power. They are developed out of the customs of social groups seeking to keep and increase power.

c. Christianity is essentially a “slave morality”—arising from the self-interest of the weak and oppressed, from the secret hatred and envy of those more favored (*ressentiment*).

i. It is therefore dishonest, because while professing love it is built upon hatred.

ii. It favors the weak and there impedes the production of truly superior beings. Nietzsche finds this contemptible.

d. Nietzsche favors a stance “beyond good and evil,” being honest and joyful about the will to power, recognizing that God is dead and that morality must be built upon against without him.

e. Comments: Nietzsche is similar to Marx in his view that moral ideas are built on the self-interest of social groups. His atheism and acceptance of nihilism have been influential upon the existentialists.

20. Utilitarianism (Jeremy Bentham, 1748-1832), John Stuart Mill, 1806-1873)

a. Utilitarianism is a frankly teleological system, founded (like ancient Epicureanism) on the premise that pleasure is the supreme good.

b. It differs from Epicureanism chiefly in that it states as the goal of ethics not only the pleasure of the individual, but the “greatest pleasure for the greatest number.” For Bentham, this broader goal is a consequence of individual self-interest. For Mill, it is based upon the social instinct in mankind.

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c. Bentham measures pleasures in mainly quantitative ways, as did the ancient Cyrenaicists. Mill distinguishes various qualities of pleasure, as did Epicurus.

d. In theory, utilitarianism is a simple, practical system. There is one principle—the greatest pleasure for the greatest number. A good act furthers that principle; an evil act impedes it. One may, then, simply “calculate” the goodness or badness of an act by calculating the pleasures and pains produced by it. The “hedonistic calculus.”

e. Act (Bentham) vs. rule (Brandt) utilitarianism (Mill is intermediate): should the principle of utility be applied to particular acts, or to rules?

f. Utilitarianism has had considerable influence upon legislation.

g. The democratic process encourages utilitarian thinking to some extent. It is tempting to think that quantities and qualities of pleasures can be measured by votes and polls.

h. Comments:

i. Both Bentham and Mill assumed as a matter of course that everyone by nature seeks pleasure and flees from pain. But is that true? People do sometimes sacrifice themselves for others. Cf. Nietzsche who argued that power was more central than pleasure.

ii. One way to overcome the above objection is to define pleasure as “whatever someone seeks,” whether it be ice cream or a martyr’s death. That introduces a circularity into the system. (Pleasure is what we seek. Anything we seek is pleasure.) More seriously, the circularity leaves unclear just what we are trying to calculate when we seek to calculate pleasure.

iii. Even if we do seek pleasure and avoid pain in some intelligible sense, does this imply that we ought to? (“Naturalistic fallacy” question.)

iv. Even if we seek pleasure for ourselves, is it obvious that we seek it for others? Is it obvious that we ought to seek it for others?

v. The principle of utility is, in the end, like Kant’s categorical imperative, an “empty,” contentless norm, which gives no ethical guidance, but which relativizes all concrete decisions. Thus it leaves us free to what is right in our own eyes—to be autonomous. In effect, utilitarianism tells us that we ought to seek whatever we seek.

vi. It seems that maximizing happiness is always right. But is it? What if the majority in a country would take great pleasure in the murdering off of a minority? Sidgwick, a later utilitarian, dealt with this problem by adding a new principle to the utilitarian scheme, a principle of “justice,” equal distribution of happiness.

a) But this principle has no basis in the overall utilitarian system.

b) It is certainly not intuitively obvious. Many people prefer freedom of opportunity to the forced equal distribution of benefits (capitalism vs. socialism).

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vii. The difficulty of calculating the pleasures and pains produced by an act is so enormous as to require virtual omniscience.

a) There are so many kinds of pleasure and pain.

b) Most pleasures are not easily measurable at all, because many are not simple body sensations.

c) To complete the calculation, one would have to trace the effects of an action into the indefinite future, throughout the universe.

d) Note then, as in Kant, Hegel, the ethicist acting as if he were God.

e) The discussion between act- and rule- schools reveals another problem: that the kind of behavior that brings the most pleasure as an individual act may not maximize pleasure when made into a general rule. (Cf. Kant’s insistence that moral principles be generalizable.)

viii. Summary: The principle of utility, therefore, provides no concrete ethical guidance at all. Its meaning is unclear, its justification weak, its implementation impossible. Empty transcendence, relativistic immanence.

21. Intuitionism (G. E. Moore, 1873-1958, H. Prichard, W. D. Ross)

a. Moore agrees with the utilitarians that the good is something beyond us, objective to us, not a quality of the will or mind as in Kant and the idealists. However, he agrees with Kant that the sublime, unique quality of the moral law cannot be derived from sense experience.

b. Goodness, according to Moore, is indefinable. It is not pleasure, because it always makes sense to ask whether a pleasure is in fact good. All other definitions of “good” similarly fail, including definitions in terms of God’s will. (“The open question argument”).

i. Reply: Definitions are of many different kinds and serve many purposes. If indeed a definition must reproduce exhaustively all the meaning and connotations of the term it defines, then of course “goodness” is

indefinable. But so is every other term on that basis. But definitions ordinarily claim to be no more than a guide to usage. Moore has not shown that goodness is indefinable in that sense.

ii. Reply 2: It seems that we can always ask whether pleasure, God's will, etc., are in fact good, because our age is in great confusion about the basis of morality. If everyone agreed that pleasure was the highest good, it would not make sense to ask if some pleasure were good. Same for the will of God.

iii. Reply 3: It is sometimes suggested that if we define the good as God's will, it is then meaningless to say that God's will is in fact good. (If I define "shortstop" as "whatever I am," then the assertion that I am a shortstop becomes true, but misleading and trivial.) Answer: such problems arise in the case of definitions which misuse language. It is not such a misuse to speak of God as the standard of goodness; rather this definition is required by revelation.

c. Not only is goodness indefinable, according to Moore, but it is impossible to derive such goodness from any "natural" state of affairs. Moore accepts

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Hume's argument that "is" does not imply "ought". "Naturalistic fallacy" is his name for the mistake involved.

i. Moore never clearly defined what he meant by "natural" in this context.

ii. Moore's only ground for the distinction between "natural" and "nonnatural" was intuition; but the distinction is supposed to be the ground for the appeal to intuition (see below).

iii. The "naturalistic fallacy" is a fallacy only if indeed goodness cannot be defined in terms of natural properties; but Moore has not shown adequately that these assumptions are true.

iv. Nevertheless, the argument about the naturalistic fallacy is important. A system of ethics does need to show why its observations yield moral conclusions. It is, e.g., proper to ask a utilitarian why we ought to seek pleasure, even granting that we do.

d. Since goodness is not defined by or derived from any "natural" state of affairs, it is to be regarded as a "nonnatural" property of various states of affairs, simple and unanalyzable (because not definable).

e. This nonnatural property is discovered by "intuition".

i. Moore is not clear as to just how this is done. He speaks of holding something before the mind, contemplating it, identifying it as good or bad.

ii. Is this merely another kind of experience, by which we perceive special "is" factors from which "oughts" may be derived?

iii. At any rate, it seems to remove goodness from the area of that which is publicly discussible. It is hard to imagine how anyone could argue that something is good. But if such arguments are impossible on Moore's view, he would seem to be doing injustice to common sense.

iv. At one point, he says that these "nonnatural properties" "depend on" natural properties, thus compromising the purity of his conception.

v. We have here another example of an empty norm—a norm so transcendent, so unique, that no one can establish what it says.

vi. Intuitionism prospered in Britain at a time when there was a strong moral consensus. It was plausible to say that simply “looking at” a moral question would magically generate agreement. The advent of sharply conflicting moralities (D. H. Lawrence, e.g.) weakened the consensus.

f. Once the good has been intuited, according to Moore, we can determine what is right simply by choosing the best means of attaining the good.

i. At this point, Moore’s position is close to utilitarianism. Intuition grasps the goal; the means are determined by calculation. Henry Sidgwick, a utilitarian, developed a similar approach.

ii. Other Intuitionists (H. Prichard, e.g.) felt that Moore was not consistent at this point. Does the end automatically justify the means, as Moore’s view suggests? Or must we intuit the goodness of means as well as that of ends? Prichard thought that the goodness of means must also be intuited.

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iii. But to postulate a multitude of intuitions merely compounds the problems noted under e., above.

22. Pragmatism, Naturalism (John Dewey; cf. R.B. Perry, William James, many others)

a. Ethics begins by surveying our likes and dislikes, but does not stop there.

Through critical study of the effects of various choices, we discover what we really want. (So far, a straightforward teleological system.)

b. It is not simply a matter of choosing a goal and then enduring any means to achieve it. Some goals are highly desirable, but the means are so difficult or unpleasant that the goal is not worth the effort. One must, therefore, evaluate the proposed means, then re-evaluate the proposed goal in the light of that analysis.

c. All desires must figure in the calculation—not only our desires for the distant future, but our desires for the short term. Even desires normally called “evil” (desire for unjust revenge, etc.) must be counted in the equation.

d. Though Dewey is very critical of idealism for its *a priori* thinking and its unclear language, his own ethic turns out to be, like idealism, an ethic of self-realization. “Good” is “the meaning that is experienced to belong to an activity when conflict and entanglement of various incompatible impulses and habits terminate in a unified orderly release in action.”

e. There are no fixed goals. Goals may be altered in the process of deliberation and choice. Even self-realization is not a fixed goal, but a criterion for determining what goal is really ours at a given moment. (That distinction is not entirely clear to me.)

f. Different people may have radically different goals. There is no reason, in Dewey’s system, to assume that deliberation might not lead some to cannibalism, genocide, suicide.

g. Comments:

i. Note rationalism (the emphasis on calculation), irrationalism (the lack of any fixed standards).

ii. In this system, good behavior amounts to successful behavior. Is this even a plausible account of what morality is? (Other questions: Is this a “typical American” ethic? Is it parallel to Dewey’s “operationalist” view of science?)

Are we obligated at all to be successful?)

iii. Dewey makes frequent appeal to “fair-mindedness,” “freedom of inquiry,” etc., as if these were fixed ethical norms. But they cannot be on his basis.

iv. The difficulty of moral “calculation” is even more severe here than in utilitarianism. There are even more factors to take into account. As in comment d., we have here a reason why the content of morality for Dewey is impossible to specify.

23. Emotivism (A. J. Ayer, C. L. Stevenson)

a. Logical positivism insisted that all statements of fact were “verifiable” by methods akin to those of natural science. The positivists felt that ethical statements (e.g. “It is wrong to steal.”) could not be so verified: therefore, they

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said, ethical statements cannot be statements of fact; they must be something else.

b. Different positivists adopted different analyses: M. Schlick said that ethical statements were “rules” for behavior, analogous to rules of procedure in science. R. Carnap said that ethical statements were imperatives, commands, disguised as indicative statements of fact.

c. The prevalent positivist view, however, was that ethical statements are characterized by two distinctive elements:

i. They are expressions of feeling. Since those feelings are often feelings about empirical facts, empirical facts do play a role in ethical discussion. But ethical statements are not statements of fact.

ii. They also recommend to others the feelings expressed.

d. The feelings expressed cannot be debated as such. Ethical debate centers around the facts concerning which the feelings are expressed, trying to bring to attention features of the facts which will change attitudes.

e. Comments:

i. There is an element of emotive expression in ethical language, and these men are right to point this out.

ii. On this basis, the ethical feelings themselves cannot be judged as right or wrong. They are responsible to no standard beyond themselves.

iii. Once an ethical debate is reduced to fundamental differences in feeling, no further debate is possible. In the final analysis, then, the emotivist claims the right to whatever, upon reflection, he feels like doing.

iv. On this basis, it is difficult to understand why anyone would ever wrestle with a moral question. How can you wrestle with a feeling? Once we know how we really feel about a matter, what further question is there? On the emotivist basis, then, people are simply confused when, even though knowing how they feel, they continue to ask what is right. This is an implausible account of the moral life.

v. Irrationalism, then, is manifest here in the relativism of the emotivist approach. Rationalism is evident in the dogmatic manner in which ethical statements are reduced to feeling-expressions and the latter rendered incorrigible.

vi. The defects in the positivist view of meaning have bearing here. Cf. Frame, “God and Biblical Language”.

24. Other Recent Analyses of Ethical Language

a. R. H. Hare: Ethical judgments (“It is wrong to steal.” “One ought to keep his promises.”) are prescriptions. That is, they are not descriptions, nor are they mere imperatives or expressions of feeling. Their force is to tell someone what to do, not necessarily to influence him to do it.

b. J. O. Urmson: Ethical judgments are a kind of grading. They do not describe qualities of things or merely express attitudes toward those qualities. Rather, they put things into various categories, based on prior descriptive analysis.

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c. S. Toulmin, K. Baier: Moral language states socially-based rules of conduct, implications of those rules and justifications for them.

d. H. N. Castaneda: Imperatives and their justification.

e. R. B. Braithwaite: Personal subscription to a particular kind of conduct.

f. P. H. Nowell-Smith: Ethical language includes many uses of language of different sorts which are interrelated in many different ways.

g. Comments:

i. This literature is useful in showing us the variety of ways in which ethical language is used. My own view is close to Nowell-Smith: We cannot simply reduce ethical language to any single form of non-ethical language.

a) Look at all that we do using ethical language: advise, exhort, implore, command, condemn, deplore, resolve, confess, profess, criticize.

b) At different times, different functions are prominent. Scholarly papers on ethics are more like descriptions; sermons (good ones) more like exhortations.

ii. Note that in this tradition, the traditional concerns of ethics are abandoned in favor of “meta-ethics”. These philosophers make no attempt to tell us what acts are right, or even how to find out what acts are right. They merely try to tell us what sort of language we are speaking when we discuss these issues.

iii. This last-named problem can be traced back to G. E. Moore, but in a more basic way it reveals the overall bankruptcy of non-Christian ethics. Non-Christian ethics has reached the point of admitting that it has no power to tell us what we ought to do.

iv. Balancing this irrationalism is the general agreement [see above under Moore, 21.b.] that goodness may not be defined in terms of God’s will. Thus, the general admission of ignorance is qualified by a dogmatic, rationalistic denial of divine authority.

v. These men all agree that at some point ethical discussion must cease—either with private feelings or social codes or something else. In a sense, this admission is perceptive. Ethical thought, like all human thought, is governed by religious presuppositions. And yet most all people are prompted by conscience to realize that their own feelings, or the will of society, cannot adequately serve as ethical presupposition. Feelings can be wrong, or bad. Thus, these modern theories are never fully persuasive, even to non-Christians themselves.

25. Existentialism (Jean-Paul Sartre; cf. M. Heidegger, K. Jaspers)

a. As an approach to ethics, existentialism is chiefly a kind of moral psychology—an analysis of the experienced phenomena of moral decision making.

b. The British analysts tend to reduce the difficult moral choices to the simple: a hard moral choice is like grading apples or following rules, etc. The existentialists do the opposite: They analyze even “simple” moral choices in terms of our experiences of deep anguish, despair, etc. (E.g., Sartre: Why do we hate to touch something? Because stickiness is emblematic of every obstacle to our freedom to control reality.)

c. Comparison with idealism, which is also a kind of “existential” ethic:

- i. Both are ethics of self-realization.
- ii. For Sartre, ethical choices are realizations of human freedom, not human “nature” as in idealism. Sartre denies that there is any human “nature” prior to our concrete life.
- iii. Idealism identifies thought and action; existentialism sharply distinguishes them.
- iv. In Idealism, the goal is to become one with the universe. In Existentialism, the goal is to distinguish oneself from it.

d. Existentialism is consistent atheism, according to Sartre.

i. Therefore, there is no human “nature”. Man has no essence, no definition. Essence and definition presuppose the work of a designer, making things for a purpose. Unlike the paper knife, or any other “object,” man has no designer, and therefore no design.

ii. Atheism also implies that no ethical principle may be accepted on the authority of someone else. Even if an angel speaks to me, I must decide whether to obey or not. And I must decide to interpret his words in one way rather than in another.

e. Man is unique in that he incorporates non-being within himself.

i. Whence comes the concept of non-being? It is not part of “being”! (Parmenides thought the very idea was contradictory—something which is nothing.) Sartre answers that non-being is a unique property of man. Man alone is able to represent to himself things which “are not” (History, the future, the imaginary). Most significantly, he distinguishes himself from what he “is not”, his environment.

ii. In moral choice, we seek to express this non-being, particularly the discontinuity between ourselves and the world.

a) The world exists *en soi*, “in itself.” It is something “solid,” definable.

b) Only man exists *pour soi*, “for himself”—self-conscious and conscious of his uniqueness.

f. Therefore, man is radically free.

i. We are never forced by our past to choose a certain way. Our occupations, heredity, race, sex, age, etc., never relieve us from the responsibility of choice. At every moment we choose to be what we are.

ii. There are limits, of course. But those limits themselves are chosen. If I choose to go to medical school and the admission requirements are too high, that is a limit. But it is a limit because it frustrates my desire which I have freely chosen. Even death is a limit insofar as I freely choose to value

life. Interesting insight here.

iii. We are also free in the sense of being responsible to nothing outside ourselves. There is no universally binding ethical code.

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g. Freedom means that I am ethically responsible.

i. I have no excuses for the things I do. All I do has been freely chosen.

ii. In every choice I choose a certain image of man. I alone am responsible for the effects of this choice upon others. This is dreadful freedom.

h. Yet, there are limits.

i. Inevitably, we seek union between the *pour soi* (ourselves) and the *en soi* (the world). For the world limits, opposes our ability to accomplish what we have chosen to do.

ii. We would like to become both *pour soi* and *en soi*—to have both pure being and freedom, both essence and existence; in other words, we would like to be God (in whom essence and existence are one). But the concept to God is self-contradictory.

iii. We want to control the world, but we cannot. Hence, nausea, anguish. The “other” is the enemy.

i. “Bad Faith”

i. To avoid this anguish, we deny our freedom. We pretend that we are mere objects, determined by our past or our station in life. We deceive ourselves into thinking that we are not responsible in the above sense.

ii. To live in this way is “inauthentic existence”.

j. Comments:

i. Sartre is perceptive about the freedom of moral choice. To be sure, on a Christian basis, sin is a result of divine foreordination and man’s fallen nature. But there is no excuse. Every actual sin results from a choice for which man is responsible before God.

ii. In other odd ways, Sartre’s approach mirrors the Christian system, possibly because the former is such a self-conscious negation of the latter. The Christian would agree, e.g., that man’s problem arises from his attempt to be God, to control all things, to evade responsibility.

iii. Sartre’s ethic is based on human autonomy more explicitly, perhaps, than any other ethic. The Christian must attack this assumption head-on.

iv. Sartre reduces ethics to metaphysics, though he would claim to be averse to metaphysics. Ethics is a matter, ultimately, of the relations between being and non-being. Contrary to his claim, this is devastating to moral responsibility.

v. Sartre’s concept of responsibility is precisely opposite to that of Christianity. Sartre’s autonomous man is responsible to no one. On a Christian view, this is a virtual definition of irresponsibility.

vi. Sartre claims on the one hand to free us from all ethical rules (irrationalism); yet, he stigmatizes a certain kind of behavior as inauthentic and claims for himself the authority to legislate in the field of morals (rationalism). He defines man as undefinable, etc.

26. Some More Recent Ethicists

a. Stephen Toulmin (1922-)

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- i. The “good reasons” approach: Follow principles that bring the least amount of avoidable suffering (negative utilitarianism)
- ii. Generally, however, better to use a case method than any universal rule.

b. John Rawls (1921-)

i. Anti-utilitarian, because following the principle of utility can lead to horrible results for some and, therefore, for yourself.

ii. Justice as “Fairness”

A) Each person entitled to the most extensive liberty compatible with the same liberty for others.

B) Inequalities are justified only to the extent that they are necessary to help the disadvantaged.

27. Summary

a. Non-Christian ethics fails to separate the three perspectives (normative, situational, existential).

i. Deontological ethics (Plato, Stoicism, Kant) tries to determine duty without reference to the consequences of actions. However, without reference to those consequences it is unclear how our duty in a given situation can ever be defined.

ii. Teleological ethics (Aristotle, Epicurean, Utilitarian) tries to avoid the notion of an absolute duty transcending experience. Yet, its own concept of the ethical goal (pleasure, the greatest happiness for the greatest number) cannot be shown to be obligatory through experience apart from transcendent presuppositions.

iii. Existential ethics (Sophism, Aristotle, Kant, Idealism, Pragmatism, Existentialism) tries to make ethics a purely inward matter. But it cannot avoid making reference to transcendent duties (cf. ii. above) and external situations.

b. No system of non-Christian ethics even does justice to its own favorite perspective.

i. Deontological ethics advocates an empty norm—a norm without clearly definable content. The norm gives us no clear guidance, and it prevents the lesser principles from giving us clear guidance, since they are relativized by the ultimate norm. Thus, there is really no norm at all.

ii. Teleological ethics tries to be empirical, concrete, to avoid reference to mysterious or transcendent principles. But the basis for obeying their principles is an ultimate mystery. And the calculation involved in making ethical choices requires superhuman insight.

iii. Existential ethics tries to do justice to the inner life, but winds up making man an insignificant cog in some rational (Hegel) or irrational (Sartre) cosmic process.

c. All non-Christian systems involve rationalism and irrationalism.

i. They claim that autonomous reason is able to determine moral obligation without divine aid (rationalism).

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ii. They claim that moral obligation has no higher basis than the workings of

chance, and that therefore there is no absolute truth available to man (irrationalism).

iii. The rationalism, then, can produce only a formal principle—the good in general, duty in general, the principle of utility, ethical intuition, etc.—which turns out to tell us nothing specific and to be without basis.

iv. The radical differences among these thinkers as to the standard of ethics, the goal (pleasure? power? self-realization? contentment?) and the motivation call in question the rationality of the project.

v. The irrationalism relativizes not only the alleged norms, but even its own assertions. Thus, if irrationalism is true, it cannot be true.

d. The non-Christian approach leads to the abandonment of ethics itself.

i. Without any norm or duty, available to human knowledge, ethical study is not possible.

ii. If there is no moral order in creation, choice is without meaning.

iii. If man is merely a product of chance, decision is without meaning.

iv. Thus, in non-Christian thought, ethics becomes speculation (deontology), technology (teleology) or psychology (existential).

v. Note, therefore:

a) Abandonment of ethics in favor of meta-ethics in modern language analysis philosophy.

b) Abandonment of any attempt to give ethical guidance in existentialism, while retaining the vocabulary of ethical responsibility.

c) Modern discussions of ethical issues (abortion, capital punishment, etc.) without any distinctively moral concern, social utility being the only principle.

e. Since non-Christian ethics is helpless to do justice to its own concerns, it is wholly unable to raise objections against Christianity.

i. Objections to the morality of the Bible.

ii. Objections to God's actions in Scripture—killing the Canaanites, etc.

iii. Objections to the imputation of Adam's sin, to election, to the substitutionary atonement, to reprobation and Hell.

iv. Objections based on the problem of evil:

A) On a non-Christian basis, good and evil cannot be meaningfully discussed; therefore, no problem can be spoken of.

B) Put differently: If a Christian has a problem with evil, the non-Christian has a problem with good.

C) How, on his basis, can good exist and be distinguished from evil?

D) Yet, as a man in God's image, he knows at some level of his thought and life that good exists and has a claim upon him.

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f. Yet, there are elements in non-Christian ethical systems which can be of use to Christians. The non-Christian has, though he opposes it, considerable knowledge of morality.

i. Specific precepts (Romans 1:32; 2:14f.).

ii. He attempts to do justice to the three perspectives, which is important even to Christian ethics.

iii. He explores the complexity of ethical life.

- a) The many elements of ethical language.
 - b) The difficulty of applying norms to situations.
 - c) The difficulty of ethical growth in the fallen world.
 - d) The problems of organizing society into a coherent order.
- iv. In recognizing the complexities of ethical decision, the non-Christian is often more perceptive than the Christian.

PASTORAL AND SOCIAL ETHICS

Lecture Outline, Part Two: Christian Ethics (Basic Principles)

by John M. Frame

I. Christian Ethics: The Normative Perspective (Christian Deontological Ethics)

A. God Himself as Norm:

1. "God is light," I John 1:5, 4:8ff.

a. A reflection on the nature of God at a very basic level. (Cf. "God is love," "God is Spirit".)

b. By nature, God is self-communicative. Light is something which radiates from a source to a receiver. Cf. the identification between God and the Word, John 1:1, between God and His name (Psalm 7:17, etc.).

c. But "light," particularly in this context, is a moral metaphor.

i. To walk in light, in John, is to walk obediently, righteously. Cf. 1:7, 2:9f.

ii. To walk in darkness is to sin: 2:11; cf. John 3:19f.

iii. Therefore, to say that God is light is to assert that God has a perfectly holy character, worthy of all praise and imitation. This is a pervasive teaching of Scripture. Simply to ascribe such perfection to God is to accord Him the status of a norm.

d. The specific function of light in the moral order is to reveal good and evil (John 1:5ff., 3:19ff., 8:12, 9:5, 11:9ff., 12:35f., 46, I John 1:7, 2:8ff.) and therefore to guide.

e. As the ultimate ethical guide, who shows us what is right and what is wrong, God is ultimate norm.

f. By His very nature, then, God establishes and displays what is normative.

2. Union of God Himself with His revelation (cf. course in *Scripture and God*):

a. Unity between God and His word, name, glory, angel, Son, Spirit.

b. Assertions made about these forms of revelation.

i. Divine attributes ascribed to them.

ii. Uniquely divine acts performed by them.

iii. Worship directed to them.

3. So authority intrinsic to God's Lordship.

4. Our responsibility: Essentially, imitation of God.

a. Man as vassal king, in God's image, with responsibilities and privileges analogous to God Himself.

b. Righteousness as imitation of God's character: Leviticus 11:44, Matthew 5:44-48, I Peter 1:15f. Implication: The law ultimately coincides with the character of God. To obey the law is to reflect the character of God. To disobey the law is to mar that image. The law is a picture of God's Own nature.

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c. Righteousness as imitation of God's acts: Exodus 20:11, Deuteronomy 5:15, Matthew 5:44-48, I John 4:9-11.

d. Righteousness as imitation of Christ:

i. Christ as light, John 1:4, 3:19, 8:12, 9:5, 12:35f., 46.

ii. Cf. Christ as name, glory, angel, Son, Spirit.

iii. Imitation of Christ's character, acts: Matt. 16:24, 19:21, John 13:14f., 34f., 17:18, 20:21, 1 Cor. 11:1, Philippians 2:5-11, I Peter 2:21, I John 3:16, Matthew 16:24)

iv. Imitation of others who imitate Christ, Luke 4:25ff, 1 Cor. 10:1ff, 11:1, Phil. 3:17, 2 Thess. 3:9, Heb. 6:12, 11-12, James 5:17f.

e. Imitation of God must be carefully distinguished from coveting God's prerogatives, seeking to erase the Creator-creature distinction. Imitation is not seeking identity, but seeking to reflect God's character within the admitted limitations of creaturehood. The difference between the two attitudes is radical—between sin in its essence and righteousness in its essence.

f. At the most basic level, this is the source of ethical obligation. We have ethical duties because God is intrinsically worthy of obedience and because all creatures are inevitably confronted with the revelation of His standards.

B. The Word of God as Norm (cf. course in *Scripture and God*. To say that God's Word is authoritative is to say that it is normative for ethics. On that score, no further argument is necessary.)

1. The Word that comes through nature and history:

a. Clearly reveals God's glory, His invisible power and divinity (Psalm 19, Romans 1:20).

b. Clearly reveals His wrath against sin (Romans 1:18).

c. Reveals man's obligations before God (norms!) (Romans 1:32).

d. Creation in general is not said to reveal the way of redemption from sin; however, the process of redemptive history described in Scripture does reveal God's way of salvation.

e. There is, therefore, a sense in which our "situation" is normative. Thus, the normative and situational perspectives overlap, as we have seen. We will consider this more fully in connection with the situational perspective.

2. The Word that comes in persons.

a. The Word is identified with God Himself and with Christ, while the Spirit is said to bring the revelation home to man's heart. Thus, God mediates His Own Word.

b. The Word is also found in man:

i. "The work of the law" written upon the heart of man (Romans 2:14f.): All men, by nature, have access to the basic requirements of God. These are essentially the same as those given in the written law, but now communicated through another medium (cf. Murray on Romans).

ii. In the regenerate, the Word is written on the heart. This is a much more profound relation between the Word and man than is spoken of in i. The writing of the Word on the heart implies not only knowledge of obligation,
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but actual obedience to that obligation, obedience from the heart (Jeremiah 31:33f.; cf. Deuteronomy 6:6, Proverbs 3:3, etc.) Cf. *Doctrine of the Word*, "The Word as God's Presence".

iii. The example of apostles, teachers: I Corinthians 4:16, 11:1, Philippians 3:17, I Thessalonians 1:6, 2:6, II Thessalonians 3:7-9, Hebrews 13:7, I Timothy 2:12.

c. This biblical teaching shows the overlap between normative and existential

perspectives. We shall explore these matters further when we consider the existential perspective.

3. The Word as spoken and written language.

a. To the patriarchs, prophets, apostles.

b. Through them to others.

c. The revelation committed to writing is God's Own Word also:

i. The covenant document is authored by the Lord and stands as the supreme norm of covenant life.

ii. The prophetic message claims divine authorship. The prophet is one who speaks God's Word.

iii. Same for the apostolic message.

iv. The written Old Testament endorsed by Jesus and the apostles as God's word.

v. The writings of the apostles claim the same authority.

4. Unity of the Word: The same God is speaking in all the media, and His message is consistent in all of them.

a. Nature-history and Scripture

i. Psalm 33:4-11: The written law is binding because it is in essential unity with the creative word which inevitably comes to pass.

ii. Psalm 19: Note the implicit correlation between the revelation in creation (1-6) and in the law (7ff.). (Cf. Romans 10:13-17 with 18: Natural and special revelation as one organism).

iii. Psalm 147:15-20.

b. Person-revelation and Scripture.

i. The "law" in the phrases "work of the law" and "law written on the heart" is the law of God, particularly that given through Moses. Thus, the "law on the heart," far from being an alternative to the written law, is the written law inscribed upon our being.

ii. The witness of revelatory persons in Scripture (Christ, the Spirit, the apostles and prophets) unanimously endorses the truth of Scripture.

c. Scripture also validates the others, affirming their unity with itself.

C. Ethics and the Attributes of Scripture

1. Power

a. Through the Spirit, Scripture (as all divine utterances) carries with it the omnipotence of God.

b. Received in faith, the word is the source of all spiritual blessing, all holiness.

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c. Received in unbelief, the word brings curse, hardening.

2. Authority (the attribute particularly linked to the normative function)

a. At each turning point in human history, the issue facing man is the question of how he will respond to the spoken or written Word of God.

i. Genesis 1:28ff: Man's original task defined by the Word.

ii. Genesis 2:17: The probation which is to determine his status as righteous or sinner, defined by the Word.

iii. The Fall: Substitution of the word of a talking animal (Satan) for that of God. Ultimately, substitution of one's own word for God's.

iv. Promises to the Patriarchs: given through God's Word. His people are to

believe and obey, even in the face of apparent evidence to the contrary.

v. The Mosaic Covenant: Integral to it is the book of the covenant.

a) Authorship is by the Lord.

b) Contains stipulations, laws which the vassal (Israel) must obey.

c) Also contains authoritative revelation

i) Of God's Name

ii) Of the History of Redemption

iii) Of blessings and curses resulting from obedience or disobedience

iv) Concerning Covenant Administration

vi. Jesus

a) His perfect obedience defined by the Law.

b) His life directed by biblical prophecy.

c) He attests the authority of the Old Testament.

d) He sets forth His Own word as the supreme test of discipleship (John 12:47ff., etc.).

e) He provides for additional revelation through His apostles.

vii. Apostles

a) Attest the authority of the Old Testament—cf. II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21.

b) Claim to speak and write the Words of God.

c) Claim that their words in oral and written form are the supreme test of discipleship.

viii. The Last Judgment: the criterion will be the word of Christ, John 12:48.

b. As ultimate criterion, Scripture, therefore, is to function as a basic commitment (or presupposition) for all our life. All choices must be consistent with the truth of Scripture.

i. Scripture has the ultimate say in defining what our duties are. Ethical behavior is keeping the word of the Lord, Deut. 6:4ff, Luke 8:15, John 17:6, 1 Tim. 6:20, 1 John 3:24, 5:2-3.

ii. The basis of duty, then, is not a rational abstraction (non-Christian deontological ethics) nor mere empirical examination of the causes and

47 effects of actions (non-Christian teleological ethics), nor the autonomous moral self (non-Christian existential ethics).

iii. The autonomy of the reason or the moral self is thus radically rejected, and with them, the whole tradition of secular ethics.

iv. Positively, the basis of duty is the fact that a personal God, Who deserves all obedience, has called us in love and authority to be His willing servants.

v. Why ought we to obey? The answer must be circular: Because God has commanded it.

a) All ethical systems have a similar circularity when it comes to justifying their ultimate principle.

b) Non-Christian systems, however, render the very concept of duty unintelligible.

3. Clarity

a. Clarity has meant in Reformed theology that the way of salvation is plain

enough that the unlearned as well as the learned may have a sufficient knowledge of it (Westminster Confession of Faith I:vii).

b. A larger point is ethical in nature: We may never use the unclarity of Scripture (granting that it is unclear in a sense) as an excuse for sin. God always grants us sufficient means to carry out the responsibilities before us.

c. Christian ethics is practical. The Christian is not faced with the mystery of a contentless norm (non-Christian deontology), nor with the impossibility of doing an indefinite amount of calculation (non-Christian teleology), nor with the impossible responsibility of creating norms out of his own head (non-Christian existentialism).

4. Necessity

a. We are not permitted to form our moral opinions on the basis of natural revelation alone. Our fallen mind inevitably twists, represses or otherwise resists the truth of natural revelation. Romans 1.

b. Without the revelation of Christ, no salvation and therefore no morality is possible, Romans 10:13-17.

c. The covenant document is the covenant. To break the former is to break the latter and *vice-versa*.

d. Without the written Word, we lose the ultimate standard of discipleship (Above, 2.a.).

e. No Scripture, no Lord, no salvation.

f. Thus, autonomous reason has no role in formulating ethical principles. At this point, the whole tradition of “secular ethics” is radically rejected.

g. Nor may the traditions of the church ever serve in the unique place given by God to His written Word.

5. Sufficiency (of Scripture for ethics)

a. Formulation. “The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequences may be deduced from
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Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.” (Westminster Confession of Faith I:vi).

b. Biblical bases.

i. The polemic against substituting the words of men for the Word of God: Deuteronomy 18; I Kings 13; Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:1-10; Galatians 1:8f.; II Thessalonians 2:2.

ii. The boldness of God’s messengers, standing against the many and powerful—Moses before Pharaoh, Elijah before Ahab, Isaiah before Ahaz, Jonah before Nineveh, Paul before Agrippa, Felix Festus—free men! Cf. Acts 4:19f., 5:29.

iii. The inscriptional curse of the covenant document: cursed be anyone who adds or subtracts, Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18.

iv. The sufficiency of Scripture for salvation and good works, II Timothy 3:16f.

v. Christ as the last word of God in the history of redemption (Hebrews

1:1ff.) attested by the apostles (Hebrews 2:4), showing us “all things pertaining to life and godliness” (II Peter 1:2-11) “until the eternal kingdom.”

c. Misunderstandings of sufficiency

i. Sufficiency is not limited to “matters of salvation” in some narrow sense. Rather it is comprehensive. Scripture is sufficient to reveal God’s will in all matters.

a) The Confession’s statement does mention salvation explicitly; however:

i) The Confession does not regard salvation as something narrowly “religious” as opposed to some other area of life. Salvation is of the whole person.

ii) Besides salvation, the Confession refers to “all things necessary for His own glory,” “faith,” and “life.”

iii) Nor is it possible to confine “faith” and “life” to some particular area of life. Faith is what we believe and life is what we do (cf. Shorter Catechism, Question 3).

b) Scripture places no limit on the sufficiency of Scripture in telling us the will of God. Rather, it speaks comprehensively of the sufficiency of Scripture to equip us “for every good work.”

c) This is not to say that Scripture contains all the world’s information or instructs us in all human skills. The point: in any area of life, our duty toward God will be an application of Scripture. For the concept of “application” see section iii.

ii. Scripture is not merely sufficient as a general guide by which we discover ethical norms beyond Scripture. Scripture contains all the norms (vs. some Dooyeweerdian representations).

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a) Scripture draws a sharp distinction between the sufficient word of God and the traditions of men. To promulgate a norm as God’s will which is not an application of Scripture is to deny that distinction.

b) This misunderstanding gains its plausibility from the fact that indeed we do need extra-Scriptural information to apply Scripture. But that fact does not imply that we have duties which are not applications of Scripture.

c) Scripture never speaks of any extra-biblical norms which are not also found in Scripture. Romans 3:1f., in fact, may imply that the Scriptures contain a much fuller transcript of God’s will than what is available to the Gentiles in natural revelation.

iii. Scripture is not sufficient merely as a supplement to natural law.

a) Four types of law in Thomas Aquinas’ conception:

i) Eternal law (in God’s mind)

ii) Natural law

(1) The counterpart of eternal law in the created world

(2) Enables us through natural reason to discern what is good

iii) Human law (civil statutes, etc.)

iv) Divine law (Scripture)

(1) Adds what we must know to attain our supernatural end

(2) presupposes the general structure of natural law

b) Comments:

i) Built on a scheme which radically distinguishes between natural and supernatural ends (cf. critique of this under situational perspective).

ii) Fails to reckon with the noetic effects of sin.

iii) Puts the Scriptural doctrines on the faulty foundation of apostate (Aristotelian) natural reason.

iv) Eliminates the sufficiency of Scripture in any meaningful sense.

Not Scripture, but Scripture plus Aristotle becomes our working ethical authority.

iv. Sufficiency does not rule out the use, even the necessity, of extra-biblical information in the determination of our duty. (Cf. the relation of presuppositions to evidences in apologetics.)

a) As we have seen, God is revealed in the whole creation, though that revelation is opposed by the natural man.

b) Creation is the necessary medium by which the law is applied to specific situations.

i) Note the “moral syllogism”: Sabbath breaking is wrong
Operating a factory on Sunday is Sabbath breaking
Operating a factory on Sunday is wrong. To evaluate that syllogism, you need to know, not only something about the Bible, but also extra-biblical information. Most moral reasoning is of this kind.

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ii) Scripture itself assumes that man will use his knowledge of creation in applying God’s law. When God told Adam to abstain from the forbidden fruit, Adam had the knowledge of creation to distinguish trees from other things and to single out a particular tree in view, etc. God does not spell out explicitly in his revelation all this information. To do so would be ludicrous.

iii) In Scripture, men are rebuked for failing to make such applications to current questions (Matthew 16:3, 22:29; Luke 24:25; John 5:39f, Romans 15:4; II Timothy 3:16f, II Peter 1:19-21 [in context]).

iv) If such applications of Scripture were not permitted, we could not use Scripture at all. We would then lack, in effect, not only the applications, but the norm itself. The meaning of Scripture is its application.

c) Thus, human reasoning also has a role in moral decision making. The sufficiency of Scripture must not be taken to deny that. We are not, of course, speaking of autonomous reason, but reason subject to God’s Word (“analogical”). Thus, the Confession speaks of “good and necessary consequence”.

d) And, thus, the Confession speaks of matters which are to be ordered by “the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed”.

v. Sufficiency does not rule out the use, even the necessity, of the

illumination of the Spirit for a saving understanding of Scripture, for its proper use and application. Note statement in confession to this effect.

vi. Summary:

a) Scripture contains all the ultimate norms for the Christian life in all its aspects.

b) Natural revelation also contains norms, but none that are not in Scripture also.

c) The norms of Scripture must be applied with the help of natural revelation and the illumination of the Spirit.

d) Such applications, when correct, set forth the meaning of Scripture, its demand in a situation, and therefore are not to be regarded as extra-Scriptural.

d. The “*adiaphora*” (literally, “no difference,” “indifferent”).

i. History

a) Among the Church Fathers, the term was applied to actions such as eating meat which were considered to be neither right nor wrong in themselves.

b) During the Reformation, Luther applied the term to certain Roman forms of worship which he felt were neither commanded nor forbidden by Scripture and thus could be practiced by the believer in good conscience. Later, further controversy developed as to whether

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Protestant could acquiesce in church rites imposed by Roman Catholic rulers.

c) In the late 1930’s, there was a split in the Presbyterian Church of America (later OPC) partly based on the issue of “Christian liberty”. Specifically, the question was whether total abstinence from alcoholic beverages was required by Scripture, or whether such use of alcohol was an *adiaphoron*.

ii. *Adiaphora* is an ambiguous and misleading concept.

a) Taken literally (as a Greek neuter plural), it refers to things which are in some sense “indifferent.” Thus often people refer to meat or wine or tables or chairs as “things indifferent”. Generally, I think this is a shorthand way of talking about the human use of the “things”.

However, referring to “things” as indifferent can lead us to forget the biblical teaching that everything in creation is good (Genesis 1:31; I Timothy 4:4). There is no biblical distinction between some things which are good and others which are bad or indifferent.

b) More commonly, the word refers specifically to human acts. However, we should bear in mind that according to Scripture all human acts are either pleasing or displeasing to God. I Corinthians 10:31; Romans 14:23; Colossians 3:17, (cf. 23) show that all human acts are under God’s evaluation as good or bad.

c) One sometimes hears, also, the above in modified form: “acts concerning which Scripture is silent”. But the above texts indicate that Scripture speaks concerning all our acts, and so is not silent about anything. Significantly, I Corinthians 10:31 and Romans 14:23 occur

in contexts dealing with matters which have traditionally been called *adiaphora*.

d) A more common and more defensible use of the term is formulated in this quote from the Lutheran theologian Robert Preus in Baker's *Dictionary of Christian Ethics* "acts or church rites which in themselves are neither morally right or wrong, but matters of Christian liberty." Note the modifying phrase "in themselves". The point is that these acts are right in some situations and wrong in others. Surely there are some actions in this class, but the use of *adiaphora* and the phrase "neither morally right or wrong" disguise the fact that every act in the class is right or wrong in God's sight.

e) Another possibility: *Adiaphora* are choices that are not between good and evil, but between two goods. This is an important concept, but I'm not convinced that the term *adiaphora* helps to expound it.

f) Finally: *Adiaphora* are acts that in a certain situation are neither commanded nor prohibited by Scripture. Again, this is an important notion, but the term conceals the important fact that such an act is, not morally neutral, but good in God's sight.

g) Conclusion: *Adiaphora* is used for too many different concepts, some of them quite unscriptural. Its use in communicating legitimate

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Scriptural concepts is vitiated by its connotation of moral neutrality. Such neutrality is everywhere rejected by Scripture.

iii. There is, however, an important point raised by the *adiaphora* discussion, and that is the liberty of the Christian from the religious and ethical ordinances of men, or, in other words, the sufficiency of Scripture for ethics. (The Christian, to be sure, is subject to the ordinances of men for the Lord's sake, I Peter 2:13. But these ordinances can never be his ultimate authority, and they must be defied when they conflict with divine revelation.) That this is the central point of the debate can be seen from the classical "*adiaphora*-texts":

a) Romans 14:1-15:13

i) Setting

(1) One party in the church has a religious scruple that the other does not have.

(a) v. 2: the "strong" eat all things, the weak only herbs.

(b) v. 5: one regards special days, the other does not.

(2) Each is persuaded of the rightness of his actions (6—"unto the Lord")

(3) Both groups are Christians (3, 15).

ii) Problems (important to distinguish):

(1) One group is "weak in faith".

(2) Each group has a wrong attitude toward the other (despising, judging; 3, 4, 10).

(3) The strong, by his behavior, is placing a "stumbling block" in his brother's way.

(a) Not only a cause of grief to him (19), but:

- destructive (15)
 - condemnatory (23)
 - tending to overthrow the work of God (20)
- (The work of God, of course, cannot be overthrown. The language, however, shows the supreme destructiveness of the stumbling block.)
- (b) Interpretation: the strong, by his behavior, influences the weak to sin.
- (c) The sin of the weak is against his own conscience (20-23) and thus against God.
- (d) The sin in violating his own conscience, doing what he believes is wrong even though it may be objectively right, the weak acts out of rebellion, and thus sins objectively (23)

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iii) Solutions

- (1) On weakness of faith: Paul sides with the “strong” (14:14, 20, 15:1). The weak, then, we assume, are to be won over to the position of the strong by loving admonishment from the Word.
- (2) On the disputatiousness: Don’t despise or judge one another. Treat one another as brothers, in Christian love. [Note: this is not inconsistent with (1)]
- (3) On the stumbling block: Do not induce a weak brother to sin against his conscience. If he cannot be instructed, do not use any pressure to get him to do something he believes is wrong.
- iv) The main thrust of Paul’s injunction: Do not play God. God, not man is the judge of right and wrong.
- (1) Both “strong” and “weak” have compromised that principle—the weak by “judging” the strong and the strong by “despising” the weak.
- (2) The strong have also, in effect, “played God,” setting their own influence over against what the weak consider to be the command of God.
- (3) Note Paul’s sustained emphasis throughout the passage on God as the supreme ethical judge: 3ff., 6-12, 17f.
- (4) The term *adiaphora*, with its connotation of moral neutrality, suggests the very opposite of what Paul is stressing at such length. Paul wants, above all, to tell us that all our actions must be done “unto the Lord” and with faith (23).
- (5) The notion, then, that the church may not teach people authoritatively concerning matters of food and drink is decisively rejected by this passage.

b) I Corinthians 8-10

i) Setting

- (1) Food offered to pagan idols was being sold in the market, possibly indistinguishable from other food and, thus, hard to avoid.

(2) Question: Do we endorse idolatry by eating such food? (Note, in context, Paul's strong condemnation of idolatry, 10:1-22, in particular connection with eating and drinking, 10:16ff. Note also the danger suggested concerning a possible sacramental union with a demon through participation in sacrifice, analogous to the union with God in the Lord's Supper, 10:16-21, cf. 11:27-34.)

(3) Again, one party has a scruple (They "lack knowledge," [1, 7, 10f.] and have a "weak conscience," [7, 9, 10-12]); the other does not.

(4) Both groups are Christians (11f.)

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ii) Problems (Same as those in Romans).

(1) Ignorance, weakness (8:1, 7, 9-12)

(2) Contentions (a general problem at Corinth, 1:11. Note the urging to love in 8:1-3).

(3) Stumbling block: 8:7, 9ff. The weak sees the strong eating and is enticed into eating himself—out of a rebellious spirit. The result is that the weak is guilty of idolatry.

iii) Solutions

(1) The strong is right, because an idol, unlike God, has no power to curse those who eat his food. An idol is nothing (4ff.). Our God is the only Lord (cf. 8:8, 10:26).

(a) Note well: The emphasis is that we must not ask what the demon thinks about our eating, but what God thinks of it.

(b) Thus again, the stress is on the exclusive authority of God over our behavior. The point is that these matters of "indifference" or "neutrality".

(c) If one eats to the glory of God, the act is good (10:31); if you do it out of rebellion against God, then you are in league with devils—not because of the food, but because of your sinful behavior.

(d) Weakness of faith is failure to understand this principle. Cf. the young Christian who burns his idols, throws away his rock music, vs. the older Christian who collects idols and rock records for their artistic value.

(2) Contentions: Be loving (8:1-3), edifying (10:23f.). Do not exalt your own "knowledge". ("I am a Westminster graduate; I know the Greek. You are a benighted fundamentalist.")

(3) Stumbling block: Seek to teach the weak, but, if that is not possible, and if you might cause him to violate his conscience, abstain, 8:7, 9ff. God's concerns, not mine, must govern my behavior.

iv) Note again, the inadequacy of "*adiaphora*" to convey the moral intensity of the situation. There is nothing morally neutral about becoming an idolater through violation of conscience.

I Corinthians 9 is especially significant in showing the intensely

moral considerations which govern Paul himself in decisions on how to use the good things of creation.

c) I Timothy 4:1-5: Some advocate abstinence from marriage and meats. The operative point is that God has created all things good, and thus, man has no right to despise them.

d) Colossians 2:16f.: Some try to “judge” others about feasts, etc. The relevant point in context is the triumph of Christ over principalities and powers. We hold fast to him, not to men or angels. Again, the opposite of ethical indifference is presented.

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D. Parts and Aspects of Scripture as Norms

Scripture is a diversity in unity. In seeking to use Scripture as our ethical norm, we cannot avoid the question of how the various parts and aspects are related to one another. Ethics presupposes hermeneutics (as well as *vice-versa!*).

1. Different Forms of Language

a. Scripture contains many kinds of language: imperatives, indicatives, questions, promises, prose, poetry, song, law, history, epistle, proverbs, parables, drama, symbolism, emotive expression, etc.

b. When doing theology, we are tempted to think of Scripture as a collection of indicatives; when doing ethics, we are inclined to think of Scripture as a collection of commands. There is truth in both of these approaches [e., below], but both can mislead.

c. Since all Scripture is profitable for godliness (II Timothy 3:16f.), we dare not exclude any passage or any type of language in formulating a Christian ethic. The ethical implications of the Psalms, of Ecclesiastes, of the parables, etc., must all be done justice.

d. It may not always be possible to do justice to such diverse media merely by translating them into scholars' prose. At times, ethical admonition may have to reflect the variety of Scripture itself—using poetry, symbol, parable, etc.

e. Each type of language is a perspective on the whole, as well as an element within Scripture. In a sense, all Scripture is indicative because all Scripture contributes to our belief system. All Scripture is imperative because all Scripture contributes to our knowledge of our duty before God. Yet it is dangerous to reduce our image of Scripture to one such perspective, denying the existence or importance of others.

f. The structure of the suzerainty treaty—a unity made up of different kinds of language (name, history, law, vow, administration) illustrates how a document with many functions can exercise a unified authority.

2. Gospel, Law, and Redemptive History (or: the relation of biblical and systematic theology in the development of a Christian ethic). Compare discussion of “biblico-theological extremism” under the definition of “moralism” in the beginning of this outline.

a. In many ways, it can be shown (cf. courses in hermeneutics, homiletics, biblical theology) that Christ is the “center” of Scripture, and, more specifically, that the events of his death, resurrection, ascension, and sending forth the Spirit at Pentecost are of central importance in Scripture. These are the events to which the Old Testament looks forward and upon which the New

Testament reflects.

b. Does this imply that Scripture is most basically to be characterized as a redemptive history?

i. Certainly, Scripture is a history in that it records and interprets the historical events mentioned earlier, and in their historical context.

ii. Scripture, however, is different from modern histories.

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a) It includes, for instance, a law code, a song book, a collection of proverbs, a set of letters—and not merely as historical source-material!

b) All of these, and the historical material too, are intended not merely to give us historical information, but to govern our lives here and now (Romans 15:4; II Timothy 3:16f., etc.).

c) As often pointed out, the Gospels are not biographies of Jesus. They are Gospels. Their purpose is not merely to inform, but to elicit faith.

Most histories do not have this purpose.

iii. It would, of course, be possible to define “history” so broadly as to include all these functions. One could speak of the Psalms and Proverbs as in some sense “interpretation” of historical events. But such definitions are so far removed from normal language as to be misleading. “Interpretation” in the usual sense is not the chief purpose of Psalms and Proverbs.

iv. I am therefore willing to say that Scripture is a redemptive history, but I am reluctant to say that this is the only way or the most important way of characterizing Scripture.

v. At the very least, we would have to modify the phrase “redemptive history” in order to say that Scripture, unlike any other history, is normative redemptive history—history intended not only to inform, but to rule the reader (II Timothy 3:16f.).

vi. But to say that Scripture is normative history is to say that Scripture is not only history, but also law, and that “history” and “law” are at least equally important characterizations of Scripture.

vii. Such correlation between history and law is to be expected if, as Kline argues, Scripture is a “suzerainty treaty”.

viii. Scripture is also Gospel—its intention is to bring the good news of Christ to elicit faith in Him.

ix. I would argue that there are still other ways to characterize Scripture: It is also promise, wisdom, comfort, admonition. Cf. the variety of the treaty form.

x. Does this approach compromise the emphasis of Scripture upon Christ and upon His death, resurrection, etc.?

a) Christ is not only central to history, He is central also as the eternal lawgiver (Word), as the wisdom of God, as prophet, priest, and king. It therefore could be argued that a more flexible approach to Scripture does more justice to the centrality of Christ than does an approach which gives primacy to history.

b) The death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ and the Pentecostal outpouring are important not merely as historical happenings (though over against the skepticism of modern thought, it is vitally important to

affirm them as historical happenings). They are also vitally important in their present impact upon us, not least in their normative function. Romans 12:1ff.; Ephesians 4:1ff.

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c. Ought ethics and theology to be “controlled” by redemptive history?

i. They ought to be controlled by everything Scripture says. This includes not only its statements of historical fact and its interpretations of the meanings of history, but also its commands, poetry, its systems of truth, etc.

ii. Since theology is to be controlled by everything in Scripture, it is to be controlled by redemptive history, but not by that alone. Theology (ethics) must be aware of the process of redemptive history, must take it into account, must say or do nothing that compromises the teachings of Scripture about this history.

iii. Theology and ethics must be equally concerned to do justice to the normative teaching of Scripture, its power to change the heart, etc.

d. Relations between ethics and redemptive history

i. Redemptive history is the setting in which the law is given. We must understand redemptive history in order to understand and apply the law.

ii. The grace of God given in redemptive history gives to us the righteousness of Christ by imputation and the power to keep the law by sanctification.

iii. Reflection upon redemptive history motivates us to obey. We obey, not simply because we are commanded to, but out of gratefulness for what God has done and an in-wrought desire to obey. Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:15; Colossians 3:1ff.

iv. Our fundamental obligation, to imitate the righteousness of God, is not created by redemptive history. It dates from creation and is binding upon all people, whether redeemed or not.

v. Ethics, then, involves description of the redemptive-historical process, but not only that. It also involves the imperative of the law, the promise and comfort of the gospel, the powerful poetry and wisdom and parable which drives the message into the heart.

vi. Since ethics is inevitably application, it must not only look back upon redemptive history (and ahead to the *parousia*), but must focus upon the present, exhorting us to our present duties in the name of Christ.

3. Law and Gospel

a. The Lutheran Distinction (*Formula of Concord*, Article V.)

i. Law: “properly a doctrine divinely revealed, which teaches what is just and acceptable to God, and which also denounces whatever is sinful and opposite to the divine will.”

ii. Gospel: “the doctrine which teaches what a man ought to believe who has not satisfied the law of God, and therefore is condemned by the same. . . .”

b. The *Formula* teaches that even though the Gospel preached by Christ and the disciples involves a call to repentance (Mark 1:1ff, 1:15, Luke 24:46-47, Acts 20:21), the Gospel when contrasted in general with law makes no such demand. It comforts against the terrors of the law by bidding us look to Christ alone (Article V:vi)

c. In Lutheranism, the distinction between law and gospel is the key to Scripture. They consider many others, including the Reformed, to be confused as to the distinction.

d. The Reformed, while not denying the legitimacy of the distinction, tend to speak of “law” and “gospel” in broader, and, to my mind, more Scriptural terms.

i. The Lutheran sees law almost exclusively as threat and terror, while the Reformed put more emphasis upon law as the delight of the redeemed heart (Romans 7:22; Psalm 1, 119:97; etc.), the law as a gift of grace (Psalm 119:29), law as “way of life,” (Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 5:33, 8:3, 11:13-15, 28:1-14, 30:11-20, 32:47; Psalm 119:29; etc.).

ii. The Lutheran position tends to abstract the Gospel from the demand of repentance, feeling that such a demand is not properly good news. But, in Scripture, the demand is good news because it arises out of the fact that God has acted, and man may now respond.

e. The three uses of the law

i. Enumeration:

a) “External discipline”—to restrain sin in society (*Formula of Concord*, Article VI)

b) Law as a means to drive men to Christ by exposing their sin.

c) Law as a rule by which the regenerate may shape their lives.

ii. The Lutherans accept all three uses of the law (as over against some among them who denied that the law should be preached to the regenerate). They base this use of the law upon the incompleteness of sanctification in the regenerate, and therefore, the believers continuing need of threat, “sharp urgency”.

iii. Works of the Spirit, however, are such as can be produced by no threat or constraint whatever. (“ . . . as if they had never received any precept, had never heard any threats, and expected no remuneration.”) As such, believers “live in the Law”; i.e., they conform to the law, but not by threat or constraint.

iv. The Reformed stress that the preaching of the law need not be mere threat or constraint, but is a gift of grace.

v. The distinction between works done under constraint of law and works done in the Spirit is not as simple as pictured in the *Formula*.

a) Agreed: Works done merely out of constraint and not out of love and gratefulness to God are not good works at all.

b) However, living in the Spirit is living in response to a command (Galatians 5:16, etc.). It is preposterous to suppose that obeying this command puts us in the sphere of the flesh.

c) It should not be supposed that sanctification is achieved without struggle, without constraint.

4. Law and Grace (see Murray, 181ff.)

a. What law can do:

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i. commands and demands

- ii. pronounces approval and blessing
- iii. pronounces judgment upon infractions
- iv. exposes, convicts of sin
- v. excites, incites to worse transgression

b. What law cannot do:

- i. anything to justify the sinner
- ii. anything to relieve the bondage of sin

c. Being “under law”:

- i. being under the dominion of sin (Romans 6:14)
- ii. being under the ritual law of the Mosaic economy
- iii. obligated to obey God in Christ.

d. The Christian under the law of God: Matthew 5:17-20; I Corinthians 9:20f.; Romans 6:14, 7:1-6; I Corinthians 6, 8.

5. Old and New Covenants

a. In both covenants, there is demand for obedience and the promise of salvation by grace alone through faith (Murray, 194-201).

b. Both covenant documents are authoritative for men today: II Timothy 3:16f.; Matthew 5:17-20.

c. What change is brought about by the establishing of the New Covenant?

i. Now, we live looking back on the accomplishment of redemption, not looking forward to it as under the Old Covenant.

a) Thus, the believer has a much greater power to do good works because of the great fullness of the Spirit poured out on Pentecost.

b) Thus, the believer has a firmer assurance that his sins are forgiven.

c) Thus, he has a stronger motive to holiness:

i) Gratefulness for the love shown to him in Christ.

ii) A firmer assurance that sin can be overcome by the power of God.

iii) The example of Jesus’ love.

d) Hence, appeal to the work of Christ and its results (presence of the Spirit, unity of the body, etc.) become the chief motivations of New Testament ethics. It is these facts, more than the mere fact that holiness is God’s will, which motivates the exhortations of the New Testament. (Note “therefore” in Romans 12, etc.)

e) The NT does sometimes appeal to the law, however, to motivate obedience (Matt. 5:17-20, 7:12, 12:5, 22:36-40, 23:23, Luke 10:26, John 8:17, Rom. 8:4, 13:8-10, 1 Cor. 9:8-9, 14:34, Gal. 4:21-22, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, Jas. 2:8.)

ii. What change is there in the believer’s obligation as a result of the covenantal change? What stays the same?

a) The fundamental requirement of love is the same (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37ff.; parallels; John 13:34f., many

60 Johannine parallels) with a new clarity, motivation and example (“as I have loved you”).

b) Our obligation to keep the law in general remains intact, Matthew 5:17-20.

c) While the whole law remains binding, its application is different in

many respects.

i) A change of situation always brings about a change in application. The application of the Torah to city life is different from its application to a largely agricultural society.

ii) The change from Old Covenant to New brings about some rather broad changes in the situation in which we apply the law.

(1) In general, the Old Covenant is related to the New as shadow to substance, as type to antitype. Since the reality had not yet come, God's people in the Old Covenant period knew of Christ only through symbolic prophecies, types, ordinances. Since Christ has come, and with him, the New Covenant revelation, we are not restricted to such shadows for our knowledge of Christ. Positively, Christ, Himself, is revealed as the sufficient mediator and sacrifice.

(2) Unlike the Old, the New Covenant community is not identified with a particular national and political unit. The New Covenant order, therefore, does not demand loyalty to one earthly kingdom among others. Positively, Christ is the King in a new international commonwealth, a new people of God.

(3) The New Covenant puts into effect a written canon that will not be added to until the *Parousia*. The former special office of prophecy is fulfilled in Christ as the mediator of the New Covenant revelation.

(4) Thus, the New Covenant puts into effect crucial changes in the priestly, kingly, and prophetic functions.

iii) Since the situation changes in these ways, the status of the law changes as well.

(1) Christ as priest fulfills the law of expiation.

(2) Christ as king fulfills the civil law.

(3) Christ as prophet fulfills the moral law.

6. Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil Law

a. The traditional discussion

i. The Westminster Confession (XIX:i-v) distinguishes three kinds of law:

a) Moral, given at creation, summarized in the Decalogue, perpetually binding and useful under the gospel (i, ii, v, vi)

b) Ceremonial, prefiguring Christ and giving moral instruction, all of which are abrogated under the New Testament (iii).

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c) Judicial (sometimes called civil), given to govern Israel as a political entity. These expired with that state, "not obliging any other now, further than the general equity may require."

ii. Controversy has existed:

a) Concerning the three-fold distinction itself.

b) Concerning the status of the civil law.

b. Evaluation of the three-fold distinction.

i. The distinction is not found explicitly in Scripture. Scripture speaks simply of "the law," both positively and negatively. It is "the law" which

Jesus did not come to destroy (Matthew 5:17-20). It is “the law” to which men are in bondage because of sin. It is “the law” from which we are set free in Christ. The Old Testament, too, does not list its statutes in such neat groups. “Moral,” “ceremonial,” and “civil” statutes are placed alongside each other and mixed together with no apparent concern about possible category-confusion.

ii. It is important, therefore, to say that the most basic changes wrought by the New Covenant in this area affect, not one part of the law, but the law as a whole.

iii. It is not always easy to distinguish these three categories.

a) They don’t come neatly labeled in the OT. Typically, they are mixed together.

b) Laws traditionally called “ceremonial” do not pertain only to ceremonies, but to many other things, like diet, clothing, economics (the Sabbatical years and Jubilee), etc.

c) The Confession’s discussion makes it look as though the way to find if a law is currently binding is to determine first which of the three categories it belongs to. However, it more often happens that we determine which laws are binding first, and then decide which bin to put them in.

iv. Nevertheless, the three-fold distinction does reflect a genuine distinction within the divine government—the prophetic, priestly, and kingly functions.

a) Moral law corresponds closely to the prophetic office, which sets forth God’s demand for righteousness.

b) Ceremonial law (called law of expiation in an earlier discussion) corresponds to the priestly office, which concerns particularly man’s need of expiation from sin.

c) Civil law corresponds to the kingly office, which governs the covenant commonwealth.

c. Evaluation of the discussion concerning continuation / abrogation.

i. To summarize our earlier discussion: It is best to say that the law as a whole is subject to changes in application because of the advent of the New Covenant.

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ii. Ideally, then, it is best not to raise the question in terms of the general categories moral, ceremonial, and civil. Rather, having seen something of the overall change in our relation to the law, we ought then to study each particular statute to see how it is affected by the overall change.

iii. This task, however, can be facilitated if we learn to make at least rough groupings among types of laws, determining those groupings primarily by the functions of the laws in the history of redemption. The distinction between moral, ceremonial, and civil, then, can be an aid to us.

iv. The ceremonial law.

a) Sacrifices and cleansing regulations are no longer literally binding because they are but shadows of the work of Christ (Colossians 2:13-17; Hebrews 9:8-10; 10:1-18).

- b) Dietary laws are not literally binding because they are a form of cleansing law, prefiguring the purity of Christ. Enforced under the New Covenant, they would encourage the misconception that the Kingdom of God is food and drink, Mark 7:14-23, esp. verse 19; I Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14; Acts 10:9-16, 11:2-10.
- c) The calendar of feasts is treated similarly, Colossians 2:16f.
- d) The fundamental requirement of these laws is still binding, that we approach the holy hill of God with clean hands and a pure heart, i.e., with the righteousness of Christ. We come to God bearing sacrifice—the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ.
- e) The ceremonial laws continue to instruct us concerning that righteousness.
- f) Do some of the “ceremonial” laws bear upon human health and safety? More work is needed on this subject.
- v. The moral law.
- a) In general, the authority of the “moral” statutes is reaffirmed in the New Testament and most all of the Old Testament ethical principles are specifically reinforced.
- i) Statements about the authority of the law (Matthew 5:17ff.) or the moral teaching of the Old Testament (II Timothy 3:16f., etc.).
- ii) Authoritative use of the Old Testament in moral discussion: Matthew 5-7; James 2:8; Mark 7:10; Romans 13:8-10; Ephesians 6:2f., etc.
- iii) Reiteration of Old Covenant moral principles, Ephesians 4-6, etc.
- b) Changes
- i) The law is no longer a curse and threat because of Christ.
- ii) Since our sins are forgiven and the Spirit dwells within, the law is now in a greater sense than under the Old Covenant, a delight.
- iii) We have a stronger motivation to holiness.
- iv) The New Covenant revelation completes the canon. The moral law has been revealed once-for-all, and our business is application of that, not waiting expectantly for further revelation.
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- vi. The civil law (Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*).
- a) Obvious Changes
- i) The New Covenant no longer identifies the Kingdom of God with an earthly political unit. We belong to a heavenly city, under Christ, the King. Thus, there is no requirement of loyalty to national Israel. The Kingdom of God is not to be defended by the sword.
- ii) Some of the civil laws clearly are addressed to a particular historical situation, e.g., the division of Canaan into portions for the various families of Israel, the consultation of Urim and Thummim, etc.
- b) Does the kingship of Christ, however, eliminate the need for a distinctively Christian political order?

- i) In the Old Testament, the ultimate kingship of God was not compromised by the existence of a temporal human kingship.
- ii) The New Testament teaches that in the new dispensation, God appoints rulers for His righteous purposes (Romans 13:1-7).
- iii) Since all things are to be done to God's glory, we should expect God to provide us with at least general norms for righteous rule.
- c) The Old Testament theocracy may be seen as a sort of "incarnation" (Don't press the analogy suggested by that word!): the kingdom of God existing in the form of human social institutions.
 - i) The theocratic statutes presuppose that paradoxical situation, and thus may not be naively applied to any other situation.
 - ii) With the coming of the New Covenant, political institutions on earth lose their "divine nature".
 - iii) Nevertheless, as a form of human government promoting social order, the statutes must be seen as the wisest ever given (Deuteronomy 4:7f.)
 - iv) In the Old Testament period, even pagan rulers were judged for their failure to rule righteously, righteousness being defined by the law of God. Thus, the Old Covenant norms for politics were not seen as applying exclusively to Israel (cf. Bahnsen).
 - v) It is inevitable, then, that we shall seek to imitate the Old Covenant theocracy in developing a Christian politics, somewhat as we seek to imitate the righteousness of the incarnate Christ.
 - vi) Imitation of Old Testament Israel, like imitation of Christ, is fraught with peril. We will often be tempted to claim for ourselves what was unique to the theocracy. On the other hand, we may dismiss as unique to the theocracy something that God wants us to observe. The job is difficult.

d) Problem Areas.

i) Sabbatical years and the Jubilee

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- (1) Analogous to yearly feasts or to weekly Sabbath?
- (2) Are they moral, ceremonial, or civil? (Perhaps, the distinction breaks down here.)
- (3) If civil, are they distinctive to Israel or a divine model for all civil order?
- (4) If limited to Israel, how may we in the present situation emulate the equity provided by these laws?

ii) Tithe structure.

iii) Penalty structure (same problems).

e) Summary: I'm straddling the fence on this issue. I hope I can resolve it some in my own mind because it is crucial in determining our social and political responsibility. In general, however, I would say that the burden of proof is on those who would deny the relevance of some civil statute to our time.

7. The Love Commandment and Other Commandments

Note: more will be said about the nature of love under the existential perspective.

Our present purpose is to sketch the relation between the love-command and the other commands. By “love commandment,” we mean the commandment to love God and, thus implicitly and on that basis, the command to love one another.

a. Prominence of the Love Commandment.

i. Love as the covenant allegiance owed by a vassal to his suzerain.

ii. Prominence of love (= exclusive covenant loyalty) in the Decalogue. (“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”)

iii. Prominence of love in the *shema*, the fundamental confession of faith of God’s Old Covenant people (Deuteronomy 6:4ff.)

iv. Prominence of love in Jesus’ teaching (particularly love of enemies, e.g., Matthew 6:43ff.).

v. Love as the “new commandment” identifying the New Covenant people of God, John 13:34f., 15:12, 17; I John 2:7ff., 3:11ff., 4:7ff.

vi. Emphases on love in New Covenant ethics: I Thessalonians 4:9; I Peter 1:22; Hebrews 13:1.

vii. Love as the highest Christian virtue: I Corinthians 13; I Peter 4:8.

viii. Love as fulfillment of the law: Matthew 22:37-40; parallels; Galatians 5:14, 6:2; Matthew 7:12; Romans 13:8ff.

b. Love is a commandment, part of the law.

i. This fact immediately rules out any opposition or antithesis between love and commandments in general.

ii. Any arguments directed against the keeping of commandments in general bear with equal weight against obedience to the love commandment.

c. The love commandment requires obedience to the whole law of God.

i. In the covenant structure, the commandment to love the Lord (exclusive covenant loyalty) is a prologue to the detailed prescriptions of the law.

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Love is demonstrated by obedience to the prescriptions. Note connection in Deuteronomy 6:4ff.

ii. “Fulfillment” of the law implies that loving behavior will carry out the law’s requirements.

iii. One who loves Jesus will keep his commandments, John 14:15, 21, 23, 15:10; I John 2:3-5, 3:21ff., 5:3. Cf. correlation of “light” and “love” as equally ultimate characterizations of God in I John.

iv. Scripture never suggests that one must ever disobey a divine command to fulfill the law of love.

d. Love is a provocative characterization of the law.

i. Even though love involves obedience to law, loving and obeying are not merely synonymous. Although they require the same thing, they characterize it in different ways.

ii. Love focuses more on the motive of the heart (cf. later under existential perspective), obedience more on the actions performed.

iii. The emphasis on love, therefore, warns us that slavish obedience is not the goal of the law. Obedience out of grudging, unwilling submission is not what the law requires. Rather, God calls us to lives of earnest concern, genuine care, for God and one another.

e. Misunderstandings

i. Schleiermacher: law is concerned only with the outward at. Therefore, the love commandment is not a commandment at all.

ii. Brunner, Bonhoeffer: Since God's will for me is always absolutely concrete, law can be only a general guide. Knowledge of God's will comes about in a momentary inspiration in a situation.

iii. J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*: There are no rules. Laws are general guidelines, maxims, but none is absolute. Ultimately, we must simply do what is the most loving thing in a particular situation.

a) Contradiction: Fletcher renounces rules (irrationalism) but sets forth his own rule (do what is loving in a situation) as absolute (rationalism). (His attempt to show that his rule is not a rule in unconvincing.)

b) Fletcher's rule lacks all content, and, thus, can give no moral guidance.

c) Fletcher's notion of love is unbiblical. He denies the biblical relationship between love and the other commandments.

d) Implementing the norm of love faces the same difficulties as implementing the principle of utility.

e) Thus, Fletcher's arguments (often dogmatic assertions) about what love requires are supremely unconvincing.

8. The Decalogue and the Other Commandments (see introduction to Part Three).

9. Priorities Among Divine Commands.

a. Every legal obligation (in human or divine law) is essentially obligation to a legal system. That system includes not only specific precepts, but also broader principles, judicial arrangements for applying the law, executive arrangements

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for enforcing it, etc. The system as a whole determines what use is to be made of any part of it.

b. In any legal system, certain principles are regarded as more important than others: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," Matthew 9:13; "Leave your gift at the altar and be reconciled to your brother," Matthew 5:24; "Weightier matters of the Law," Matthew 23:23. Cf. Psm. 78:17, 32, 56, Ezek. 8:6, 13, 15, Matt. 12:31-32, 18:6, Luke 12:47-48, John 19:11, Heb. 2:2-3, 10:29, 1 John 5:16, WLC 151-52.

c. In any legal system, it is assumed that, in emergencies, the normal regulations may be transcended by larger principles such as the maintenance of human life and safety (Matthew 12:4, parallels), obedience to higher authority (Acts 5:29; cf. Romans 13; I Peter 2:13ff.)

i. Norman Geisler: "graded absolutism"

ii. W. D. Ross: "prima facie duties."

d. Thus, the application of any biblical commandment is subject to the broader principles of biblical ethics. In any particular situation, a lesser principle may be transcended by a higher one.

i. This is not antinomianism: we are talking about "higher" and "lesser" principles within the law itself, not exceptions to law. Actions in accord with this principle are obedient to the law in its full meaning.

ii. This must be done carefully. This principle is not a warrant, e.g., to disobey the seventh commandment in the name of love since love is a

higher and broader principle. We must guard against replacing the biblical norms with the lusts of our own hearts and using the above principle as rationalization.

e. A further example of this principle: Not every biblical commandment can be carried out immediately by every individual.

i. We tend to think of obedience as instant response to divine commands: biblical pictures of Abraham, Jesus, and others reinforce this picture.

ii. Thus, sermons often suggest that we ought to drop whatever we are doing and do what the sermon calls for: persistent prayer, evangelism, pursuit of social justice, visiting the sick, feeding the poor, studying the Scripture, etc.

iii. However, we clearly cannot do all of these all of the time. We are finite, and our schedules are limited. We must frequently stop obeying one command in order to obey another. And Scripture does not assume otherwise. It assumes that some commands may not be carried out “immediately”.

iv. It also recognizes that such activities are fundamentally the responsibility of the church as a whole, not of each individual within the church. No individual could single-handedly evangelize everyone in Burma or pray for all the lost in India.

v. Each individual is expected to play a role in the fulfillment of these tasks. The role one plays will depend at least partly, on his own gifts. Not everyone is expected to play the same role.

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vi. It should not be assumed, therefore, that one who spends ten hours a week helping the poor is necessarily more obedient than someone who spends ten hours in prayer or visiting the sick.

vii. Therefore, in addition to the general system of “priorities” set forth in the law itself [c., d. above], each individual must develop for himself, in the context of the church and obedience to the Word, a personal set of “priorities” which may be different from those of anyone else.

viii. It seems odd, even impious, to suggest that an individual may decide what emphasis he will put on various divine (absolute) commands. Yet, this is a necessary part of applying the word to a situation; and without such application, the law is a dead letter.

ix. It must not be assumed, therefore, that because God has commanded something, it must be done immediately or must be given an unlimited amount of time.

a) In some church courts, e.g., one commonly hears that since God has sanctified the truth and requires sound doctrine, questions of doctrinal orthodoxy always must take precedence over all other considerations. Thus, there are church courts that are so preoccupied with doctrinal questions (even minutiae) that they do little in the area of missions, evangelism, prayer, etc. The commandment concerning doctrinal soundness, however, must not be thought to take precedence over every other consideration in every situation.

b) Other church courts take the opposite approach: God commands

evangelism, and, thus, we must be up and about the business of soulwinning, and questions of doctrine must take second place. But to assume without argument that they must is to take an irresponsible attitude.

c) The OP and PCA churches differ essentially in their customary determinations of priorities. The OPC is closer to a) above; the PCA closer to b), though both bodies are most balanced than the caricatures in a) and b) would suggest. The main problem inhibiting merger of these bodies is that neither group is willing to question seriously its own scheme of priorities or to acknowledge the difficulty and subtlety of the question involved. Each group tends simply to assume that its own scale of priorities is right and then to measure the other group in terms of that scale.

II. Christian Ethics: The Situational Perspective (Christian Teleological or Situational Ethics).

In the normative perspective, we asked “What is our duty?” Here, the ethical question is, “How must I change the world in order to accomplish God’s purposes?”

A. The Situation and Our Knowledge of Our Duty.

1. Recall what was said earlier about God’s character and acts as ethical revelation.

a. As our ultimate “situation” or environment, God Himself is norm [I.A.].

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b. Since his word comes through nature and history, there are norms available to us through the situation [I.B.].

c. Such norms do not go “beyond” Scripture in the sense of compromising Scriptural sufficiency [I.C.5.].

d. Yet, natural revelation is indispensable for the application of Scripture [esp. I.C.5.c.iii.]. And without the application, we would have no norm at all.

2. Functions of the situation in making moral decisions.

a. Posing moral questions: We are told to do all to the glory of God. Thus, every fact poses the question of how we are going to use the things before us to God’s glory. (Picture Adam’s thinking as he came to know more and more about the world: “How can I best relate this fact to my calling before God?”)

b. Answering moral questions: Everything we learn about the facts helps us to answer the questions of 2.a. The fact that fire cooks food shows us one way in which fire can be employed in the building of God’s kingdom. This is saying simply that everything we learn about the world helps us better to apply God’s norms. Cf. the relation of presuppositions to evidences in apologetics. (Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*)

3. Means-end relationships (teleology).

a. Often, applications of God’s norms will be on the basis of means-end relationships. If I am to obey God by worshipping on Sunday morning, I must find transportation to church. Finding transportation, then, is a duty because it is a means to the end of getting to church.

b. Does the end justify any means?

i. God uses even ungodly means to achieve his purposes. His purposes will be achieved whatever means we may try to employ (his decretive will).

This fact, however, does not justify the use of such means (his preceptive

will).

ii. Though ungodly means have a certain effectiveness [i], Scripture often represents them as powerless. Ultimately, they can achieve neither their own purposes nor the purposes of God (Ephesians. 6, e.g.).

iii. Thus, in one sense, only godly means are capable of achieving God's purposes. Ungodly means must be seen as working against them, contributing to them only in a highly ironic or paradoxical sense. God uses ungodly means by overruling them, overwhelming them, forcing them contrary to their intention to glorify him.

iv. Thus, in one sense, the end does justify the means. Any means that is in the best sense conducive to God's glory is legitimate. Any means that is not is illegitimate.

v. However, the situation is so complicated that we should seek to evaluate on the basis of Scripture not only the ends we seek, but also the means for achieving them.

vi. In practice, we often justify an action because it is conducive to a good end. There is nothing wrong with this as long as we are open to the correction of Scripture concerning both ends and means.

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vii. A means which is good "in itself," or good "in general," must be further evaluated according to the end it aims to accomplish and its efficiency in achieving that end.

c. Thus, we can see the very limited sense in which a "Christian utilitarianism" is possible. We seek to calculate the consequences of our actions to determine whether they are conducive to God's purposes. But we must do this always in subjection to God's written Word.

4. Casuistry.

a. Casuistry is simply the application of law to situations.

b. As such, it is inevitable. If we are to obey the law at all, we must learn to make judgments about its applications (cf. normative perspective). Scripture requires that. [I.D.5.c.iv.b) i)].

c. Casuistry assesses the differences in different situations, the motives of actions, the diversities (priorities, especially) within the law itself.

d. Though casuistry is unavoidable to the Christian, it has been subject to much abuse. We dare not take on this job without being aware of the dangers of it, the errors associated with it in the past.

i. Pharisaism: The law is in effect replaced or even contradicted by casuistic interpretations, ". . . making the word of God of none effect by tradition."

ii. False applications were often made normative in the church.

iii. Casuistry as rationalization of sin: ("lax" interpretations). In Rabbinical Judaism and later Roman Catholic casuistry, there was a tendency to polarities between more "lax" and more "rigorous" schools: Shammai vs. Hillel, Jansenists vs. Jesuits, etc.

a) Principle that a wrong action can be justified because it is more right than its opposite.

b) Too easily determining exceptions to general commands.

c) Too easily claiming implicit qualifications to commands.

- d) Principle that a normally sinful action can be excused if done for a good motive.
- iv. Casuistry as a burdensome yoke (“rigorous” interpretations):
 - a) Vast catalogue of restrictions added to God’s word.
 - b) Leaves little room for freedom of the believer, individual responsibility.
 - c) Encourages a nit-picking mentality, interest in minutiae as over against the “weightier” matters.
 - d) Questions the perspicuity of revelation by making morality a matter for experts to decide.
 - e) Promotes overconfidence in the interpreter’s own ability to interpret Scripture and situation. Are we really sure that we “understood” the Viet Nam war?
 - f) Encourages works-righteousness.
- e. Ways to guard against such abuse.

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- i. Firm, practical confidence in the gospel of justification by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ.
- ii. Firm, practical confidence in Scripture as the clear and sufficient word of God.
- iii. Perspective: Awareness of what is more or less important within Scripture itself, and among its applications (“priorities”).
- iv. A mature conscience, resisting rationalization.
- v. A recognition that even the largest catalogue of applications will not be exhaustive. No matter how large (or how accurate!) the catalogue, there will always be a question of application remaining. (If the catalogue applies the Scriptures, who applies the catalogue?). Thus, there is always need for a choice by the individual. And, often, that choice is best helped, not by a list of rules, but by moral growth in the Spirit.

5. Summary: A biblical understanding of our situation will tell us our duty. If we understand the ends and means of the created order, we will know what to do. This is a Christian “situational” or “teleological” ethic. However, it presupposes and involves all we said earlier about the norm.

B. The Ethical Situation (environment).

Since we must take our situation into account when we make ethical choices, it is important that we learn to describe that situation in a biblical way.

1. God Himself: God is the original environment from which all else comes, and in whom we live and move and have our being. Recall the “Lordship attributes,” control, authority and presence [Part I: I.C]. It is the fact of God, which must, above all, be taken account of in our ethical decisions.

a. His Decree.

i. Since God by His decree foreordains everything that comes to pass, all means/end relationships are part of his all-wise plan. We can trust that the means he approves will be effective and that the end he announces will surely come to pass. Hence, the persuasiveness of the “natural law” idea. God’s commands are consistent with creation. I would not say that the former are “grounded in” the latter, for the opposite conception is equally

legitimate.

ii. Thus, the situational and normative perspectives are consistent. What God tells us in His word will surely take place in the world. Obeying the law is the best way to get along in the world.

iii. Does our environment ever force us into making a sinful choice? (“Conflict of duties,” “tragic moral choice”.)

a) There are many apparent examples of this: cf.

i) Must we not, in some situations, tell lies in order to preserve life?

In World War II, many fought moral battles over the question of whether they should answer truly when asked if they were hiding Jews.

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ii) Women in concentration camps were sometimes lured into adulterous relationships on the promise that cooperation would save the lives of their loved ones.

iii) Biblical examples: cf. Murray 123ff., Kline “The Intrusion”.

b) It appears that in these examples one cannot keep one commandment without breaking another. This is because the situation has become so distorted by sin that no perfectly righteous choice is possible.

c) Such an analysis must, however, be rejected:

i) The character of God.

(1) God is not a tempter (James 1:13). Men are tempted when they are enticed by their own lust (v. 14). If God in His providence allowed the world to go so far astray that no good choice could be made, it would be difficult to avoid shifting the blame for our sinful decisions on to him. In a sense, of course, God has decreed that fallen man cannot choose the good. But this presupposes that the environment presents even to fallen man a righteous alternative (see below).

(2) God does not deny Himself (II Timothy 2:13). If genuine “tragic choices” existed, God would be, in effect, commanding and forbidding the same thing (in our example, he would be commanding and forbidding either truth-telling or preservation of life).

ii) The character of sin: Sin always presupposes that there is something right that ought to be done, and that man knows what that is. Note Romans 1-2, other biblical condemnations of sin. If there were “tragic choices,” there would, in those cases, be no clearly right alternative, and, therefore, no way of knowing that alternative.

iii) The character of the law:

(1) If there are “tragic choices,” then the Lord in effect commands two contradictory things [1.b.], and the law, then, would also be contradictory. Remember that where applications are contradictory, meaning is contradictory.

(2) “The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul” (Psalm 19:7ff.). If there were “tragic choices,” then it would be

necessary and beneficial to break the law in some way (e.g., in the example of the law requiring truth), and harmful to keep the law. The suppositions are impossible.

iv) The character of Christ:

(1) If Jesus did face “tragic choices,” i.e., choices in which it is impossible not to sin, then, it could not be said that Jesus was “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” If Jesus faced “tragic choices,” then He was a sinner.

(2) If we face “tragic choices” and Jesus did not, then it can scarcely be said that Jesus was “tempted in all points like as we

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are.” (Hebrews 4:15). I.e., if Jesus did not face decisions of this most difficult type, then he can hardly be said to have participated in the moral agony of our fallen world.

v) I Corinthians 10:13—A promise particularly given to believers, but reflecting the general view of moral life summarized above.

d) Why the theory is plausible.

i) It is easy enough, when writing an ethics text, to concoct an example where all “ways of escape” from sin are ruled out. But are there cases like that in the real world? Be careful of forming your picture of the ethical life on the basis of hypothetical examples taken from ethics textbooks.

ii) Some of the plausibility of this theory comes, however, from the undeniable fact that moral choice is often very difficult. Often, it is not easy to find the “way of escape.” In rejecting the concept of “tragic moral choice,” do not fall to the other extreme of oversimplifying ethical problems.

iii) Some alleged examples of tragic moral choice are really questions of priority within the divine law. [Cf. I.D.11.]. It is at least arguable, e.g., that the command to preserve life overrides the command to tell the truth in some cases.

iv) Some moral situations are particularly difficult because they involve a choice between two evils. When trying to save lives on a battlefield, we may have to choose between allowing one man or another to die, in order to have time and resources to save others. This seems like a “tragic choice” in the above sense. Note well, however: It is a choice between two evils, not a choice between two wrongs. Either choice we make will bring harm to someone, and that is, in one sense, evil, even “tragic” in a general sense. But it cannot be shown that all possible choices in that situation will displease the Lord.

iv. Foreordination, freedom, responsibility.

a) It has often been thought that if man is to be responsible for his actions, he must be able to act independently of God’s decree.

i) Recall *autexousion* (free will) in many church fathers.

ii) Thomas Aquinas: God moves man’s will toward the universal good; else man would not be able to will anything. However, man

determines himself, by his reason, to will this or that (which may be a true or only apparent good).

iii) Arminianism.

iv) Secular philosophers: Descartes, Kant, Existentialism, some British writers such as H. D. Lewis and C.A. Campbell.

(1) Lewis and Campbell deny not only divine foreordination; they also deny that our choices are determined at all by past choices or character.

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(2) Other secular philosophers the same.

b) The central argument: “ought” implies “can”.

i) It is generally assumed in law that a person can be blamed for something only if he was able to avoid doing it. If, e.g., someone is judged insane, he may be acquitted of blame, since, presumably, he “could not avoid” doing what he did.

ii) Scripture, then, is also invoked to support this principle.

c) Comments:

i) It is true that in Scripture moral responsibility presupposes certain kinds of “ability”.

(1) Doing right or wrong presupposes all those abilities which distinguish human beings from the animal kingdom. Animals are not subject to moral praise or blame (except metaphorically or symbolically, Exodus 19:13, etc.)

(2) Morality presupposes that ethical decisions are our decisions—decisions which, even if foreordained, are genuine decisions of the person, based on norms which the person adopts as his own [cf. III.B.1.d-e.]

(3) Doing right or wrong presupposes knowledge of God’s standards, Romans 1-2. Those who have greater knowledge are subject to greater condemnation, Leviticus 5:17ff., Numbers 15:29ff., Luke 12:47f., for, in a sense, they are more “able” to do right.

(4) Moral choice also presupposes that mankind in Adam was originally created with such a nature that he could have chosen obedience. Thus, the human race is responsible for the depravity which resulted from disobedience (Romans 5).

(5) Scripture also presupposes that man is not determined entirely by his heredity and created environment. Even those without wealth or education or moral training know God’s law and are expected to obey even if their environment militates against it. (Cf. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, IX.) A bad environment, therefore, is no excuse for disobedience.

(6) Moral responsibility presupposes various natural abilities: physical and mental capacities for carrying out God’s commands.

(7) Accessibility to God: God can reach us by his grace, so that we “can” do his will.

ii) Other kinds of ability, however, are not presupposed by the Scriptural concept of responsibility.

(1) The power of contrary choice since the Fall.

(2) The ability to will contrary to, or independently of, God's decree (Acts 2:23, 4:27f.).

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(3) The power to know exhaustively or control completely the effects of our actions.

(4) The power to establish our own moral standards (cf. Sartre).

iii) To suppose that any of the abilities under ii) are required for morality is to adopt a non-biblical set of moral presuppositions. Thus, the basic question is a question of morality, not merely of metaphysics or anthropology.

iv) "Free will" in the Arminian sense is actually destructive of responsibility.

(1) It makes our choices to some extent the product of chance. And who can be held responsible for choices which are purely accidental, which just happen?

(2) This problem is even more obvious in those views which make choice independent of previous choices and character. Moral choice on such views becomes "internal accident," a queer movement of the mind.

(3) It makes our ultimate environment, at some point, impersonal rather than personal. At that point, we are no longer responsible, because responsibility is always responsibility to a person.

(4) The notion of chance (irrationalism) coupled with moral autonomy (rationalism) amounts to a non-Christian dialectic that is destructive of all moral (and other) discourse.

v) The Problem of Evil: See Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God; Doctrine of God*.

b. His Authority (cf. I., the Normative Perspective): God's word is the fact by which all other facts are to be interpreted and evaluated.

c. His Presence (cf. III., the Existential Perspective): In our thinking about ethics, we must reckon on the fact that God is not aloof or far away from us, but deeply involved in our midst both to bless and to curse.

i. Before the Fall: God was Lord and Friend to man; Control, Authority, Presence.

ii. After the Fall:

a) God appears to judge sin. His hostility toward sin continues even in the present period. Thus, we make our ethical decisions with the wrath of God in view (Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 3:6).

b) He gives the redemptive promise—the basis of ethical hope.

iii. With the patriarchs and Israel: covenant solidarity. "I will be with you," Exodus 3:12; Cf. Deuteronomy 7:6ff., etc. Because we are his, because he has drawn us to himself, therefore we are to be holy, set apart for him.

iv. Incarnation to Pentecost:

a) The kingdom has come—the righteousness of God on earth.
b) We are in the kingdom, in Christ, in the “age to come.” We are children of light. Thus, we are able to prevail in the moral battle.

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c) In Christ, we have the definitive example of righteousness.

d) Yet, we are also living in “this age”. The old and new ages overlap, and we exist simultaneously in both. Christ has won the decisive victory (“already,”) but sin continues to exercise power until the *parousia* (“not yet”). Thus, all ethical life involves tension. We are holy in Christ, yet disobedient servants.

v. The *Parousia* and Consummation: Note the various ways in which this hope is related to ethics as a purifying doctrine:

a) Since this age is to end and the things of this world are to be dissolved, the Christian ought to have a set of priorities radically different from those of the world, II Peter 3:11; cf. I Corinthians 7:26, 29.

b) Since we eagerly await that day (II Peter 3:12; I John 3:3), we will anticipate it even now by purifying ourselves as he is pure. Thus even now, we are part of the new age, not of the old (Galatians 1:4; Romans 12:2)

c) Since the Resurrection of Christ has decisively established the new age, we are confident that our labors for his kingdom will not be in vain, but will inevitably prevail, I Corinthians 15:58.

d) We look to the *parousia* as our deliverance from tribulation, and thus as a source of hope in tribulation, Luke 21:28, parallels.

e) Knowing that Christ is coming, but not knowing the day and hour, we must always be ready to meet him, Matthew 24:44; I Thessalonians 5:1-10; I Peter 1:7; II Peter 3:14.

f) Rewards also serve as motivation, Romans 14:10; II Corinthians 5:10; I Corinthians 3:8ff., 9:17f., 25; Colossians 3:23-25; Ephesians 6:7f., II Timothy 4:8; I Peter 5:4; James 1:12; Psalm 19:11; Matthew 5:12, 46, 6:1ff., 10:41f., parallels; II John 8; Revelation 11:18.

i) This teaching is not works righteousness or salvation by merit.

(1) We do not deserve the reward. Even at our best, we do no more than our duty, Luke 17:7-10.

(2) The reward is out of all proportion to the service rendered, Matthew 19:29, 20:1-16, 24:45-47, 25:21ff.; Luke 7:48, 12:37.

(3) Essentially, the reward is the kingdom itself (Matthew 5:3, 10, 25:34) which is given by grace to the elect, Matthew 20:33, 25:34; Luke 12:31f. Cf. the Old Testament emphasis on the Lord himself as the inheritance of his people. Psalm 16:5, 73:24-26; Lamentations 3:24. Cf. Philippians 1:7-11.

ii) Paradoxically, however, there are also degrees of reward, and these have some positive correlation to our faithfulness [passages under f)].

(1) Remember that our faithfulness is itself a gift, a product of God’s grace.

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(2) The passages underscore the principle that although we are saved by grace through faith alone, the faith that saves is never alone, never without obedience.

(3) Since, then, there is a positive correlation between salvation and obedience, it is not surprising that there should also be a correlation between the degree of obedience and the fullness of salvation blessing.

(4) Since there is no sorrow or pain in heaven, we must assume that even though there are degrees of blessing, everyone will be perfectly happy with the blessing he has. Everyone receives enough to fill him to capacity. No one will be jealous.

iii) Note the correlation between our own ultimate self-interest and the fulfillment of God's purposes. [Cf. below on the goal.] There is no antagonism between these in Christian ethics.

vi. Notice, then, how our ethical decisions must take account of past, present, and future events.

2. The Angels.

In a surprising number of passages, Scripture teaches us to take our angelic "environment" into account when making ethical decisions.

a. The doctrine of angels rebukes the smallness of our cosmology.

i. The modern cosmology leaves little room for angels.

a) In one sense, it is relatively easy for modern man to deal with God: He makes God so utterly transcendent that his existence is irrelevant to the world.

b) Angels, however, cannot easily be eliminated by the transcendence route.

ii. Though the modern cosmology is often said to be much broader than the biblical one, much larger, it is actually smaller in its view of rational beings. The modern view sees man as the only rational being on earth and the vast reaches of space (save some enclaves on other planets) as devoid of intelligent life. In Scripture, however, the universe is filled with great multitudes—legions—of angels. Thus:

iii. Scripture teaches that the visible world is only a small part of God's kingdom, only a small part of the intelligent life of the universe. II Kings 6:17 teaches us that we need a larger perspective than the visible world affords.

a) Our spiritual struggles are part of a much larger warfare.

b) The warfare is in one sense far bigger and more complicated than we would ever suppose apart from revelation.

iv. The doctrine of angels also emphasizes the personal character of God's providence. Not only is the world governed by a divine person, but that divine person typically works, not through impersonal "law structures," but through personal agents. This is important, for impersonal

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determinism militates against ethical responsibility. God does not press buttons—not often at least; rather, he sends messengers.

b. The doctrine of angels shows us something of the dimensions of our ethical

warfare.

i. Angels participate in the kingdom warfare.

a) Bad angels—Satan and his hosts—tempters, accusers, etc.

b) Good angels—ministering spirits for us (Hebrews 1:14).

c) The fight one another, as well as against and for us (Daniel 10:13, 21; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7).

d) Thus, Scripture urges us not to underestimate the difficulty of the struggle, as if we could succeed with human resources alone, Ephesians 6. Not only are men involved, but also beings which are terribly strong, intelligent, numerous, and, to us, exceedingly mysterious.

e) On the other hand, we ought not to overestimate the difficulty either; for there are angels fighting on our side, II Kings 6:15-17.

f) The main point: Do not base your hopes or fears merely upon the empirical situation. The really decisive issues in life are religious and ethical, even if “experience” suggests otherwise; for it is our religious and ethical equipment alone that will prevail over the hosts of evil.

Use the armor of God!

ii. Angels are witnesses to human salvation. Luke 12:8f., 15:10; I Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 3:10; I Timothy 3:16; I Peter 1:12; Revelation 14:10.

a) Although in one sense angels participate in the redemptive drama, there is another sense in which they are spectators rather than participants. Redemption does not extend to them. Unfallen angels need no redemption, and fallen angels receive none (cf. Hebrews 2:16).

b) Thus, the angels are somewhat bewildered by the process of redemption. They are amazed at what God has done for humanity.

c) Remarkably enough, they learn the redemptive wisdom of God through the church, Ephesians 3:10! It is our privilege to teach angels by our words and life! (Consider this as an ethical motivation.)

d) Beyond this, the angels also serve as “witnesses” in a more official sense (Luke 12:8f., etc.).

iii. The doctrine of angels is a measure of the greatness of our salvation in Christ; for that salvation lifts us above the angels.

a) According to Hebrews 2:9, Jesus was made a little (or “for a little while;” the temporal expression *brachu* is used) lower than the angels for the suffering of death. He is then again exalted above them.

b) The passage implies that Jesus’ brethren share that exaltation with him. Thus, Psalm 8 is fulfilled. Although we do not yet see everything subject to man, we see this dominion in Jesus (2:8).

c) Thus, the angels minister to us, not *vice versa*, Hebrews 1:14.

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d) The world to come is not theirs, but ours, 2:5ff. (Cf. Paul’s odd statement that we shall judge angels, I Corinthians 6:3.)

e) Thus, angel worship is a great delusion from which Christ has set us free, Colossians 2:18f., Revelation 19:10, 22:8f.

f) Because of Christ, Satan is a defeated foe. We may resist him, and he

will flee, I Peter 5:8f.; James 4:7.

g) Salvation is for man alone, God's image, not for angels (Hebrews 2:16) [cf. ii., above].

3. The Human Environment (Social).

God expects us to take our fellow human beings into account when we make moral decisions. We shall say much more about the foundations of social ethics in connection with the ethics of government (Fifth Commandment) and of sex (Seventh). At this point, we shall restrict ourselves to some very general observations.

a. The Cultural Mandate: A Corporate Task (Genesis 1:28ff.).

i. "Subduing" and "replenishing" the earth are not tasks that Adam could even conceivably have done alone [cf. I.D.11.e.iv.].

ii. Since God made man male and female, and since reproduction is part of the cultural task itself, God intended from the beginning that this work be carried out primarily as a corporate task, a task of mankind.

iii. Thus, the individual is not responsible to replenish and subdue the earth; rather, his responsibility is to make the best contribution to this task of which he is capable.

iv. Thus, from the very beginning, God intended for us to make our individual decisions by taking other people into account, and specifically by seeking how we can best help our fellow human beings in their divinely ordained task.

b. The Fall: A Corporate Failure.

i. Eve was intended as a helper for Adam in every respect including the ethical-religious. Both were to encourage one another in keeping the commands of God.

ii. In the Fall, Eve became temptress instead of helper, taking the role of Satan.

iii. Similarly, Adam forsook his headship and capitulated to the sinful request of his wife.

iv. Thus, the Fall involved not only individual sins on the part of Adam and Eve, but simultaneously a breakdown of their relationship, of their Godordained family structure.

v. Corroborating these observations: The Fall brings about sexual shame between the man and woman, Genesis 3:7, 10f., 21, cf. 2:25. Also, note Adam's blaming his wife for his sin, 3:12, further breakdown of family harmony, 3:16, pain and toil in the cultural task, 3:16-19 [cf. a.].

vi. Note also the New Testament emphasis on Adam as corporate head of the human race, Romans 5; I Corinthians 15.

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vii. Thus, the question "What would have happened if Eve had sinned but Adam remained obedient?" is an unreal question, demanding, not a minor, but a major change in the biblical story. Adam and Eve were united in their cultural task and united also in sin. It was the race that fell in Genesis 3.

c. Corporate Effects of the Fall.

i. Working out of the curse [above, b.v.]

- ii. Development of “civilization” among sinful men.
 - a) The sons of Cain, Genesis 4:17-24, developing social, cultural, governmental institutions in opposition to God.
 - b) Genesis 6:1-5: Royal polygamy? Angel marriages? Mixed marriages? In any case, a breakdown in the divinely ordained social structure.
 - c) Genesis 11:1ff.: Babel. Unification of the human race in disobedience to God.
 - d) Compounding of evil through cultural developments; Sodom and Gomorrah, Canaan, etc. Sinful practices reinforced by unified cultural tradition, rationalized, accepted easily by individuals.
 - e) Principles of evil incarnate in governmental, ecclesiastical forms: Daniel, Revelation.
- d. The Corporate Character of Redemption.
 - i. The first redemptive promise, like the cultural mandate, concerns land and seed (Genesis 3:16-19): In toil, we will live off the land until the seed of promise defeats the enemy. Like the cultural mandate, these promises concern humanity as a body. The toil over the land is a common task, and the seed presupposes reproduction and family.
 - ii. God redeems, not merely individuals, but “a people”.
 - a) Sethites / Cainites, Noah’s family, Shem / Ham and Japheth, Peleg / Joktan (Genesis 10:25?), Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Christ.
 - b) The promise “to you and to your children”—family units brought into the kingdom. Circumcision and baptism.
 - iii. Redeeming a people implies that the people is united by common structures. Thus, redemption involves the development of a new civilization, new social institutions.
 - a) Prophetic, priestly, kingly institutions.
 - b) Family, church, state.
 - c) New Covenant: Christ as king, apostles, prophets, pastor-teachers, elders, deacons, each believer using his gifts to serve the body.
 - d) The consummation: not only new heavens and new earth, but New Jerusalem as well—new city, new social order.
 - e. Corporate Life “Between the Times”.
 - i. Specific situations do develop, different in some respects from those noted in Scripture, to which the law must be applied.
 - ii. Thus in ethics, we must discern carefully the process of history.
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- f. Corporate Life and Moral Decisions (Summary).
 - i. God intended for us to help one another in our common task, not to try to do everything alone. Thus, we are to seek help and guidance from those equipped to give it.
 - ii. Because of sin, however, other people are not only helpers, but tempters as well. Thus, the need of vigilance, testing, proving as well as trusting.
 - iii. Such temptation, sinful influence, is compounded by the development of unregenerate social institutions.
 - iv. Because of redemption, we may expect from others, not only help coming out of “natural” gifts, but specifically, the blessing of the Spirit. In other

words, we meet Christ in his brethren. The gifts of the Spirit are not proportional to intelligence, education, wealth.

v. The blessing of the Spirit is magnified in the development of regenerate institutions.

vi. We must not only expect help from one another, but must above all seek to help one another—the love-command. In all our decisions, we must consider the needs of others above our own.

vii. The great events of our time must be addressed by the Word. This involves Christian analysis of social and political issues. Such social critique is itself a corporate task. Many ministers do not have the training to carry out such analysis knowledgeably. The ministry needs help from many Christians trained in many fields.

4. The Human Environment (Individual).

a. Christian ethics is throughout both individual and social. In every decision (not only decisions about “social issues”), we are called to take others into account. On the other hand, every decision (even on “social issues”) is a decision which we make as individuals. We must always live “with others,” but also with ourselves.

b. Our character.

i. Created in God’s image, precious to God.

ii. Depraved by the fall, unable of ourselves to do anything good.

iii. New creatures in Christ, free from sin’s dominion, filled with gifts of the Spirit.

iv. Sin still lingers until the consummation.

v. Individual differences in character from other Christians due to differences in level of sanctification, specific temptations, etc.

vi. For more on this, see existential perspective, III.

c. Our history.

i. Besides being members of groups and institutions, we are each unique—different in some way from every other human being.

ii. This uniqueness begins in the creative mind of God and exists from conception.

iii. Each of us has unique heredity, environment, abilities, strengths, weaknesses.

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iv. None of us enters the kingdom of God in precisely the same way. Though faith and repentance are necessary in all cases, these occur in many different forms and in many different situations.

v. Each of us has a set of experiences different in some way from those of everyone else.

vi. Each of us has, in some degree, a unique role in the kingdom of God—a unique calling, unique gifts and opportunities.

vii. Each of us has, in some sense, a unique spiritual battle. True, the temptations we face are “common to man” (I Corinthians 10:13); but they do not take identical form in every individual case. All of us are tempted to steal, but in different ways: Some are tempted to steal from individuals, others “only” from corporations or government, others from the honor due

to God.

viii. Each of us has, in some measure, unique moral responsibilities stemming from his particular calling. (The pastor of Covenant PCA, Winter Park, is obligated to preach there regularly; I am not.) These arise out of applications of the Word to our unique situations.

d. Moral decisions, then, must take into account both the likenesses and the differences between ourselves and other persons (particularly other Christians).

i. We must each apply the word to his unique situation. Though we can and must seek help from others in this, no one else can do it for us. Even in applying the advice of others, an individual judgment must be made.

ii. We must each seek to overcome his unique temptations through the means of grace, realizing that our temptations are not, at the most basic level, different from those all men experience (I Corinthians 10:13) or, specifically, different from those which Christ experienced as a man (Hebrews 4:15).

5. The Natural Environment.

a. Man as part of nature.

i. Man is a creature, and in that respect is closer to nature than he is to God.

ii. Man is made of the dust, Genesis 2:7.

iii. He is dependent upon the ground for his continued life, Genesis 1:29, 2:8ff., 3:17ff., etc.

iv. Thus, many obvious similarities and analogies between human and animal life.

b. Man as distinct from nature.

i. A special creation, not a product of evolution, Genesis 2:7, 21ff.

ii. Special engagement of the divine counsel, Genesis 1:26.

iii. Image of God, Genesis 1:26ff.

iv. Vassal lordship over the earth, Genesis 1:26ff., 2:19f.

c. The curse on the ground, Genesis 3:17-19.

i. The earth resists man's dominion.

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ii. It is a source of distress ("toil"), weariness.

iii. Though all things are good, even after the fall (I Timothy 4:4; cf. Genesis 1:31, I Corinthians 10:26), man's lust finds in things a source of temptation, as with the fruit in the fall narrative itself.

iv. Events in the natural world serve as means of divine judgment, chastening, deliverance.

a) The plagues of Egypt.

b) Job's sufferings.

c) The Flood, etc.

d. Nature and redemption

i. Natural (and supernatural) signs, Matthew 2:2, 24:29ff.

ii. Nature and redemptive events (above, d.iv.).

iii. Creation waiting anxiously for the consummation, Romans 8:19-23.

iv. The course of nature and history is "on our side". Things and events are occasions for growth and victory, not only means of temptation (Romans

8:28).

v. Consummation: The new heavens and new earth, II Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1.

e. Nature and moral decisions.

i. From the beginning, man was expected to apply God's word to his natural environment.

a) Cultural mandate: How do we use each thing to God's glory and to fulfill our task?

b) Naming of animals.

c) Abstaining from the forbidden fruit.

d) "Keeping" and "cultivating" the garden, Genesis 2:15. I.e., Adam's task is not merely to dominate, but also to maintain and improve his natural environment. Conservation is not, of course, opposite to subduing and replenishing, but necessary to them.

ii. Since the fall, we must reckon with nature as an occasion for suffering, frustration, sin.

iii. Yet even now, we live by the ground (Genesis 3:17ff.) and, thus, must continue to cultivate and subdue it.

iv. Anticipation of physical resurrection in the new creation-purifying doctrine.

C. The Goal of Christian Ethics.

Since Christian ethics is, from the situational perspective, a matter of determining the best godly means of achieving God's purposes, it is important for us to try to define in general what those purposes are. What goal or goals ought we to be seeking in moral decisions?

1. The Doctrine of the Two-fold End.

a. Some church fathers, perhaps under Gnostic influence or due to misreading of Scripture, denigrated the physical world, favoring an ascetic withdrawal from

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the world as the highest form of Christian morality (Tatian, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Jerome).

b. Augustine.

i. More positive, world-affirming view of the state, marriage, property. These are not evil in themselves.

ii. Earthly life, however, is but a pilgrimage to the hereafter. The supreme goal of human life is our union with God in the vision of God in heaven.

iii. Earthly pursuits, therefore, though not sinful in themselves, can distract us from our heavenly goal.

a) Private property is legitimate; the rich and poor alike can be saved by God's grace. But possessions are a hindrance to the soul, and, thus, poverty is preferable. If we cannot abstain from possessions, let us at least seek to avoid the love of possessions.

b) Marriage is a sacrament and therefore good, but sex always involves desire (in this age), and desire is evil. Therefore, celibacy is higher than marriage.

c) The state promotes justice and happiness in the world. Yet in this fallen world, it is based on self-love, contempt of God. Thus, it must

be subordinate to the church.

d) Even good works are always tinged by sin.

iv. Asceticism, therefore, is valuable, not because the flesh is evil or because we ought to seek what is unpleasant for its own sake, but rather because such practices free us from earthly preoccupation so that we may better serve God.

v. Comments:

a) Augustine realizes better than his predecessors that God's creation is good.

b) His motive for asceticism is not that things are bad in themselves, but that our sinful hearts become preoccupied with them so as to draw us away from the service of God. Augustine's concern, then, is ethical, not metaphysical. The question he asks about the use of things is altogether biblical.

c) Augustine, however, tends to go beyond the biblical data in his moral generalizations. Is it true that all desire is evil? That marriage always or generally presents more spiritual dangers than celibacy? That the state is necessarily less godly than the church?

d) In these overgeneralizations, Augustine almost unconsciously returns to hierarchical patterns of thought: the soul vs. the body, the church vs. the state, etc.

e) Augustine's otherworldliness, his preference for monasticism, run counter to the biblical emphasis upon involvement in the affairs and needs of the creation.

c. Thomas Aquinas.

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i. Man's highest good: Contemplation and love of God, bringing likeness to God and realization of the true self.

ii. In its highest form, the beatific vision, this is possible only in the life to come.

iii. Through reason, leading us to habits of virtue, we can attain an incomplete happiness in this life.

iv. For eternal blessedness, however, a supernatural principle of grace must be infused into man by God—the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, love.

v. Even in this life, the contemplative life is superior to the practical life.

a) It is based on the love of God, while the practical life is based on the love of man.

b) The practical life is therefore less meritorious.

c) The contemplative life is more free from the senses and bodily organs.

vi. *Consilia Evangelica* (evangelical counsels).

a) The safest, quickest way to blessedness is the monastic life, the life of poverty, chastity, obedience.

b) These cannot be commanded, for they are not for everybody. Yet for those capable of it, this is the way to the highest perfection.

vii. Comments:

a) Like Augustine, Aquinas presents us with an essentially otherworldly ethic, based on biblical warnings about the temptations of earthly life

and the kingdom of God as the highest good.

b) Aquinas is subject to the same criticisms as Augustine in these matters.

c) Aquinas compounds the problems which Augustine had.

i) With a lower view of the effects of sin. He sees man without grace as capable of goodness at a certain level, but needing grace to achieve the highest goal.

ii) By dividing Christians into various groups who have essentially different obligations. One group has a “higher” morality than the other, even though the other group is not guilty of sin on that account. There is no biblical support for this notion.

d. Lessons.

i. It is important to maintain that all men have the same “chief end”. Much mischief has been done.

a) By allowing the legitimacy of non-Christian ends as having natural but not supernatural validity.

b) By claiming that different groups of Christians may properly seek different ethical goals.

ii. Formulation of the goal must be based upon Scripture, not on plausible generalizations about the physical and spiritual, the civil and ecclesiastical, the married vs. the celibate life, etc.

2. The Overall Goal: Biblical Formulations

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Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question #1: “What is the chief end of man? Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

a. Glory of God.

i. Man’s purpose from the beginning is determined by God, Genesis 1:26ff. Man is created, preserved and redeemed for the sake of God’s purposes and no other.

ii. Man’s obligation to God is the central feature of biblical law (cf. normative perspective).

iii. I Corinthians 10:31; Romans 14:23; Colossians 3:17ff., 23: All that we do must be done as unto the Lord. Our obligation to seek his glory pervades every aspect of life, every moral choice. Matt. 6:33.

b. Human Enjoyment of God (cf. “eternal life” as the goal *Westminster Confession of Faith* XVI:2).

i. Scripture data:

a) Law as delight of the redeemed heart, Psalm 1, 119:97; Romans 7:22.

b) Law as gift of grace, Psalm 119:29.

c) Law as way of life, Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 5:33, 8:3, 11:13-15, 28:1-4, 30:11-20. Obedience is the road to covenant blessing.

d) Law given for our good, Deuteronomy 10:12f; cf. 4:40, 12:28.

e) Rewards as motivation for obedience: [cf. above, II.B.1.c.v.f)]

ii. An “anthropocentric” formulation? Yes, in a way. But remember that it is God who is to be enjoyed, and indeed God in contrast with the lusts of our own hearts.

iii. Consistency with the first formulation: God is glorified by the realization of redeemed human life. He does not demand the annihilation of man, but

rather obedience to him brings the highest happiness. There is no need to draw sharp opposition between “happiness” and “duty” as in much non-Christian philosophy.

iv. Scripture does condemn selfishness and preoccupation with one’s own comfort and pleasure, demanding self-sacrifice and even the endurance of hardship and persecution. But this is presented as the road to the most enduring forms of happiness: Matthew 5:24-34, 10:16-42, etc.

a) The passages which most graphically describe the rigors, the difficulties of the Christian life, characteristically also emphasizes its rewards.

b) In contrast, the pleasures of sin are characterized as fleeting and vain. Even the pursuit of the good things of this earth is vain outside the context of God’s overall purpose (Ecclesiastes).

c. The Kingdom of God as Man’s *Summum Bonum* (Van Til).

i. Biblical emphases

a) Qualifications for entering the kingdom are ethical, but conferred by grace.

b) Seeking the kingdom involves seeking God’s righteousness, therefore, at all levels. Cf. Matthew 6:10.

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c) Thus, “seeking the kingdom” is that supreme purpose which takes precedence over all others, Matthew 6:33. Cf. Matthew 25:34.

ii. Relation to other formulations:

a) Combines theocentric, anthropocentric emphases. Matthew 6:33 teaches that as we seek to glorify God, we will find our own happiness.

b) Brings out the key factor of historical development: The goal of ethics is the implementation of a particular historical program, not merely of general norms.

c) This specific program shows concretely how the glory of God is related to our happiness.

iii. Summary: The Goal of ethics is the fulfillment of the total covenant relationship between God and man. We seek to advance the purposes of that covenant, that kingdom program.

3. More Specific Goals.

a. Every commandment, indeed every application of a commandment, presents us with a goal to be fulfilled, an end to be attained (overlap of situational and normative perspectives). The question of priorities among these goals is the same as the question of “priorities among divine commands” [above, I.D.11.].

b. Cultural Mandate and Great Commission.

We shall deal with only one specific priority question here, the relation between these two basic aspects of God’s kingdom program. There is much to be said here, and I have much work yet to do on the question. However, I offer the following theses as fuel for discussion. The general point: The Great Commission is an application of the cultural mandate to the post-fall situation, and within that situation, has “priority” in some, but not all, senses.

i. The redemptive promise takes the form of the Cultural Mandate.

a) The Cultural Mandate (Genesis 1:28ff.) has two basic elements, the subduing and the replenishing of the earth, corresponding to the creation ordinances of labor and marriage. (The consecration of these activities to God is reflected in the Sabbath ordinance.)

b) The curse again brings these two elements into view. Childbearing (3:16) and labor (3:17ff.) are the aspects of human life singled out for special mention.

c) The *Protevangelium* (3:15ff.) also mentions these functions specifically. They are not only cursed, but are instruments of redemption.

i) Though childbearing will be painful, it will, in time, yield a redeemer.

ii) Though labor will be toilsome, nevertheless, it will sustain physical life so that the line of the promised seed will be preserved.

d) The post-Adamic covenants promise land and seed.

i) Noah: His family is to be saved, and the land will be preserved from further destruction by flood. His sons will live and be subject

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to curses and blessings. Note especially the renewal of the Cultural Mandate, Genesis 9:7.

ii) Abraham: The seed of the promise and the land of Canaan.

iii) Moses: The Abrahamic promise renewed.

iv) David: Seed and territorial dominion combined in the concept of kingship and the promise of a continuing Davidic throne.

v) Christ: Rules (Matthew 28:18, etc.), fills (Ephesians 1:23, 4:10) all things. Rule and filling by Christ are present realities, but they also have an aspect yet to be fulfilled, I Corinthians 15:24ff., Philippians 3:21.

e) Redemption, therefore, is a particular kind of “subduing” and “replenishing”.

i) It is the subduing of sin and of the enemies of God, and of the curse which these have brought upon the earth.

ii) It is the filling of all things with the redemptive presence of God in Christ, through the Spirit. More specifically, it is the creation of a new race of people (I Peter 2:9) with their children (Acts 2:39) who are to carry the knowledge of God throughout the earth (Matthew 28:19f.). Thus “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea,” (Isaiah 11:9).

ii. After the fall, the goal of ethics is always presented in specifically redemptive terms.

a) “To him (Jesus), the kingdom exists there, where not merely God is supreme, for that is true at all times and under all circumstances, but where God supernaturally carries through his supremacy against all opposing powers and brings man to the willing recognition of the same.” Vos, *The Kingdom and the Church*, p. 50.

i) Note: The kingdom is not mere rule, but redemptive rule; not mere filling of the earth, but filling the earth with faithful kingdom

subjects.

ii) Scriptural basis: The kingdom as the righteousness of God on earth [above, 2.c.].

b) I Corinthians 9, 10.

i) Paul, here, speaks of the goals of his ministry, specifically the reasons why he does not use his “rights”: 9:16-27, 10:33.

(1) To make the gospel known without charge, 9:18.

(2) To save men, verses 19-22, 10:33.

(3) For his own share of Gospel benefit, 23-27.

(4) Note that all of these are specifically redemptive goals.

ii) Paul urges us to have the same goals: 9:24, 10:31-11:1.

(1) 10:31 presents us with a purpose which covers all of our activities.

(2) That purpose presupposes a concern for the redemption of others, verses 32-33. Doing things to the glory of God implies

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that we will constantly be thinking about the redemptive needs of other people.

(3) Imitating Paul and Christ (11:1) involves imitation of redemptive love [cf. other references to *imitatio Christi*, I.A.3.d.]

iii) Philippians 3:4-17.

(1) Here again, Paul describes the goal of his life in broad terms. Note the “all things,” v. 7f., the “one thing,” 13, “the goal,” 14.

(2) Here again, he presents his goal as an example to us, 15-17.

(3) Here, the emphasis is upon Paul’s own participation in Christ’s redemptive blessing, the knowledge of Christ gained through redemption, specifically in contrast with “confidence in the flesh” (3f.).

iv) Matthew 6:33.

(1) In context, the kingdom of God is presented as our ultimate priority as over against lesser priorities (seeking food, drink, clothing).

(2) The ultimate priority is characterized not only as the kingdom, but as righteousness (cf. 5:6). In the post-fall context, this is the righteousness of God in contrast with human sin. It is the divine program of redemption and judgment.

(3) It is, then, this program which we must regard as our prime concern, even over against the (in itself good) concern for physical necessities.

v) Conclusion: Everything we do must be done in advance, not only God’s purposes in general, but specifically the purposes connected with his post-fall program, the purpose of redemption.

iii. To say that the goal of ethics is specifically redemptive is, in one sense, to narrow the goal, and, in another sense, not.

a) We are no longer concerned to subdue and replenish the earth apart from the redemptive significance of those acts. In that sense, our goal

is “narrower” than it was before the fall.

b) On the other hand, the redemptive mandate is every bit as comprehensive as the cultural mandate.

i) The redemptive program culminates in a New Heaven and New Earth—if anything, a more comprehensive and radical change than would have resulted from Adam’s obedience to the original mandate.

ii) Our redemptive responsibility involves all our decisions, all aspects of life.

iii) The Christian bricklayer, e.g., is responsible not only to bring out the potential from the earth to God’s glory, but in doing so to contribute to the progress of the gospel (and this is done in many ways).

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iv. The Great Commission is a statement of the redemptive goal.

a) Note that it is not merely a command to preach the way of forgiveness in abstraction. It commands us to “make disciples” and to teach “to observe all that I commanded you.” Note the comprehensiveness here.

b) The Great Commission, then, calls us to preach the gospel, but including all the implications of the gospel for all areas of life.

c) Discipling and teaching are not only by word, but also by example. Cf. the notion of witness, Acts 1:8.

d) Thus, the Great Commission calls us to redemptive witness in all aspects of life.

v. Relations between Cultural Mandate and Great Commission.

a) Both call for creative involvement in God’s purposes in every decision of life.

b) Both call for godly subduing and filling of the earth.

c) Both call for comprehensive change in the world-system.

d) The Cultural Mandate is prior in that it came first in history and established the general structure of man’s responsibility. The Great Commission is merely a particular application of it to a sinful age.

e) The Great Commission sets forth the specific concerns which must motivate our subduing and filling today. In that sense, it has priority.

i) Thus, Paul gives up his cultural rights and responsibilities (eating, drinking, marriage) to carry out his redemptive calling, I Corinthians 9.

ii) Each of us must imitate Paul insofar as our gifts and callings require.

iii) This does not mean that everyone must be a preacher. Those better equipped to do other things also carry on redemptive witness as they demonstrate the difference made by the Gospel in their work.

(1) Not only making money for missions, etc.

(2) Ethical responsibility on the job.

(3) Seeking to develop new structures by which the love and righteousness of Christ can be made manifest through their work.

(4) Seeking to apply the teaching of Christ in its full scope.

III. Christian Ethics: The Existential Perspective (Christian Existential or Personalist Ethics)

The normative perspective asks, “What is my duty?” The situational asks, “How may I change the world in order to bring about those goals pleasing to God?” The existential perspective puts it this way: “How must I be changed, that I may please God? Or corporately, “How must we be changed, etc.?”

A. Goodness and the Being of God.

1. [Cf. I.A.] God’s moral attributes and his person are one. His goodness is inseparable from his being. Without his goodness, God would not be God. His good acts, therefore, are expressions of what he truly is.

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2. God’s moral attributes, not only his power and authority, render him “worthy” of all praise and obedience. The goodness of his acts, further, motivates us to obey.

B. Goodness and the Being of Man.

God intends that man as God’s image should reflect in a creaturely way this union of goodness and being, so that doing good comes “naturally”—i.e. as a normal expression of his nature. As an aspect of the divine image, this natural goodness renders man an object of worth, deserving of respect above all creatures.

1. Creation.

a. As image of God, man was originally made with a positively good character—not, as on the Roman Catholic construction, in need of special grace.

b. He was made free [cf. II.B.1.a.iv.] in various senses, particularly in the sense that, although good, he was in some paradoxical way capable of sinning.

c. He was responsible to obey God’s commands.

d. As free and responsible, he made his own decisions, in a sense. Though subject to God’s authority, he was responsible to adopt God’s norms as his own. Unlike all other creatures, man had the capacity to decide whether to obey or not.

e. Thus, though God’s norms were imposed upon him from above, in one sense, they were also imposed by man upon himself. Man acts upon those principles which he makes his own. (Note relative truth in existentialism.)

f. As vassal king, man also has the responsibility of applying God’s norms to the lower creation. Everything else in creation is subject to man and specifically subject to man as a means of fulfilling the cultural task. Thus in a sense, man becomes a lawgiver to the lower creation. Man’s authority reflects that of God of which it is image.

g. Like God, also, man is a unity. The distinction between body and soul creates no ethical conflict in man (as in Roman Catholic theology), nor does it imply that man is torn between an earthly and a heavenly end [II.C.1.]. Nor is there any tension in man created by the distinctions between will and intellect, emotions and reason, etc.

h. These ethical attributes of man (goodness, freedom, responsibility, authority, unity), together with all the aspects of the image of God, make man, like God, a person of worth, deserving respect. Christian ethics is personalist in that it values people above all other created things. Cf. Genesis 9:6; I Corinthians

11:7; James 3:9.

2. Fall.

a. Man is depraved; in himself, he cannot please God (Romans 8:8; cf. 7:18).
b. There is controversy in the church as to whether man lost the image of God in the fall or whether that image is merely “defaced”. The latter view, I think, is the Scriptural one. In any case, it is clear that man’s original creation in God’s image confers upon man a continuing dignity and importance, despite his sin [1.h., above].

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c. After the fall, man is no longer free by nature to choose the good. Yet, he is free in other senses [II.B.1.a.iv].
d. After the fall, man is still responsible.
e. Similarly, man maintains a kind of moral authority subordinate to that of God. He still must “decide for himself” [above, 1.d.]; He still establishes subordinate norms [1.f.]. Although he will abuse this responsibility, the responsibility remains.
f. After the fall, man remains a unity. His sin is not the result of inevitable conflict among the parts of his being; rather it is the result of willful choice. It does sometimes happen that will and intellect, or intellect and emotion, “conflict” in some sense; but such conflict simply means that fallen man wants to do what he knows is wrong. All “aspects” of man are equally affected by sin.
g. Though fallen, man is responsible to be what he was before the fall—obedient from the heart, obedient by nature. Nothing less will please God. Hence the depth of the hopelessness of fallen man even trying to please God apart from grace.

3. Redemption.

a. The atonement of Christ, applied to our hearts by the continuing work of the Spirit, renews us in the image of Christ (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). There is controversy over the relation between this “image” and the image in which we were originally created. However, it is an image of God, and thus includes all the moral excellencies with which man was originally created.
b. Sin remains in the believer, not to be wholly eradicated until the return of Christ; but the dominion of sin is gone forever (Romans 6:1-14).
c. The process of sanctification (cf. courses on *ordo salutis* and means of grace), Murray, “The Dynamic,” *Principles*, IX.
i. It involves both dependence upon God and substantial effort on our part. Sanctification is a spiritual battle. It takes vigilance, discipline, effort (*contra* quietism, perfectionism, Keswick, some Lutheran representations).
ii. It involves conscious obedience to God’s commands [cf. I., normative perspective] as well as spontaneous action in the Spirit.
a) Recall earlier discussion of the Lutheran *Formula of Concord* [I.D.3.] which finds an opposition between obeying commandments and working in the Spirit.
b) Comments:
i) Such an opposition or antagonism is not found in Scripture. It is true that mere obedience to commands without a heart renewed by

the Spirit is worthless; but such obedience is not true obedience either.

ii) The two need not compete, for each has a distinct function in equipping us for good works. The commands tell us God's will, and the Spirit enables us to do it. Neither can do the job of the other.

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iii) It is true that, as we mature in the Lord, our obedience becomes less labored, more spontaneous, in those areas in which are becoming sanctified [cf. d., below]. We do not always need to look up chapter and verse; we know God's law so well that it is written on the heart, and we do it simply out of gratefulness and delight. Even in such cases, however, it is the law which we obey out of gratefulness and delight.

c) It involves Christ in union with us and us in union with Him.

i) Regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification are aspects of our union with Christ (Gaffin).

ii) Faith, repentance, these represent union with Christ "from our side". We do these things because we are in Christ. They represent our reception of Christ.

d. Note ethical goodness, freedom, responsibility, authority, unity in the redeemed [cf. 1., 2., above]. The process of sanctification brings about greater and greater unity between us and the goodness of Christ which indwells us. We are light in the Lord, Ephesians 5:8, Matthew 5:14; [cf. above, I.A.]. The law is written on the heart, [I.B.2.b.]. The goal, again, is that we serve him gladly from the heart simply because we are his joyful servants; because what we want to do is to serve him in that way. The service of Christ is perfect freedom.

C. The Motive of Christian Ethics.

1. The Concept of Motive.

a. "Motive" as reason given for an action: "His motive was revenge."

i. A norm: "He did it because he was commanded to"—normative perspective.

ii. A goal: "He did it to achieve this purpose."—situational perspective.

iii. An inward disposition: "He did it because he was hungry."—existential perspective.

a) Overlaps the normative, since it presupposes a norm (that hunger ought to be satisfied).

b) Overlaps the situational, since it presupposes a goal (the satisfaction of hunger).

b. "Motive" as efficient cause for an action (whether or not given as reason): "His political liberalism is motivated by a hatred of his domineering father."

i. Norms [a. i.] and goals [a. ii.] do not in themselves cause actions unless accompanied by an inward commitment to obey the norm or to achieve the goal [a. iii.].

ii. Thus, motive, in the second sense, is roughly equivalent to motive in sense a.

iii. However, an inward disposition may cause an action even when it is not acknowledged as a reason for the action, and even when it functions unconsciously.

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c. The existential perspective deals with “motive” in senses a. iii. and b. The motives discussed (love, hate, faith, rebellion, etc.) will often be motives in both senses, but always in sense b.

2. The Necessity of a Right Motive (The Inwardness of Biblical Ethics).

a. The demand for heart-righteousness, Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 5:8, etc.

b. The polemic against externalism and hypocrisy, Isaiah 29:13f.; Matthew 23.

c. The necessity of faith, love, etc., for any good work. Romans 14:23.

d. Revelation as writing on the heart (cf. Christian Mind course): I Corinthians 13, to bring saving benefit, the word must be applied to the most basic level of man’s being.

3. Formulations of Motive.

a. Here, we shall consider those “inward dispositions” which, in Scripture, are considered necessary and sufficient for good works. “Virtue ethics.”

i. “Necessary” = without them, there can be no good work.

ii. “Sufficient” = any work motivated by them will be good.

b. Each of these may be regarded as “perspectives” on the whole regenerate character.

i. None is ever found without the others.

ii. Each characterizes each of the others: Faith is loving (Galatians 5:6); love believes (I Corinthians 13:7), etc.

iii. The regenerate life is characterized by all of them.

iv. This does not make them all synonymous. They are different “perspectives”. While they all describe the regenerate life, they do it in different ways. Thus, love, e.g., cannot be substituted for faith in the expression “justification by faith alone”. Faith describes the regenerate life specifically as trusting and receiving Christ, and these qualities have a special role in justification.

c. Faith.

i. Its basic character (review from Doctrine of the Holy Spirit course)

a) Receiving the free gift of salvation.

b) Trusting Christ as savior and Lord (involves understanding and believing the word, Romans 4).

ii. Relation to works.

a) Faith is an obedient response to a divine command, the command to believe, and therefore is itself a good work.

b) One who has faith will inevitably do good works, so that there is no true faith without good works (James 2:14-26; Galatians 5:6).

c) Thus, works are an evidence of faith (James 2, Hebrews 11).

d) Faith is not a particular act which we can distinguish and isolate from all others. It is a way of doing other things.

i) Consider this model: Faith is one act, followed by other acts (“works”). We believe at one time, and that act of believing gives us the strength to do other things (good works).

A) It is like eating a candy bar and thereby getting strength to set a pole vaulting record.

B) The model of the evangelistic meeting: coming forward is faith; what follows is works.

ii) This model is misleading.

(1) What is the one act which constitutes faith (analogous to eating the candy bar)?

(a) Not a concrete physical act, like raising one's hand at an evangelistic rally, or submitting to baptism. These can be done hypocritically, unfaithful, and well as faithfully.

(b) Not a concrete mental action (like praying a silent prayer, or saying "yes" to Jesus inwardly). These acts too can be hypocritical as well as faithful.

(c) Not something utterly mysterious, incapable of concrete definition. For in Scripture, "faith" is a word in the common language of Christians.

(2) Trusting Christ is not something that I do, and then stop doing, before I obey. Rather, faith is particularly evident during obedience.

(3) Trusting is most naturally understood as a characteristic of actions (including thoughts). The child trusts his father to catch him, not primarily before he jumps, but as he jumps. To trust is to act on the assumption that the object of our trust is reliable.

(4) Thus, the close relation between faith and obedience in Scripture. It is not just that obedience always follows faith. Rather, faith and obedience are simultaneous, and even beyond that, logically involved in one another, inseparable in concept. Obedience always involves faith, and *vice-versa*.

iii) Conclusions.

(1) Faith is not something distinctively "mental" as opposed to something "physical" (G. Clark, *Religion, Reason and Revelation*). It is as likely to be present (or absent) in physical acts as in mental acts. (Cf. the child jumping into father's arms—perhaps without reflection; Abraham leaving Ur.)

(2) Faith is not some act that we perform for a time and then stop doing in order to do something else. It pertains to all our actions insofar as these are obedient to God.

(3) Faith is "adjectival" or "adverbial". It is a quality of other acts, not something that can be performed by itself.

e) However, although the relation of faith to works is so close that faith involves works, faith does not justify us in virtue of its character as obedience. It justifies by virtue of its quality as trust and receiving of Christ. It justifies because it looks away from itself, even from obedience, to Christ and his salvation.

iii. The necessity and sufficiency of faith for good works.

- a) Necessity, Hebrews 11:6; Romans 14:23.
- b) Sufficiency, Genesis 15:6; New Testament parallels.
- iv. Faith as motive.
 - a) Exhortations to act in faith, Matthew 8:10, 9:2, 22, 17:20, 21:22, etc.
 - b) Ethical appeal to the great realities which are the object of Christian faith, Ephesians 4:1ff., Romans 12:1ff., etc.
 - c) Indications that only believers are capable of doing good works.
 - d) Inseparability of faith from good works and *vice-versa* (above).
- d. Repentance.
 - i. Repentance is the negative side of faith and inseparable from it. It is turning away from sin, while faith is turning to Christ. Each involves the other.
 - ii. Repentance, therefore, functions as a motive as does faith, Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20; II Timothy 2:25f., Revelation 2:5.
 - iii. As faith is not only a preparation for action but a quality of actions, so is repentance. Repentance is not just believing that one is a sinner, or feeling sorry, or even hating one's sins. Repentance is actually turning away from sin, and that is found only in one's actions.
- e. Fear of God—see Murray, *Principles*, X.
- f. Hope.
 - i. Hope is faith directed toward the future aspect of salvation. Like faith, it is firm and sure, not tentative or wishful as the English word "hope" sometimes suggests. Romans 5:5; I Corinthians 1:7; I Timothy 1:1; Hebrews 3:6.
 - ii. As such, hope functions as a motive to good works.
 - a) Specific references, Acts 23:6, parallels; Romans 5:4ff.; II Corinthians 3:12ff.; Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 1:5 (there said to motivate faith and love!), I Thessalonians 5:8, etc.
 - b) Ethical passages motivating obedience by presenting the consummation of redemption [Above, II.B.1.c.v.].
- g. Love
 - i. Prominence of the love-commandment in Scripture, c. I.D.9.
 - ii. Relation of the love-commandment to the rest of the law, also cf. I.D.9.
 - iii. Necessity and sufficiency for good works, I Corinthians 13.
 - iv. Basic characteristics. (Here, love of God and of one another will be treated as one—cf. I John 4:19ff.)
 - a) Gratefulness.
 - i) In the covenant structure, the love-command follows and presupposes the historical prologue, in which the suzerain's gracious deeds are set forth. Love, then, is the vassal's grateful response to the suzerain's benevolence.

- ii) In the Old Testament structure, love is particularly Israel's grateful response to God for his taking Israel to himself and delivering them from death.
- iii) The New Testament calls us to love as God first loved us in Christ, I John 4:7-21; John 13:34f.

iv) Note, apart from use of the term “love,” the biblical emphasis on thanksgiving through offering, prayer, actions: gratefulness as “motive”. Emphasis of *Heidelberg Catechism*.

b) Covenant Loyalty.

i) “Love” is the term used in the treaties to describe the fundamental responsibility of the vassal: to give his ultimate loyalty exclusively to his covenant Lord, to avoid any competing treaty—relationships.

ii) Note this emphasis in Israel’s fundamental confession of faith, Deuteronomy 6:5ff., and in the first commandment of the Decalogue, which takes the role of a “love-command” in the Decalogue structure.

iii) In the New Testament also, love is covenant loyalty. It is a commitment to Christ as the only Lord and therefore a resolution to keep (obey) him [above, I.D.9.]. Thus, it is the mark of Christians as opposed to those outside the covenant (John 13:34f., etc.).

iv) As loyalty to the whole covenant institution, love binds the vassals to one another as to the suzerain. I John 4:19ff.

v) Douma, “To love means to stick with your choice.” *The Ten Commandments*, 21.

c) Comprehensive Reorientation of Life.

i) Deuteronomy 6:5f. and its New Testament allusions indicate that the love of God is a loyalty that is to permeate all aspects of life, so that nothing is left unaffected by it.

ii) Note the comprehensiveness of love as a way of life in I Corinthians 13, particularly its connections with all other Christian virtues.

iii) It has sometimes been asked whether the concept of love undergoes change from Deuteronomy (covenantal love—a relation of loyalty and obedience) to the later Old Testament (in Hosea, a more emotional commitment, focused on marriage rather than politics as a model).

(1) Remember, however, that marriage, life politics, is essentially covenantal in character and involves loyalty and obedience, as Hosea makes clear.

(2) Remember also that covenantal love, being a heartcommitment, a commitment of the whole person (nation),

engages the emotions as every other part of life. One cannot

love God with his whole heart while remaining cool to him. He demands (and wins) our emotional allegiance along with the rest of what we are.

(3) God’s love for us is highly emotional, Psm. 103:13, Isa. 49:15, 66:13, Hos. 11:3.

d) Imitation of God’s grace.

i) Cf. imitation of God as fundamental principle of biblical ethics,

I.A.3.

ii) Those who have been delivered will seek to deliver others, Deuteronomy 5:15; Matthew 18:21-35.

iii) Thus, we are called to imitate specifically God's love for us by loving one another in the same way, John 13:34f.; I John 4:7-21.

e) Imitation of the Atonement: laying down our lives for one another, I John 3:16.

i) The love of God which we are to imitate is most precisely displayed in the atonement: John 3:16, 15:13; Romans 5:8, 8:39 (in context); Ephesians 2:4f.; II Thessalonians 2:16; I John 3:16, 4:9f.; Revelation 1:5. Cf. Mark 10:45; I Peter 2:18-25; Philippians 2:1-11.

ii) Involves loving the "unlovely," since we were unlovely when Christ loved us, Romans 5:8; Luke 14:21; Matthew 9:9-13.

iii) Involves putting the interests of others above our own, Philippians 2.

f) Imitation of God's Common Grace: love of enemies, Matthew 5:43-48; Galatians 6:10; Exodus 23:4.

i) Question of the Imprecatory Psalms:

A) Remember that the Psalms are communal, not merely individual songs, and that they call down the wrath of God against those who oppose that nation identified with the Kingdom of God. In our time, these are not so clearly identified, and the long-suffering of God in our age is more central.

B) Nevertheless, there are imprecations in the NT as well as the OT: Matt. 23:17ff, Acts 1:16-20, Rom. 11:9-10, Gal. 1:8ff, Rev. 6:10, 18:20. Jesus takes Psm. 69 on his lips, John 2:17, 15:25, Rom. 15:3.

C) And the OT, like the New, prohibits personal vengeance (Lev. 19:17f, Psm. 5:6, 7:4, Prov. 20:22).

D) It is not wrong, however, to call down God's wrath on those who clearly oppose his kingdom—with the understanding that God may answer that prayer by bringing his wrath upon Jesus.

E) A proper imprecation disclaims personal vengeance. It is a prayer for the vindication of God's name against rebels, leaving vengeance in God's hands.

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F) God has revealed that he will show vengeance to some. The imprecatory Psalms are our "Amen" to his justice.

ii) Note "priority" given to the "household of faith" in Galatians 6:10.

This is like the priority of the family—everyone must provide for his own household (I Timothy 5:8) "especially". Our brothers and sisters in Christ will naturally be closer to us than those outside—our closest friends. But this does not require any mechanical computation dividing the church's funds into certain percentages. We are to be ready to meet the needs of those whom we can help,

without asking first about national or religious allegiance, Luke 10:25-37.

g) Seeking out responsibility.

i) Love is a disposition to keep the commandments of God [I.D.9.c.].

ii) Love seeks out what we can do to serve one another [above, d)-f)].

iii) Love, therefore, gives an inevitably positive thrust to the law of God, which tends often to favor negative formulation. It is not an adequate response to the law simply to abstain from certain things. (If that were true, we could achieve sanctification by remaining in bed.) Love calls the believer to seek out ways of doing positive good, not merely of avoiding evil.

iv) We may, therefore, see Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as an exposition of the law in light of the love-commandment.

v) Love involves a concern for justice, not only mercy or benevolence. (Response to common question of whether love as a basic principle of Christian ethics must be supplemented by justice (Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Niebuhr, Ramsey): the question assumes a sub-biblical concept of love.)

h. Hatred of evil, Gen. 3:15, Psm. 139:21f.

h. Other Christian Virtues (Galatians 5:22f., elsewhere): other "perspectives" on the Christian motive. Love is focal among them since it makes explicit the basic motivation of the atonement. Yet, all can teach us about the ramifications of love.

D. The New Life as a Source of Ethical Knowledge (overlap with normative perspective).

In order to know what to do, we must know God's law (normative perspective), the situation to which the law applies (situational), and ourselves as those who apply it (existential). The redemptive transformation makes us into new creatures who are capable of applying the law as God intended.

1. The Word as God's Presence in Blessing.

a. Scripture speaks of God's word in at least three ways:

i. Decree—the word by which God directs the whole course of nature and history.

ii. Address—the word by which he speaks to his creatures in meaningful sentences.

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iii. Presence—the word by which he comes to his creatures, by which he lives with them. Cf. syllabus on *Doctrine of the Word of God*.

b. By his word, God dwells with believers to bring blessing.

i. God's "name" placed on his people.

ii. The word written on their heart.

iii. The word as containing sanctifying power, Isaiah 55:11; Genesis 18:4; Luke 1:37; Matthew 4:4; Hebrews 4:12.

iv. "Revelation" as the knowledge of God given to all believers (Matthew 11:25; Ephesians 1:17).

v. Christ as the present word, John 1:14, etc.

vi. The Spirit as the breath which drives the word into the heart,

I Thessalonians 1:5, etc.

c. Formulation.

- i. Not a continuing special revelation, but an application to the heart of that revelation already given.
- ii. Specifically, the taking root of God's address in our heart so as to create true obedience.
- iii. To have the word (in this sense of "word") is to be actually obedient. Knowing it and doing it, therefore, coincide.
- iv. Since the word in this sense makes us obedient, we may say that it enables us to translate precept into action, to apply the written word in our actual decisions.
- v. Without this continuing divine work, we would be unable to do any good thing. Scripture itself does not make us good, unless the Spirit makes us obedient to Scripture.
- vi. To speak of the "word" in this sense is to speak of all the divine gifts which produce sanctification.
- vii. We ought to seek these blessings through all the "means of grace," through the word as address (Scripture, preaching, counsel), the sacraments, prayer.

d. Implications.

- i. We can see already that there is a kind of ethical knowledge (knowing how to obey, having ethical ability) which requires the sanctifying work of the Spirit. More on this below.
- ii. Ethics, therefore, can never be a merely academic discipline. It is never a matter of merely coming up with the best verbal formulation of ethical principle. Even an exhaustive catalogue to ethical principles (applications of Scripture) will not produce holiness unless the Spirit applies the word to the heart.
- iii. When we go to Scripture as a means of grace, we ought to seek not only the answers to questions, but also the power of the Spirit, working in and through the word.
- iv. Here, then, is another reason why all aspects of Scripture, not just the laws and ethical admonitions, are relevant to ethics. The questions, commands,

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prose, poetry, parables, history, etc., all serve equally as vehicles of that transforming power. Through the all, God turns our hearts to seek him.

2. Ethical Knowledge as Product of Sanctification.

That ethical knowledge which is peculiar to the Christian is inseparable from obedience [cf. c.iii., above]. That knowledge produced by sanctification is obedience.

a. Wisdom.

- i. Essentially a skill—"knowing how," rather than "knowing that" [Exodus 31:1-5; cf. Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*] (These are related, but are not the same thing.)
- ii. In Scripture, it sometimes takes on an ethical character—the skill of godly living, James 3:13-17.
- iii. Specifically, wisdom is often the ability to do the right thing in particular

(especially in difficult) situations. Luke 21:14f.

iv. Godly speech seems to be particularly emphasized as wise: Acts 6:10, I Corinthians 2:6 (cf. 1, 4, 13), 12:8; II Peter 3:15; Colossians 1:28.

v. Wisdom is an ethical guide, Proverbs 3:5f., 22-26, producing confidence.

vi. Source: redemptive covenantal communication of God's wisdom to us by his word and Spirit: Proverbs 3:19, 8:30, 28:7-9, 30:5; Jeremiah 8:8f; Exodus 28:3, 13:3; Deuteronomy 34:9; Acts 6:3; I Corinthians 1:24, 30, 2:6-16; Colossians 2:3, 3:16; II Timothy 3:15.

vii. Note well: One cannot claim to have wisdom in this redemptive sense unless he is obedient.

b. Knowledge (cf. *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*).

i. To "know God" in the deepest sense is to know his covenant lordship.

ii. Involves knowledge of the three perspectives.

a) The works of God (situational).

b) The will of God (normative).

c) Self in the presence of God (existential).

iii. Given by grace, by Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

iv. Based on the Word of God.

v. Obedience is not only a consequence, but a constitutive aspect of the knowledge, so that we cannot have knowledge without obedience:

Jeremiah 22:16, 31:31f., Hosea 4:1f., 6:6; John 7:17, 8:19, 32, 41, 55, 17:25; I John 2:3-5, 2:12ff., 3:16, 4:7; Philippians 3:8-11; I Corinthians 2:6f., 13; II Corinthians 10:5; Ephesians 3:17-19, 4:13; II Timothy 2:22f.; II Peter 1:3, 5, 2:18-20; II Thessalonians 1:8f.

c. Truth (cf. *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*; Murray, *Principles*, 123-128; Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 382f.).

i. Concept.

a) "Metaphysical" absoluteness.

b) "Epistemological" correctness.

c) "Ethical" rightness

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ii. Source: God in Christ by word and Spirit.

iii. One cannot, therefore, say that he has the truth in the fullest biblical sense unless, by God's grace, he is walking in the truth, obeying the truth.

d. Doctrine.

i. The teaching of the word of God to promote spiritual health (I Timothy 1:10, 4:6, 6:3; II Timothy 1:13, 4:3; Titus 1:9).

ii. This teaching is done by all Christians, and not only in formal discourse (Colossians 3:16!).

e. Conclusion: The knowledge conferred in the process of sanctification is not only the information necessary for obedience, but obedience itself.

3. Intellectual Knowledge and Ethical Knowledge.

How, then, does intellectual knowledge fit into the overall pattern of "knowledge" in the ethical-redemptive sense?

a. The ethical presupposes the intellectual, Hebrews 11:6; I John 4:2, etc.

i. These passages, of course, are talking about adults of normal intelligence and do not resolve questions about the status of infants, the mentally

retarded, etc.

ii. This is the sort of point generally in view when people say that “life ought to be built on doctrine”. That slogan misleads, I think, by equating doctrine with a set of propositions (cf. 2.d., above), but the intent of it is biblical.

b. The intellectual presupposes the ethical. (This point is less often made and less often understood.)

i. The unbeliever’s ethical rebellion compromises even his “intellectual” knowledge. For to know the way of blessing and willfully to forsake it is a stupid response. Cf. *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*. The “intellectual knowledge” of the unbeliever is paradoxical. He knows (and thus is responsible), but in some sense does not know (because he renounces his knowledge).

ii. Since, then, the grace of God overcomes our unbelief and its consequences it overcomes even the “intellectual” weakness caused by unbelief. Thus, when Scripture speaks of knowledge in general coming through sanctifying grace (I Corinthians 8:1-4; I Timothy 1:5-11; I John 2:3-6, 9-11, 20-27, 4:2f., 8, 13-17, 5:2f.; John 7:17, 11:40; Ephesians 1:17f., 3:18f.), it means knowledge as a whole. God’s gift of ethical righteousness brings restoration of knowledge, even in the “intellectual” sense.

iii. Note in the above passages especially the connection between “intellectual” knowledge and love (I Corinthians 8:1-4, 13:7, 11-13; Philippians 1:10; I Timothy 1:5-11; I John 2:9-11; Ephesians 3:17f.), faith (John 11:40), obedience (I John 2:3-6, 5:2f.; John 7:17).

iv. Scripture teaches us our duty, among other ways, by presenting the Christian virtues (the fruit of the Spirit). We can learn more about our duty by asking “How can I be more loving, gentle, etc.?”

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v. *Dokimazein*: A life of obedience gives us increasing discernment as to what our duties are.

a) Romans 12:1f.

i) The language of living sacrifice, nonconformity to the world, transformation, renewal of the mind emphasizes the necessity of ethical change.

ii) One who is so transformed will “prove what the will of the Lord is”.

(1) “Prove” (*dokimazein*) = “to discover, to find out or learn by experience what the will of God is and therefore to learn how approved the will of God is” (Murray, *Romans*, *ad loc.*). It is both learning what God wants and coming to approve of it.

(2) But notice that here ethical transformation precedes knowledge of God’s will, oddly enough. The point seems to be that the more we obey, the more we know of our duty. The new life equips us to know.

b) Philippians 1:10.

i) Love produces knowledge and *aisthesis* (perception, discernment, sensitivity: a moral sense, we might say).

ii) This sensitivity enables us to prove (*dokimazein*) *ta diapheronta* (what is important, what really matters at a particular time).

iii) Here again, obedience (love) gives me a sensitivity to God's will, to know what to do.

c) Ephesians 5:8-10.

i) We are light, and that inevitably involves obedience [cf. earlier discussion about God as light, I.A.10. Also the discussion of "Goodness and the Being of Man", above, III.B.]. Note again how righteousness comes from an inward principle.

ii) That obedience enables us to know God's will, verse 10.

d) Hebrews 5:11-14 (no *dokimazein* here, but the same idea).

i) Problem: doctrinal immaturity, inability to understand Melchizedek priesthood (11).

(1) They don't even understand the most basic things (12; cf. 6:1-2).

(2) They lack a standard (*logos*; cf. F.F. Bruce) of righteousness. Doctrinal immaturity is ethical immaturity.

(3) They are "without experience of" (*apeiros*) the standard. The problem is somehow related to inexperience. In some sense, it requires experience in the Christian life to understand the great doctrines.

ii) Characteristics of doctrinal maturity (14).

(1) They have a moral sense (*aistheteria*—cf. Philippians 1:10).

(2) The sense is exercised; note emphasis on experience, connotation of rigor.

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(3) The exercise is "by reason of use" (*exis*, a skill acquired through practice). The more we use our moral sense, the more accurate it becomes.

(4) The result of this exercise: the discernment of good and evil. Thus, we come to know our duty through vigorous moral exercise.

(5) The further result (in context): doctrinal discernment. We come to understand the Melchizedek priesthood as we obey God. As "life is built on doctrine," so "doctrine is built on life."

e) Conclusion: knowing our duty presupposes sanctification. It presupposes active involvement in the spiritual warfare. We may never suppose that knowledge of our duty always comes before obedience, as though we could spend three years studying God's will and then do it. Learning and doing God's will are simultaneous.

vi. Some principles implicit in these passages. (The above teachings are rather hard to understand in the context of our intellectualistic heritage. The following comments may help us to understand why Scripture presents the matter as it does.)

a) The intellect is part of life. Its health depends on the health of the whole organism. Intellectual acts are acts of the whole person, and like all other acts, they are subject to sin and sanctification. Sanctification

in one area of life begets sanctification in others. Thus, it is not surprising that in some senses obedience is prior to intellectual understanding. Cf. John 3:3.

b) Thinking presupposes the ability to think; “knowing that” presupposes “knowing how”. “Knowing how” involves obedience to a norm, i.e., doing right.

c) What does it mean to “have a concept” of something? Well, when we test people to see if they have the right “concept” of, say, a triangle, we find out what they can do. “Having a concept” always involves being able to do certain things. It is a disposition to action. Such dispositions to action are ethically directed—directed toward a particular goal which is either godly or sinful. Thus, concept presupposes disposition to act, which, in turn, presupposes ethical dispositions. (For a Christian” to have a “right concept” of God implies being ready to endure hardship for the sake of Christ. Concepts can take a long time to acquire. Compare the apostle Paul saying “We are more than conquerors” with a Sunday School class of five-yearolds saying the verse).

d) Knowing our duty involves application of Scripture to situations [I., II.], and that, in turn, involves a particular kind of moral vision.

i) Ethical judgments involve seeing our situations “in the light of” biblical categories. We ask, “Is this act murder?” “Is this act stealing?” etc. We want to call our experiences by their biblical names.

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ii) The text itself does not perform this job. Scripture does not mention each of our experiences specifically. Categorizing our experiences under biblical rubrics, then, is something that we must do, by God’s enabling.

iii) This moral task involves:

(1) Seeing patterns in our experience which can be compared with similar patterns in biblical events. (Hijacking planes is different from stealing oxen, but there is a common pattern).

(2) Seeing analogies between our experiences and biblical teachings, stories, etc.

(3) (Cf. the aesthetic terminology in Philippians 1:10; Hebrews 5:11-14: the moral sense is in some ways like an aesthetic sensitivity.)

iv) This moral discernment is not simply a matter of sense-experience.

(1) The “duck-rabbit”: You can see the location of every line in the picture, even reproduce the picture, without having the “rabbitaspect” dawn on you. Some would not even recognize the duck, though they see all the lines. “Seeing as” is not the same as “seeing”.

(2) Seeing a pattern involves experience in the world and in cultural means of representing the world. (In the above example, it helps to have seen ducks, rabbits, and other pictures

of ducks and rabbits.)

(3) Seeing ethically relevant patterns is even more complicated.

One can have a very good grasp of what takes place without “seeing” the relevant ethical patterns and analogies, without seeing this “as” adultery, Sabbath breaking, etc.

(4) Cf. this moral example: I feel rage. Is that rage to be understood as righteous indignation (John 2:14ff.) or is it murderous hatred (Matthew 5:22)? The answer may not be obvious.

(a) I may have memorized the whole Bible and still not seen the relevant pattern there.

(b) I may have very good knowledge of myself at one level, without seeing the pattern.

(c) Thus, it is not a mere question of intelligence or senseperception.

v) This discernment presupposes spiritual maturity. A mature Christian can do it better than an immature one. And this maturity is not necessarily equivalent to intelligence or education. Often, uneducated Christians will be among the wisest in noting the patterns and analogies.

vi) The discernment can come about in unexpected ways.

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(1) It may, of course, come about in expected ways: perhaps a verse of Scripture coming to mind, perhaps a fact of experience not noticed before (like a line on the duck-rabbit not noticed).

(2) But, since one may know all the verses, and all the facts, without knowing the patterns, often the insight will come in odd ways.

(3) David’s sin with Bathsheba is an example.

(a) David knew the Scriptures; he knew adultery and murder were wrong.

(b) David knew what he had done.

(c) Yet somehow, the moral dimension of his acts was missed.

Perhaps, he had rationalized; perhaps, he was spiritually cold.

(d) Nathan revealed, in a sense, no new facts to David—neither facts about Scripture nor facts about his actions. Rather, he put the facts already known into a pattern which presented obvious analogies with Scripture. The parable of the ewe lamb shocked David into seeing the pattern with full clarity.

vii) Thus, ethical discourse is never merely a matter of setting forth facts and verses.

(1) In an ethical debate, one or both parties may be very knowledgeable about Scripture and experience, but unable to make the connections because of immaturity.

(2) Thus, it may sometimes be useful, not only to reason, but also to tell stories, to pray, to sing, to share analogies, to do odd

things for “shock value” (Ezekiel), to teach by example.

(3) Sometimes, ethical agreement may be impossible due to the lack of vision of one or both parties. It may be necessary to abandon the discussion until the immature party has grown. Go out and live the Christian life, then come back and think some more. Exercise your discernment!

(4) Thus, for still another reason, we do not dare to try to work out all the answers before engaging in the Spiritual warfare.

e) The “Doctrine of Guidance”.

i) Two Extremes.

(1) Notion that guidance is essentially an academic process—the process of intellectual study of Scripture (danger in reformed circles.)

(2) Notion that guidance is by divine addresses above and beyond Scripture (danger in Pentecostalism).

ii) Both these views think that ethical knowledge is essentially a matter of acquiring propositional information. If we have an ethical problem, we merely need to know more facts.

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iii) They tend to ignore:

(1) That we need facts about the situation, as well as facts about revelation (situational perspective).

(2) That we need the insight to see patterns and analogies.

(3) That such insight often comes about in other ways than by academic study.

(4) That the Spirit’s work in our time is not the giving of new canonical revelation but is nevertheless crucial—the opening of our eyes to see how Scripture applies.

iv) Thus, guidance does not add to Scripture; but on the other hand, it is far from an academic or impersonal process. The believer is guided in a very personal, we might even say direct, manner. Often, his workings are mysterious, perhaps even mystical in some sense.

vii. Conclusion: The ethical is in some senses prior to the intellectual. If “life is built on doctrine,” doctrine being understood as intellectual understanding of propositional revelation, then it is also true that doctrine is built on life in various ways. There is a reciprocity between the two. Neither functions without the other.

4. The Organs of Ethical Knowledge.

a. The Heart.

i. The “work of the law” written on the heart (Romans 2:15): all of us know by nature the law of God in its fundamental demands. Even under sin, man’s own nature is revelational of God and of God’s will. [Cf. I.B.2.b.].

ii. The word “written on the heart” of the regenerate [Jeremiah 31:33ff.; cf. I.B.2.b.]. This is a more profound relation between the word and our being than that described in i. If the word is written on the heart, then, we not only know God’s requirements, but we obey them by nature. Thus, the

regenerate heart is naturally inclined to do God's will.

iii. The heart convicting us of sin, II Samuel 24:10.

iv. In general, the heart is the "center" of man's being. To say that the heart is a source of ethical knowledge is to say that our nature as a whole reveals God's will, and [in case ii.] even inclines us to do God's will (ethical knowledge as involving actual obedience).

v. Since man as a whole discerns God's will, we must not press too hard the various divisions of man into "faculties" (reason, will, memory, etc.) or elevate one faculty above another as an ethical authority within man. Those distinctions have some value [see below], but must be seen as in some measure "abstractions". Nor are they neatly distinguishable from one another.

vi. On the other hand, if man as a whole is an organ of knowledge, then all aspects of man are involved, somehow in ethical knowledge. Thus, there is some value in making distinctions within man to see in more detail how the knowledge functions.

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b. *Synteresis* (or *synderesis*).

i. In Thomas Aquinas, *synteresis* is reason as the faculty by which the first principles of morality are known.

ii. These cannot be derived from anything more ultimate, but are a "habit" of the soul.

iii. As such, they form the major premises of ethical syllogisms ("All stealing is wrong," etc.).

iv. The concept roughly coincides with our description of the "work of the law" written on the heart [a.i., above]. As such, it is unobjectionable.

v. By making this a faculty of reason, however, Thomas suggests that this is something autonomous, as Aristotelian reason was conceived to be.

c. Conscience.

i. In Thomas Aquinas, much moral theology.

a) Take the moral syllogism, "All stealing is wrong; embezzling is stealing; therefore, embezzling is wrong." As we saw above, the first premise is supplied by *synteresis*.

b) The second premise is supplied by "an inferior kind of reason".

c) Conscience (*syneidesis*) draws the conclusion, embezzling is wrong.

Thus, conscience is essentially a syllogistic rational process, though Thomas agrees that the term "conscience" may also be applied to *synteresis*.

ii. In Scripture."

a) "Conscience" (*syneidesis*) in the New Testament is used in ways roughly parallel to some Old Testament uses of "heart". The word "conscience" is not found in the English Old Testament (KJV), but there are places where it is a possible translation of "heart". Cf.

II Samuel 24:10 with New Testament references. We would be inclined to say that David's "conscience" smote him. This suggests that conscience is our inmost being, conceived as a means of ethical knowledge.

b) Conscience is not the law, or the work of the law [a.i. and a.ii., above]; rather, conscience bears witness to these revelations of God (Romans 2:15, cf. Murray's commentary). It is, therefore, not autonomous, but rests upon the revelation of God.

c) Conscience is, therefore, a source of ethical knowledge: Acts 23:1, 24:16; Romans 9:1, 13:5; I Corinthians 8:7-12, 10:25-29 in context; I Timothy 1:5.

d) There is no Scriptural reason to restrict the work of conscience to the work of deriving conclusions from ethical premises.

i) Conscience is certainly that which perceives the revelation and attests its truth.

ii) Conscience convicts us of sin [above examples].
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iii) Conscience is certainly involved in the perception of patterns and analogies [above, 3.] whereby we derive the minor premises of moral syllogisms ("Embezzling is stealing," e.g.).

(1) It may be identified with that "moral sense" we discussed earlier which Scripture also speaks of under other names (*aisthesis*, *aistheterion*). That function of conscience is presented in Scripture as something highly important, the solution to much ethical perplexity. It is not to be relegated to "an inferior kind of reason" as in Aquinas.

(2) We identify this with conscience simply because, according to Scripture, conscience perceives our obligations. This implies that conscience perceives, not only the law, but the application of the law.

e) Sin infects even the conscience, I Corinthians 8:7, 12; I Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:15. Cf. the expression "good conscience" or "pure conscience". Sometimes, however, these expressions refer not to the sin or goodness of the conscience itself, but to the sin or goodness of the person, to which the conscience testifies.

i) Therefore, conscience is not infallible. If "seared," it can fail to do its work of bringing sin to our attention.

ii) There is some paradox here. On the one hand, conscience sometimes fails; on the other hand, no one is ever without sufficient knowledge of God's will to be responsible for sin. We ought to assume, then, that conscience is never entirely destroyed in the sinner. (Cf. the problems about the sinner's having "knowledge" and having the "image of God".)

f) It is always wrong to disobey conscience, even when conscience errs, I Corinthians 8:7, 10, 12 in context. To disobey conscience is, by definition, to do what we think is wrong. And doing what we think is wrong always involves a spirit of rebelliousness against God.

g) It is not, however, always right to obey conscience. Obeying conscience is right only when conscience itself is right.

h) Thus, we have a duty to train the conscience. The conscience must be sensitized by Scripture and the Spirit so that it becomes a more reliable

guide.

d. Experience.

i. Scripture never deprecates knowledge obtained through the senses, as is done by rationalistic philosophers. The facts about Christ have been “heard and seen”. The gospel is based on reports to this effect by witnesses. (Cf. the emphasis on witnesses in biblical jurisprudence.)

ii. It is by means of our senses that we learn the content of Scripture and the facts of our situation.

iii. Sense-experience, in itself, is insufficient to teach us our duty (apart from divine authority, the Spirit, etc.). Yet, it plays an indispensable role in the discernment of our duty.

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iv. Scripture is understood only insofar as it makes some connection with our present experience (meaning as application). We understand the meaning of Scripture by drawing analogies with the patterns of our own experience [above, D.3.]. This is not in a technical philosophical sense, but it is experience, and it involves sensation.

v. Thus, we are better equipped to explain Scripture when we have experienced the realities to which Scripture refers (e.g. when we have gone through the same trials and triumphs that the biblical characters have gone through).

e. Reason.

i. “Reason” is one of the most ambiguous concepts in human thought. Some meanings:

a) Logic (especially in rationalism, cf. G.H. Clark).

b) The “laws of thought” (law of non-contradiction, etc.).

c) Following a certain method of inquiry.

d) The psychological capacity for making judgments based on various data. I will assume this definition below.

ii. There is plenty of work for reason to do in the area of ethics.

a) Moral syllogisms.

b) Determining causal relations between means and ends (situational perspective).

c) Scripture exegesis.

d) Analysis of the situation to which Scripture applies, etc.

iii. Like “conscience” (with which the concept of “reason” overlaps), reason is infected by sin (cf. apologetics courses). Thus, like conscience, reason is not infallible. We may therefore say (as we said about conscience) that to disobey reason is always wrong (God does not want us to live irrationally), but to obey reason is not necessarily right. Reason must be trained to operate on godly presuppositions, to use godly methods, to be sensitive to what really matters.

iv. Like conscience, reason may never suppose itself to be autonomous. The function of reason is to understand and apply the law, not to create it. And even the understanding and application must be done obediently.

f. Will.

i. “Will,” in general, is our ability to choose to act in a particular way. Thus,

will is always involved in any moral act or decision.

ii. Will is also involved in moral deliberation (which after all is itself a series of moral acts and decisions).

a) We choose to reason on certain presuppositions rather than others.

b) We choose to take the language of deliberation in one sense rather than in another (cf. existentialism).

c) We choose to accept one reason as valid and another as invalid.

iii. All of these choices, on the other hand, may be based on reasons.

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iv. Thus, it appears that reason and will are mutually dependent. We accept reasons because we choose them, and we choose because we find those choices reasonable. Will and reason, therefore, are not neatly distinguishable. (Cf. earlier discussion of “doctrine” and “life”.)

g. Imagination.

i. The word “imagination” in the English Bible is almost always used in a bad sense (Jeremiah 3:17, etc.). It represents, however, various Hebrew and Greek terms which bear little relation to the term “imagination” as commonly used today; thus, we cannot condemn a positive use of the term out of hand.

ii. Today, “imagination” can be a synonym for creativity, for the power to see patterns and analogies, for the power to conceive of possible situations in which something of importance takes place. As we’ve seen, ethics presupposes all of these skills.

iii. Imagination can help us in conceiving possible alternative courses of action, types of terminology, etc.

iv. Imagination may warn us against hasty generalization by presenting us with possible situations in which our principle does not apply (counterexamples).

h. The Emotions.

i. Scripture does not discuss “the emotions” as an independent item of concern, any more than it discusses “the intellect” or “the will” in such a way.

ii. Yet, it speaks a great deal concerning particular emotions—griefs, joys, anxieties, awe, terror, woe, lust, and also about concepts which have a large emotional component: love, hate, happiness, etc.

iii. According to Scripture, regeneration reorients our emotional life.

a) We learn to love God and hate evil, to rejoice in the good, to be content in the face of difficulty, etc.—the opposite of the unbelieving emotional disposition.

b) Regeneration does not necessarily make us more emotional or less emotional. We may assume that in this respect believers differ from one another. Yet, our emotional life, however active it may be, is now the Lord’s. Thus, our joys, sorrows, etc., are different from what they were.

c) As there is a change in our emotions by grace, so there is a command to work out this new principle (gift and task, “already” and “not-yet”).

i) It is sometimes said that feelings cannot be commanded, or even taught. Hegel (*Early Theological Writings*) thought that

Christianity was even more reprehensibly authoritarian than Judaism, because while Judaism commanded actions, Christianity commanded feelings.

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ii) Scripture, however, assumes that feelings ought to be changed to conform to God's will, and that they can be changed, by thought and by new habits.

d) Scripture teaches about the emotions, not only by commanding us to change them, but also by:

i) Presenting sin in its true ugliness (*contra* Eve, Genesis 3:6).

ii) Presenting the new life as something beautiful and delightful (rationale for emotive sermons).

iv. Emotions and knowledge.

a) Emotions, like reason, have a "hermeneutical" component; i.e. they assign (or discover) meaning in various data which they express.

Anger, fear, and delight represent certain assessments of the meaning of the facts at which one is angry, fearful, or delighted.

b) It may be said, therefore, that the emotions presuppose, or ought to presuppose, reason; for our feelings ought to be based on true assessments of meaning, and a true assessment is a rational assessment.

c) The opposite, however, is also true. Reasoning presupposes emotions.

Illustration: writing a book review is a highly "rational," even "academic" or "theoretical" activity. Yet, it is a job that requires a subtle interplay of emotions and reasoning. I read a chapter; I feel a certain way about it. I return to verify or falsify my feeling. Perhaps, the feeling changes as I analyze. Perhaps, the initial analysis agrees with the initial feeling. Or perhaps, feeling and analysis disagree, in which case, it is evident to me that the analysis is incomplete.

i) Note that feeling can be said to "lead" the intellect in some senses. My feelings indicate what, to me, is in need of analysis.

ii) Once I am entirely satisfied emotionally, the analysis usually ends.

iii) If I had no emotions at all about the book, I would not keep on reading it, much less write about it.

iv) It is hard to imagine any theoretical or rational inquiry which is not dependent on emotion in some such way. Cf. "cognitive rest" in DKG.

d) Emotions and reason, then, form a single complex set of capacities by which we seek to respond rightly to our world. (Other capacities are also part of the complex—sense-experience, imagination, etc.) Each involves the other.

e) Scripture never suggests that emotions are naturally more sinful or less sanctified than reason, or *vice-versa*. Man, as a whole, is depraved and, as a whole, is redeemed. At some particular point, however, emotion may signal an inadequacy in our reasoning [iv.c), above] or *vice-versa*. (Checks and balances.)

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f) Scripture never suggests that emotions in general must be subordinated to reason or *vice-versa*, (the former in Greek thought, the latter in, e.g., Hume). (*Contra* Gordon H. Clark, “The Primacy of the Intellect”.)

i) The emotions and the reason ought to agree, to be sure.

ii) “Disagreements between emotions and reason” are best understood as disagreements between one set of emotion-reasons and another set of emotion-reasons. One set will have a more emotional cast, the other, a more rational cast, but neither will be totally devoid of either emotion or reason.

iii) In cases where “reason and emotion disagree,” the resolution may involve a better analysis or a better (more godly) emotional response to the previous analysis. The direction of the solution is not dictated by the nature of reason and emotion as such.

iv) Illustration: you are persuaded rationally that there can be no good in Pentecostal worship; but, when you attend a service, you find yourself (surprisingly!) clapping along, singing, shouting Amen from the heart. Do you simply rebuke your emotions for contradicting your intellect? Do you simply abandon your previous conviction because it no longer “feels right”? Neither. Think it through, pray about it, study Scripture, train yourself in godly emotions. It could go either way.

v. Summary: Emotions are aspects of our ethical sensitivity, our *aistheteria*. We dare not neglect them as we seek to “prove what the will of the Lord is.”

PASTORAL AND SOCIAL ETHICS

Lecture Outline, Part Three: Exposition of the Law of God: Introduction; First and Second Commandments

by John M. Frame

Introduction

A. At this point we return to the normative perspective, as is traditional in Reformed ethics, asking “What does God’s Word tell us to do?” Remember, however, that other approaches are also legitimate. I shall from time to time bring light from other perspectives to our study of the Law.

B. The Decalogue in the Context of the History of Redemption.

1. Limitations of the Decalogue as summary of the law.

a) It is not the only summary, nor the one most recent in the history of redemption. Cf. Eccl. 12:13, Micah 6:8; Deuteronomy 6:5 (Matthew 22:37ff., parallels); Matthew 5-7 esp. 7:12; I Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:22.

(b) Like the love-commandment, the Decalogue is not sufficient in itself to define biblical morality.

(1) Even within the Old Testament, the Decalogue is supplemented by the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 21-24), case law, and application through non-legal material.

(2) The New Testament provides necessary correlations between the law and the redemptive work of Christ.

(3) Therefore, to define murder and adultery, e.g., we must consult all of Scripture, not just the Decalogue.

(4) The Decalogue itself announces that it must be seen in a context of redemptive reality.

(a) It begins with the announcement of the divine name.

(i) The law, therefore, is not authoritative merely because it happens to be true, but because of its author.

(ii) We obey the law because of who God is [cf. Part Two, I.A. Leviticus 18:2, etc.].

(iii) In the law, God reveals himself, his own character, as Israel’s covenant Lord.

(b) It then summarizes the history of redemption.

(i) The ground of obedience is not simply that the law is a command, but that God has redeemed his people. Gratitude.

(ii) Note how grace precedes law. Obedience is done in the context of grace.

b) Some elements of the Decalogue are limited to its historical situation.

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(1) The historical prologue, Ex. 20:2.

(2) Reference to Palestine in the fifth commandment, verse 12.

2. Importance of the Decalogue as summary of the law.

a) Church-historical importance: Reformed catechisms traditionally deal with ethics in a kind of exposition of the Decalogue. Reformed systematic

theology has also followed this procedure. Thus, this form is convenient for capturing what reformed people have most wanted to say about ethics.

b) Uniqueness of the occasion on which it was promulgated [C.1., below].

(1) Fulfillment of the promise of deliverance.

(2) Holiness of the mountain, thunders, lightnings, cloud, trumpet.

(3) This is the only time that the people of God as a whole gathered together and heard directly the divine voice.

(4) This is the “day of the assembly” (Deuteronomy 9:10, 10:4, 18:16), the day when Israel was constituted as God’s covenant people. This is part of our own community memory, since the people of God is one in all ages. Compare Ex. 19:6, 1 Pet. 2:9, also Rom. 11.

(5) This is the occasion upon which Moses was chosen as the mediator of God’s law (Exodus 20:19ff.).

c) Uniqueness of its function in the covenant structure.

(1) The Decalogue is the first written “covenant document” (Kline), the seed out of which grew the biblical canon as a whole. As a seed, we expect it to contain the whole biblical message in significant summary.

(2) As the covenant document, it functions as the basic constitution of Israel.

d) Uniqueness of its publication: “written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10).

e) Though the Decalogue is supplemented, it is nevertheless singled out in the later history of redemption as having a distinctive function within the canon: Deuteronomy 4:13, 5:1-27, 10:1-5; Matthew 5-7 (much commentary on Decalogue here), Matthew 19:16ff., parallels; Romans 13:9.

f) The basic requirements of the Old Testament law are not abrogated by the New Covenant [Part Two, I.D.5.], and the Decalogue does embody, on the whole, the “basic requirements.”

g) Hermeneutical principle: Generally when we seek light on a biblical doctrine, we look first at the passages where that doctrine is most focally and clearly presented. The Old Testament, on the whole, is more concerned than the New with setting forth our law (ethics, law). The Torah is the heart of Old Testament law, and the Decalogue is the heart of the Torah. Redemptive-historical change, of course, presents an argument against such focus on the Old Testament [Part Two, I.], but

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with due allowance for such change, considerations of hermeneutics do argue for it.

3. Conclusion: The limitations of this or any summary must be frankly acknowledged. Consideration of the Decalogue is not the only way to summarize biblical ethics, nor is it, in every sense, the best way. Yet, it is one useful way, and, in some respects, it is uniquely useful.

B. Decalogical Hermeneutics.

1. Breadth of the Commandments.

a) The problem: *The Westminster Larger Catechism*, Question and Answer 99, presents some rules for “right understanding” of the Decalogue which seem rather strange in contrast with our normal concept of “grammaticohistorical” exegesis.

(1) Rule 1 states that the Decalogue requires “the utmost perfection of every duty” and forbids “the least degree of every sin”. But it appears that the Decalogue deals only with ten areas of obligation and does not mention many others. Does the Decalogue really serve as a complete Christian ethic?

(2) Rule 4: “. . . where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded”

(a) In normal logic and hermeneutics, we do not deduce commands from prohibitions and *vice-versa*. “Keep of the grass.” does not ordinarily imply that you ought to give some positive encouragement to the growth of the grass.

(b) Often, it is not clear what “the contrary sin” or “the contrary duty” is. If I say, “Don’t write your name on the first line of the paper.”, what is the “contrary duty”? To write someone else’s name? To write your own name on the second line or some other line? To write nothing at all? The “contrary duty,” it would seem, must be mentioned specifically; we cannot simply deduce it from the prohibition.

(3) Question and Answer 108: The second commandment, we are told, requires such things as administration of the sacraments, religious fasting, vows. How are such duties to be found in the language of the commandment, granted the principles of “grammatico-historical” exegesis?

b) Response: Present-day use of these principles, without explanation, is bound to cause confusion among those trained in “scientific exegesis”. The writers of the catechism did not anticipate the distinctions which we, today, would consider necessary. Yet, the point they were making was not only valid, but important, and still is today. The catechism is looking at the sins described in the light of the whole Bible, and finds that when the whole Bible is consulted, each sin referred to in the Decalogue includes all the others (cf. James 2:10).

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(1) The first commandment: “other gods” include Mammon (money, Matthew 6:24), or anything else which competes with God for our ultimate loyalty. Since any sin is disloyalty to God, violation of any commandment is also violation of the first. Thus, all sin is violation of the first commandment. The commandment forbids all sins.

(2) The second commandment, similarly: the sin of worshipping a graven image is in worshipping anything (or worshipping by means of anything) of human devising. “Worship” can be a broad ethical concept in Scripture as well as a narrowly cultic one (cf. Romans 12:1f.). Any sin involves following our own purposes instead of

God's, false worship.

(3) In the third commandment, the "name of the Lord" can refer to God's entire self-revelation; and disobedience of any sort to that revelation can be described as "vanity".

(4) The Sabbath commandment demands godly use of our entire calendar—the six days is to do God's will, any ungodly use of time may be seen as transgression of the fourth commandment.

(5) "Father and mother" in the fifth commandment can be read broadly to refer to all authority [see later discussion] and even the authority of God himself (Malachi 1:6) so that all disobedience to God is violation of the fifth commandment.

(6) Jesus interprets the sixth commandment to prohibit unrighteous anger (Matthew 5:22) because of its disrespect for life. Since all sin manifests such disrespect for life, all sin violates the sixth commandment. It would not be wrong either to include a respect for spiritual life within the scope of this commandment.

(7) Adultery is frequently used in Scripture as a metaphor (indeed, more than a metaphor) for idolatry, Israel being Jehovah's unfaithful wife. The marriage figure is a prominent biblical description of the covenant order. Breaking the covenant at any point is adultery.

(8) Withholding tithes and offerings—God's due—is stealing (Malachi 3:8). Thus, to withhold any honor due to God falls under the same condemnation.

(9) "Witnessing" in Scripture is something you are, more than something you do [see later discussion]. It involves not only speech, but actions as well. It is comprehensive.

(10) Coveting, like stealing, is involved in all sin. Sinful acts are the product of the selfish heart. There is, therefore, a unity to sin as there is a unity to righteousness (=love).

c. Some principles:

1) The Catechism seems to assume the principle that proper applications of the commandments are aspects of their meaning.

2) It understands the concepts of the Decalogue (adultery, murder, etc.) in their full biblical meaning, bringing in data from all Scripture.

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3) It recognizes that each commandment is part of a broad system of commands, each of which takes the others into account.

4) The system as a whole requires primarily heart-obedience (the law of love). If your *heart* hates murder, it will motivate you positively to seek your neighbor's health.

2. Narrowness of the Commandments: Even though each commandment includes all the others, the commandments are not all synonymous. Each looks at our total obligation from a different perspective, in different terms. Lying is not precisely the same thing as stealing.

a) There is a dangerous tendency in some ethical writing to eliminate specific meaning in favor of general meaning.

(1) E.g., "Adultery is not mere abstinence from extra-marital sex, but is

really whole-souled fidelity to God;” “The sixth commandment tells us to promote God’s eternal life, and so has no bearing on abortion.”

(2) That is unwarranted.

(a) The general has no meaning apart from the specific. What is “spiritual chastity” if it does not entail any specific behavior?

(b) Reducing the specifics to the general brings in all the problems associated with situation ethics—a general law of love with no specific meaning.

(c) You can never refute a proposed specific application of a commandment merely by referring to its general meaning. E.g., you can never refute an application of the eighth commandment to the property tax simply by saying that the commandment deals with our stewardship before God. To refute a specific application, you must argue specifically. It is simply not true that God is concerned only about broad redemptive realities and not about narrow “details.” (Cf. John Murray’s comments on this.)

b) Therefore, every commandment has both a broad and a narrow meaning: The eighth commandment does teach that we should not rob God of his honor; but it also teaches that we should not eat donuts without paying.

3. Summary.

a) The commandments represent ten perspectives on the whole ethical life. (Cf. our earlier “triangle.” These relations would be pictured as a decagon, if I could draw one.)

b) Each commandment teaches the whole of our obligation from one particular point of view.

c) Each commandment also teaches many specific obligations which follow from the whole (“equal ultimacy of the one and many”).

d) The Larger Catechism can be defended, then, by saying that the commandments do encompass a great multitude of specifics, and that any specific commandment can be shown to be an application of any of the ten. However, I am not enthusiastic about the Catechism’s method of
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presentation. It seems to move between breadth and narrowness without a clearly persuasive principle of organization and derivation.

C. Summary of the Decalogue in Chart Form. (Don’t take this too seriously—JF).

Although each commandment involves all the others, they do differ from one another in “perspective” as we have indicated. There is a progress from one commandment to the next that can be summarized in the following scheme. The rationale for the scheme will be explained in the discussions of the individual commandments. “I” refers to the first commandment, “II” to the second, etc.

1. Our Obligation to Love the Lord (I-III).

a) **Father–heart** Worship only the true God (I)—Situational perspective:

b) **Son–word** Worship him only on the basis of his word (II)—

Normative perspective:

c) **Spirit–deed** Worship him only through the right use of the word

(III)—Existential Perspective: (The first three commandments manifest a trinitarian structure: God, the Word, our Spirit-induced response.)

2. Our Obligation to Keep God's Ordinances (IV-X).

a) Situational perspective: obedience in deed.

(1) Positively.

(a) The creation ordinances of labor, rest, and worship (IV)

(b) The creation ordinance of the family (V).

(2) Negatively.

(a) Vs. contempt for man's life (VI) (creation ordinances of worship and family).

(b) Vs. contempt for marriage (VII) (creation ordinance of the family).

(c) Vs. contempt for property (VIII) (creation ordinance of labor).

b) Normative perspective: obedience in word (IX).

c) Existential perspective: obedience in the heart (X).

D. Biblical Prefaces to the Law.

1. The Presence of God (Exodus 19): At Mount Sinai, when the covenant was made and Israel was set apart as God's people, the whole people of God heard the voice of God directly, without the mediation of prophecy or writing. This event is unique in redemptive history. [Cf. above, A.2.b.]

a) The phenomena.

(1) Thunder, lightning, Exodus 19:16, 20:18.

(2) Thick cloud, darkness, Exodus 19:16, 20:21; Deuteronomy 4:11.

(3) The trumpet, Exodus 19:16, 20:18: not the ram's horn (v. 13), but something else which grows in volume as God comes near.

(4) Smoke and fire, Exodus 19:18: "to the heart of heaven,"

Deuteronomy 4:11. Apparently something enormous, unearthly. The fire is emphasized, Deuteronomy 4:33, 36, 5:4f.—perhaps

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reminiscent of Exodus 3:2, or even Genesis 15:17 (cf. Genesis 15:12).

(5) The quake, Exodus 19:18.

(6) The voice itself, Exodus 19:9; Deuteronomy 4:12, 33, 36, 5:23ff.

b) Their purpose (cf. general purposes of miracles, connotations of *dunamis*, *teras*, *semeion* parallel with Lordship attributes).

(1) Exhibition of divine power: note emphasis on the greatness (Exodus 19:18), the loudness (19:20), the enormity of the fire (Deuteronomy 4:11), the uniqueness of the experience (Deuteronomy 4:32-36), the revelation of God's greatness and glory (Deuteronomy 5:24).

(2) Eliciting of fear.

(a) Terror of God's presence in judgment—Exodus 19:16, 20:18f.;

Deuteronomy 5:5, 25; Hebrews 12:18-21. This is not presented as the purpose of God in giving the signs, but as the actual result. Doubtless God intended the result, but the emphasis in describing the divine intention is on other points; see below.

(b) Sanctifying reverence—Exodus 20:20; Deuteronomy 4:10, cf. Deuteronomy 4:24.

(3) Instruction, Deuteronomy 4:36, cf. 4:10—closely related to ii.b).

(a) Confirming the mediator, Exodus 19:9, 20:18f.; (cf. "signs of the

apostles”).

(b) Confirming the content of the law, Exodus 20:22ff., Deuteronomy 4:10.

(c) Confirming the certainty of God’s mercy and judgment, Deuteronomy 4:24 and 33 in context.

(d) Confirming the identity of God himself, Deuteronomy 4:36 in context of 35.

c) Since the New Testament Church is one body with Old Testament Israel, the assembly at Sinai is part of our own community memory (cf. Exodus 19:6; I Peter 2:9), from which we also ought to take instruction. We have, however, an even greater memory, a greater vision of God in Christ (Hebrews 12:18-29), which has a greater, but parallel purpose. Hebrews reminds us also that “our God is a consuming fire,” 12:29.

2. The Name of the Lord (Exodus 20:1): As God had earlier identified himself to Moses as “I am” and “*Yahweh*” (Exodus 3:14f.), so now he identifies himself to all Israel as the Lord of the covenant.

a) A Personal Revelation.

(1) “*Yahweh*” is first of all a proper name, the name of a person. The covenant law, therefore, is not based merely on abstract principles; ultimately, it is the will of a person. The law reveals him to us by telling us what pleases and displeases him.

(2) “The Lord thy God”: Israel itself is involved.

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(a) In effect, Israel is part of God’s own name—God is thy God, God of Israel. Note the profundity, then, of God’s covenant identification with this people. God identifies himself with them and *vice-versa*. Such love for sinners!

(b) Singular pronouns are used for Israel throughout the Decalogue. This gives a sense of unity to the people and intimacy to their relation with God.

(c) The covenant law, therefore, is not an abstract legal document, but a loving self-communication between the Lord and the people he has chosen for himself.

b) A Meaningful Revelation: “*Yahweh*” is not only a proper name, but, like most near-eastern proper names, it says something about the person named. The meaning of “*Yahweh*” is rather difficult to ascertain, but a survey of the emphases found in contexts where the name is prominent suggests that the following ideas are important (“Lordship Attributes”):

(1) Control: God rescued Israel from Egypt in such a way that displayed his control over all things in heaven and earth.

(2) Authority: He speaks in his law the word which must be obeyed without question, which transcends all other loyalties, which governs all areas of life.

(3) Presence: He identifies himself with his covenant people, primarily for blessing, but also for judgment. “I am with you.” [Cf. a., above].

3. The Rule of God (Relation of Blessing and Obedience) (Exodus 20:2, etc.).

a) Blessing Precedes Obedience (priority of sovereign grace).

(1) Emphasis on the making of covenant following divine victory:
Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 1:1-5, 4:44-49, 29:1.

(2) Emphasis upon grace as the source of victory: Deuteronomy 4:20,
6:10-12, 7:6-8, 8:17, 9:1-6.

(3) Emphasis on sovereign election: Deuteronomy 7:6-8, 10:14-17.

(4) Since we have been chosen as God's people, we must obey,
Deuteronomy 27:9ff.

(5) Since God has delivered us and blessed us, we must obey,
Deuteronomy 6:20-25, 10:21-11:7, 8:1-6, 11-18, 29:2-9; Leviticus
19:36f., 20:8, 22:31ff.

(6) God addresses Israel in the singular: emphasizing divine intimacy,
individual responsibility.

Excursus: Does this mean that the law is given only to Israel, since it is based on Israel's distinctive election

from among all the nations? No; it means that this particular covenantal formulation of the law is given only to Israel. The law itself is given to every man in nature an conscience (Romans 1-2), and the law given through nature and conscience is described as "the work of the law" (Romans 2:15), that is, ordinances agreeing in content with the law given through Moses. It is also clear that rulers in heathen nations were expected to rule justly, that is, in accord with God's law. See Bahnsen, *Theonomy*, 339-364. The Mosaic Law, then, is a formulation of that law that is known to all people and which binds all people. It is, however, a particular application of that law to a very "peculiar" people. It is not easy to sort out what is generally applicable from what applies

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only to Israel specifically [cf. Part Two, I.D.5-6.]; but it would be wrong to assume that since the law is a redemptive revelation its demands may not be proclaimed to unbelievers. Quite the contrary.

b) Blessing Follows Obedience.

(1) If you obey, then you are the people of God. Exodus 19:5.

Interesting and paradoxical contrast with Deuteronomy 27:9ff. The point is that obedience and salvation are inseparable. You can't have either without the other.

(2) Promise of prosperity, victory, to those who obey: Exodus 20:6, 12, 23:22-33; Deuteronomy 5:32f., 6:1-3, 17-19, 8:7-10, 11:10-12, 13:18, Psm. 1. Note NT parallels: Matt. 6:33, Mark 10:29, 1 Cor. 3:21, Eph. 6:1-3, 1 Tim. 4:8. Grace leads to works, which lead to more blessing.

I. The First Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

A. Theological Setting.

1. The Positive Focus.

a) WLC 104: What are the duties required in the first commandment?

A. The duties required in the first commandment are, the knowing and acknowledging of God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify him accordingly, by thinking, meditating, remembering, highly esteeming, honouring, adoring, choosing, loving, desiring, fearing of him, believing him, trusting, hoping, delighting, rejoicing in him; being zealous for him; calling upon him, giving all praise and thanks, and yielding all obedience and submission to him with the whole man; being careful in all things to please him, and sorrowful when in any thing he is offended; and walking humbly with him.

b) Love.

(1) Despite the negative formulation of the commandment, it actually commands that most positive of Christian virtues, love. [Cf. Part Two I.D.9; III.C.3.f.].

(a) It comes at the point where the suzerainty treaty would demand love by the vassal for the suzerain.

(b) Its meaning is synonymous with the covenantal sense of love: exclusive covenant loyalty.

(2) Relations to context.

(a) Love, therefore, is the grateful response of the vassal to the saving mercies of the Lord described in the historical prologue: here, thankfulness for the redemption from Egypt.

(b) This love, in turn, becomes the motive for obeying all the rest of the law.

(c) It provides a summary of our obligation—cf. Deuteronomy 6:4ff.

(3) New Testament realization: Matthew 10:34ff., 19:16-30, 16:24; Philippians 3:7f. One of the strongest proofs of the deity of Christ is that

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he demanded the same absolute loyalty that Jehovah demanded in the first commandment.

c) Worship: Exclusive loyalty to a god means exclusive worship.

(1) Narrow focus: cultic purity. Sacrifice, prayer, etc., made exclusively to the Lord.

(2) Broad focus: ethical purity.

(a) Pure worship always involves coming before God with clean hands and pure heart (Psalm 24:4; cf. Luke 1:74; Acts 24:14; II Timothy 1:3, etc.).

(b) Cultic terminology (*'abad, latreuein, douleuein, leitourgein*) (especially outside the Bible, but inside it as well) for service in general, whether religious or secular. Thus, it is not inherently bound to cultic use.

(c) Thus, the language of worship [above; and also the language of priesthood, sacrifice, temple, holiness, cleansing] is used in Scripture for ethical purity in general: Matthew 6:24; Romans 12:1; James 1:27; Hebrews 12:28. Note also the use of these terms in connection with Paul's mission: Romans 1:9; Philippians 2:17.

“Worship in the broad sense.”

(d) The exclusiveness of our worship involves exclusive loyalty to God's law—this law and no other; cf. discussion of the sufficiency of Scripture for ethics. Deuteronomy 6:1-9, 10:12-16.

(e) Thus, the first commandment has both a narrow and a broad meaning [cf. Introduction, B.]. In one sense, all sins are violations of the first commandment, for all sins are defections from pure covenant loyalty.

d) Consecration: Covenant loyalty means that God's people and all their possessions are to be set apart to him.

(1) Note the many laws in the Pentateuch involving the sanctification of

individuals and things:

(a) Redemption (“sanctification”) of the firstborn, Exodus 13.

(b) Ransom of individuals, Exodus 30:1ff.

(c) Consecration of the Nazirite, Numbers 6.

(d) Consecration of first fruits, Deuteronomy 26.

(2) Note especially those institutions defining covenant membership:

(a) Circumcision, Genesis 17:9ff.; Leviticus 12:3.

(b) Passover, Exodus 12; Numbers 9; Deuteronomy 16.

(c) Sabbath [see below, IV.].

(3) Comments:

(a) Covenant loyalty (love, worship) must take concrete form. One must not only love God inwardly and seek to obey; rather, he must confess the Lord openly by identifying himself as belonging to God.
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(b) Since we are fallen, this consecration involves confession of our sins and reception of God’s atoning grace.

(c) In confessing the Lord, we also identify ourselves with his people. There is no such thing as a merely private allegiance to God.

(d) Note also the importance of recognizing ourselves as stewards, recognizing that God owns all and we only hold in trust.

(e) In the New Testament too, the elements of public confession, sacraments, identification with God’s people, stewardship are emphasized.

(f) More broadly, Scripture teaches that our chief end is to glorify God (see earlier lectures).

2. The Negative Focus.

a) WLC 105: What are the sins forbidden in the first commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the first commandment are, Atheism, in denying or not having a God; Idolatry, in having or worshipping more gods than one, or any with or instead of the true God; the not having and avouching him for God and our God; the omission or neglect of any thing due to him, required in this commandment; ignorance, forgetfulness, misapprehensions, false opinions, unworthy and wicked thoughts of him; bold and curious searching into his secrets; all profaneness, hatred of God; self-love, self-seeking, and all other inordinate and immoderate setting of our mind, will, or affections upon other things, and taking them off from him in whole or in part; vain credulity, unbelief, heresy, misbelief, distrust, despair, incorrigibleness, and insensibleness under judgments, hardness of heart, pride, presumption, carnal security, tempting of God; using unlawful means, and trusting in lawful means; carnal delights and joys; corrupt, blind, and indiscreet zeal; lukewarmness, and deadness in the things of God; estranging ourselves and apostatizing from God; praying, or giving any religious worship, to saints, angels, or any other creatures; all compacts and consulting with the devil, and hearkening to his suggestions; making men the lords of our faith and conscience; slighting and despising God and his commands; resisting and grieving of his Spirit, discontent and impatience at his dispensations, charging him foolishly for the evils he inflicts on us; and ascribing the praise of any good we either are, have, or can

do, to fortune, idols, ourselves, or any other creature.

b) Why is the law so negative? All the commandments except the fourth and fifth are framed as prohibitions. (Note, however, strong emphasis on love and obedience at the end of the second.)

(1) As we have seen, a negative formulation does not rule out positive applications. Positive or negative form is more a matter of phrasing than of meaning. But why all the negative phrasing?

(2) The negative focus reflects the reality of sin and temptation. Obedience to God always involves saying no—to Satan, to the world, to our own lusts. The negative formulations call our attention to the fact that this is

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a fallen world, and, at every point, we must be prepared to do battle with sin.

(3) The very notion of “exclusive” covenant loyalty requires negations for its exposition. To love God exclusively involves denying that special love to anyone else. As God’s electing love makes distinctions among men, so we must distinguish among the gods.

(4) Specifically: the negations call for:

(a) Repentance—turning away from sin to Christ.

(b) Self-denial—taking up our cross and following Christ.

(c) Separation—breaking away from all associations which compromise our loyalty to him.

(5) Remarkably enough, the New Testament is no less negative in its emphasis. Cf. the Sermon on the Mount. Even love, the most positive of Christian virtues, is expounded negatively in I Corinthians 13.

(6) You see how important it is to preach negatively. Many object to this, finding in any criticism or prohibition a lack of love. But truth must be proclaimed in contrast with error, good in contrast with evil if it is to be presented clearly and relevantly to the real needs of people.

c) From what must we separate?

(1) From false gods (“No other gods before [or besides] me”): Moloch, Baal, Asherah, etc. (Deuteronomy 6:14f., 12:29-32). Cf. the third temptation of Jesus, Matthew 4:9f.

(2) From giving ultimate devotion to something less than God: Mammon/money, (Matt. 6:24), possessions (Luke 12:16-21) [Col. 3:5 says greed is idolatry], politics (Dan. 2:21), pleasures-entertainment (2 Tim. 3:4), food (Phil. 3:19), self (Deut. 8:17, Dan. 4:30).

(3) From false ideas of God

(a) Limiting him to a narrowly religious sphere.

(b) Supposing that our works might gain his favor.

(c) Sentimentalist religion: a god who does not judge.

(d) Pluralism: God as one of many ways to heaven.

(e) Neo-paganism: mystical identity between God and the self.

(f) Extreme feminism: the creation of new, female images of God.

(g) Practical or theoretical deism.

(h) Process and open theisms.

(4) From false prophets and religious figures: Deuteronomy 13, 18;

Exodus 22:18.

(5) From false religious practices: divination, human sacrifice, petty superstitions: Deuteronomy 18:9-14; Leviticus 18:21, 19:26, 31, 20:6, 27.

(6) From those who practice false worship, Exodus 12:15, 23:25-33; Leviticus 20:1-6; Deuteronomy 21, 13:6ff.; Ezra 4:1-3; Deuteronomy 125

7:16-26, 23:3-8, 25:17ff., 27:2-7; cf. Exodus 34, 23:31ff.; Deuteronomy 7:1-4.

(7) From uncleanness: Numbers 19; Deuteronomy 23, etc.

(a) Ceremonial

(b) Ethical, II Corinthians 7:1; cf. metaphorical senses of “idolatry,” Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:5; I John 5:21; Mark 6:24; Luke 6:9ff.

(8) From any compromise with false religion, II Kings 5:18; Joshua 23:7; Ezra 4:1-3; Exodus 23:24, 34:13; Numbers 23:52; Deuteronomy 12:1ff., 16:21.

B. Problem Areas.

1. The Occult.

a) The problem.

(1) Contemporary devotion to the occult goes back to the pre-Christian period of western history. Shows the incompleteness of the evangelization of the west.

(2) Even professing Christians often dabble in the occult on the side, as a kind of supplement to an inadequate Christianity, or out of sinful dissatisfaction with the simplicity of the gospel.

(3) Petty superstitions: aversion to walking under ladders, etc.

(4) Then, there are those who investigate the occult in a quasi-scientific way—not out of any obvious religious commitment, but seeking to further their knowledge. E.g.: is there a connection between the positions of the stars and the events of human history?

b) Biblical principles.

(1) Scripture forbids worship of anything other than the one true God [A., above]. This includes worship both in the narrowly cultic and in the more broadly ethical senses. False gods are not to be prayed to, bowed down to, or obeyed as ethical authorities.

(2) God forbids “turning to” or “hearkening to” wizards, diviners, Leviticus 19:31, 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 18:9-14.

(a) The practices listed in Deuteronomy 18:9ff. are somewhat obscure, but are clearly manifestations of the false religions.

(b) The main contrast in Deuteronomy 18 is between “hearkening” (obedient hearing) to the false religions (verse 14) and “hearkening” to the words of the true prophet (15, 19).

(c) Thus, the authentic word of the Lord is the only, the sufficient ultimate authority for ethics. Cf. earlier discussion of the sufficiency of Scripture for ethics.

(d) The passages do not teach that we must ignore the wizards and diviners; indeed, it was necessary for God’s people to know what

these people were saying in order to enact the proper judicial sentence.

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(e) Nor do these passages deny to the wizards all knowledge of truth. They know the truth in the same (paradoxical!) way that all unbelievers do (Romans 1), and it is therefore not impossible that we might occasionally learn from them. But we are not to hearken to them as to God. They must not be allowed, either in theory or in practice, to become our ultimate authority or to function as coordinate with or supplementary to Scripture.

(f) Petty superstitions: the problem is a religious fear, with no basis in divine revelation.

(3) False religions have no power over the believer but by God's decree.

(a) Cf. earlier discussion of I Corinthians 8-10. No idol is anything in this world. We may resist even the devil himself, and he will flee (James 4:7).

(b) God may permit Satan to afflict us (Job, etc.), but will not allow him to take us from the hand of Christ.

(c) Therefore, we need not fear that we will be hurt through mere association with the occult—e.g., through talking to a Satanist, reading a horoscope, studying the history of numerology, etc.

(i) There is nothing wrong with satisfying curiosity about such matters. Occult religions are no different, really, from other false religions, and we generally see no problem in reading the *Koran* or the *Book of Mormon*. [Cf. ii.d), above].

(ii) I am not recommending that anyone saturate his mind with false religious propaganda. Harm can be done in that way. In that respect, however, there is no difference between occult literature and mindless TV show.

(4) There is no biblical objection against a Christian scientific study of occult claims, insofar as those claims do not conflict with Scripture.

(a) Unbelievers do know truth in a sense and up to a point [Romans 1; ii.e) above]

(b) Unbelievers do make discoveries which a Christian scholar must take account of, though he must reject the religious presuppositions of the discoverers.

(c) Sometimes, these discoveries are deeply embedded in the context of a false religious practice.

(i) A witch doctor using an herb which turns out to have real medical value.

(ii) Acupuncture, techniques for relaxation and self-defense—often very difficult to separate from Eastern religious practice, but showing some insight.

(iii) Ancient Greek beliefs about the spherical shape of the earth, mainly stemming from mythological and philosophical speculation about the perfection of the spherical form.

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(iv) Astrology: we must reject astral determinism and the idea that life is to be governed by the stars. Yet, the hypothesis, e.g., that personality is influenced by the time of year at which one is born must not be dismissed simply because it is taught by a false religion.

(v) We may appreciate the music and art which comes out of false religious orientations, even while opposing the content expressed.

(vi) Clairvoyance? I have an open mind (as Geesink, Schilder), but would reject any religious teaching (as Edgar Cayce) based on that alone.

2. Religious Pluralism (Douma)

a) Are there many ways to heaven? No. The issue is Christ.

(1) His unique nature, Matt. 16:13-17, 22:42, John 1:1, 3, 14, 10:30, Rom. 9:5.

(2) Unique in making the Father known, John 1:18.

(3) Unique as the way to the Father, John 14:6, Acts 4:12.

b) Otherwise, living without God, Acts 14:15-16, 1 Cor. 1:21, 2:10-16, Gal. 4:8, Eph. 2:12, 4:18, 20.

c) Does not require any aversion or disrespect to non-Christians. We call them to liberation from the angry gods of paganism, superstition, etc. The secularization of the world encourages the development of science and technology. But technology can become an idol too.

3. Secret Societies (Masons, Odd Fellows, Rosicrucians, etc.).

a) The situation.

(1) Membership in such societies has been common among professing Christians, especially in American Presbyterianism. It is often very difficult to persuade people that there is anything wrong with them.

(2) Many reformed bodies, however, have sharply opposed membership in such organizations: the U.P. Church of North America; the R.P.N.A., the C.R.C., the O.P.C. The R.C.A. refused to take such a stand.

(3) Even those bodies which do oppose such organizations, however, have not been fully consistent with their positions. In the OPC, some ruling elders have been Masons in recent years.

b) The problems.

(1) The oath of secrecy: does Scripture permit us (as such organizations sometimes require) to pledge secrecy in advance of knowing what is to be kept secret?

(2) The bond of brotherhood: Masons are expected to help other Masons before anyone else; the brotherhood of Masonry takes precedence over other relationships. But Scripture calls Christians to give their most profound loyalty to the body of Christ. Galatians 6:10.

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(3) The religious rites of Masonry: may a Christian join in prayer, reading of Scripture, religious ceremonies which are not being carried on in the name of Christ, in which all worshippers are invited to pray to their own gods?

- (4) The non-Christian character of Masonic theology.
- (a) Claim to have found the essence of all religion, of which Christianity, Judaism, Islam, etc. are only forms.
 - (b) God is father to all, apart from Christ.
 - (c) Scripture references distorted, taken out of context. “The stone which the builders rejected” referred to the Masonic order.
 - (d) Salvation available through all religions.
 - (e) Morality based on nature, not Scripture; Scriptural law not obligatory.

c) The pro-Masonic response:

(1) A Christian may use Masonry to further God’s purposes in common grace. It is useful to encourage false religions and “natural morality” since God uses these to restrain sin in the world.

(2) Reply: God does use such religions and moralities; In fact, he uses evil itself to further his purposes. But he does not, thereby, give his approval to evil or to false worship. Further, Scripture never calls on believers to give any encouragement to false worship and doctrine; quite the contrary.

4. Secular Schools, Labor Unions, etc.

a) The problem.

(1) These organizations are not cultic or explicitly religious in the sense that those discussed earlier are. Yet, we have seen that the first commandment has a broad as well as a narrow focus.

(2) Many such organizations set forth ideologies (Marxism, secular humanism) inconsistent with Christianity, and they limit the freedom of their members to express and apply their Christian faith.

b) Response.

(1) As we noted in earlier discussions, mere association with false religions is not idolatry; else, we would have to withdraw from the world. The mere hearing of false doctrine through involvement with such organizations does not constitute sin. I Corinthians 5:9f.

(2) Nor does Scripture forbid all support to such organizations. Jesus advocated paying taxes to Caesar, even though the Roman government was idolatrous. Paul permitted Christians to purchase food from idolatrous vendors, even when that food had been offered to idols. Therefore, it could hardly be wrong to pay union dues to a Marxist union in return for various services, or to pay tuition at a humanist university.

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(3) It would be sinful for us to adopt non-Christian ideas or practices as part of our involvement with such organizations, either as a condition of membership or because we allow ourselves to be persuaded. That would be “hearkening” unto false teaching.

(4) There is, of course, always a danger in exposing ourselves to temptation. Let him who stands take heed lest he fall. It is always dangerous to expose yourself to false teaching; unless you have a good reason for doing it, and are well grounded in the faith, don’t do it.

(a) Scripture tells us to focus our attentions on things that are pure, true, honorable, etc. (Philippians 4:8). This does not mean that we are to be ignorant of evil; Paul was not. But it does mean that we ought not to saturate our minds with spiritual poison.

(b) This consideration is a serious one when we consider the possibility of sending young children to public schools.

(i) In general, I recommend the use of Christian schools or home schools, especially for the youngest children.

(ii) However, there are places where Christian schools are either non-existent or inadequate educationally or foster seriously false notions of Christianity (such as the notion that Christians never associate with non-Christians). Here, then, there are problems on both sides, and the alternatives must be weighed carefully in each particular case. The parents will be responsible for the outcome. Ultimately, they are the educators of their children.

(iii) And it is important to prepare children to live in the real world, not in a Christian ghetto. For most of us that will mean at some time receiving education from unbelievers. That may occur in high school, college, grad school, vocational training, etc. Christian parents need to decide responsibly at what point and to what degree their children should be exposed to such education.

5. Apostate Churches.

a) Scripture does not directly address the question of the apostate church.

(1) It might be argued that Old Covenant Israel had become apostate by rejecting Christ. Still, Scripture does not assume that one could simply leave Israel at his own discretion. The Jews were bound to Israel by birth, circumcision, priesthood, temple; there was no alternative. Only the making of a New Covenant by divine initiative could warrant a separation of the Christian church from the Old Covenant people of God. No such divine provision exists to free us from contemporary church organizations.

(2) In the New Testament, the possibility of an apostate church is not considered. It is assumed, in fact, that apostates will demonstrate their

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apostasy by leaving the church, I John 2:19, or else will be disciplined by the church (I Corinthians 5:9-13).

b) However, Scripture does not guarantee that any particular church organization will remain faithful until the return of Christ, anymore than it guaranteed the perpetual faithfulness of Old Testament Israel.

c) It cannot be argued that Christians are bound to visible church organizations in the same way that Israel was bound to the temple and the Aaronic priesthood. Christ is our temple, our one mediator.

d) Further, it is doubtful that any modern denomination can even claim the title “church” on a New Testament basis. In the New Testament, “church” is applied to local assemblies, to city churches, to the church universal, but

not to anything like a modern denomination. The “denomination” is an anomaly; we must treat it as a church for practical purposes, since it is the only recognized visible form of the church beyond the local unit; however, in a deeper sense, it is only a temporary makeshift, a tent in which we live while awaiting and working toward the completion of our house—the restoration of all Christians to one visible church. Thus, to leave one denomination and enter another is not the same thing as schism from the New Testament church.

e) Still, division among brethren is not to be taken lightly, for division tends to produce hurt, lessening of fellowship, weakening of the whole body of Christ.

f) Separation is warranted:

(1) When a particular organization loses any of the defining marks of the church (classically formulated as the preaching of the word, the right administration of the sacraments, discipline).

(2) When membership in such an organization requires commission of sin: in 1936, many left the Presbyterian Church USA on the ground that they were being required to support false teaching as a condition of membership.

g) While separation is required only on the above grounds, we cannot argue that it is forbidden in every other instance. One might leave a church or denomination to join another for many reasons—e.g., to find greater opportunity for developing and using one’s gifts. It is important, however, that wherever enmity or strife play a role in such a division, that the division not be allowed to prevent reconciliation.

h) Be careful of oversimplifying the questions involved here. There are many complications in particular cases. For instance, one might argue that it is sinful for a particular evangelical congregation to belong to a liberal denomination, but not for an individual evangelical to belong to that congregation. Apostasy of a denomination does not necessarily imply the apostasy of every congregation therein, even though it might imply some lesser sins in those congregations.

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II. The Second Commandment: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

WLC, 108: What are the duties required in the second commandment?

The duties required in the second commandment are, the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his word; particularly prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ; the reading, preaching, and hearing of the word; the administration and receiving of the sacraments; church government and discipline; the ministry and maintenance thereof; religious fasting; swearing by the name of God, and vowing unto him; as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship; and, according to each one’s place

and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry.

109: What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?

The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself; the making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever; all worshipping of it, or God in it or by it; the making of any representation of

feigned deities, and all worship of them, or service belonging to them; all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretense whatsoever; simony; sacrilege; all neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God has appointed.

A. Main Thrust (narrow focus):

Forbids making images for the purpose of bowing to them—i.e., doing homage to them as representations of deity, and / or as media through which God draws near.

1. Context of worship.

a) The formulations in Exodus and Deuteronomy seem at first reading to forbid all image-making, i.e., all art.

b) Other considerations, however, counteract this first impression:

(1) Scripture never suggests that there is anything wrong with art in itself, except possibly in these passages.

(2) Scripture not only permits, but warrants the use of ornamentation and in particular the making of pictures—of cherubim, bells, pomegranates, Exodus 25-28; note especially 25:18ff., 28:33ff., chapters 35-39; cf.

I Kings 6:14-36, 10:19ff. Cf. also Numbers 21:8, Ezekiel 41:17-20.

(3) The brass serpent was ordained by God to heal the people as they looked toward it (Num. 21:6-9), This was not idolatry. But the people

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later made idolatrous *use* of it (2 Kings 18:4), and God was then pleased with its destruction.

(4) Use of the Hebrew terms allows for both idolatrous and non-idolatrous use of the same item *matz-tze-bah*, pillar, designates idols in some contexts (Exodus 23:24, 34:13; Leviticus 26:1; Deuteronomy 7:5, etc.) but is elsewhere used in a good sense (Genesis 28:18, 22, 31:13, 45ff., 35:14, 20). The resultant meaning is that a pillar can have either an idolatrous or non-idolatrous function—that the erection of the pillar is neither right nor wrong in itself. It is the use, not the object itself, with which the commandment is concerned.

(5) *Pesel*, graven image, is always used in a bad sense, as an object used for idolatrous purposes. As I see it, it denotes objects used in idolatry, not art objects as such.

(6) *Temunah*, likeness, is always used in a bad sense when referring to likenesses of created things, thus similar to *pesel*. Interestingly, however, it can also be used to refer to a likeness of God, Numbers 12:8, Psalm 17:15, not all unfavorably.

c) Positively, the context is one of religious worship (not only public, but private, Deuteronomy 27:15).

2. Representations of deity.

a) The commandment does not forbid all religious use of images, for such images were used in the tabernacle and temple worship. [Cf. passages under 1.b.ii., above].

b) Specifically, it forbids the use of images as representations of deity.

(1) It forbids “molten gods,” Exodus 20:22f., 24:17; Leviticus 19:4.

(2) It forbids erecting images, pillars, etc., for the purpose of bowing down to them, Leviticus 26:1. In effect, the second sentence of the commandment in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 gives the purpose for which the making of images is forbidden.

3. Representations of the true God.

a) Obviously, the second commandment forbids making images of false gods. In that respect, however, it is redundant, since all worship of false gods is condemned already in the first commandment.

b) At crucial points, the language of the commandment is invoked specifically against the worship of Jehovah by images.

(1) Deuteronomy 4:15ff.: The commandment is warranted by the fact that Israel saw no form at Sinai, where the true God was manifested.

(2) Exodus 32:1-6: The golden calf was intended to be an image of Jehovah.

(a) Verse 4: “These are thy gods (*elohim*),” with plural pronoun and verb. But there is one calf. The verse as a whole is a paraphrase of Exodus 20:2.

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(b) Verse 5: Following the making of the calf and the altar, Aaron announces a feast of Jehovah, which would make no sense if he and Israel had determined to worship other gods.

(c) Verse 6: The next day they offered burnt-offerings and peaceofferings, best understood as those required by the true God.

(3) I Kings 12:28ff.: The calves made by Jeroboam were intended to represent Jehovah.

(a) Note verse 28, like Exodus 32:4, a reference to Exodus 20:2.

(b) The people are condemned initially, not for worshipping a false god, but for worshipping in a way not ordained by God. But in 1 Kings 14:9, Jeroboam’s calves are called “other gods,” indicating the unity between the second commandment and the first. To worship Yahweh by an image is to worship another god.

(c) Ahab (1 Kings 16:31) went from violating the second commandment to violating the first, worshipping Baal.

(4) Compare Micah, Judg. 17:2, 18:30, who also worshipped Yahweh by an image.

4. Pagan Sacramentalism.

a) “Bowing down to wood and stone” does not necessarily mean that the wood and stone are considered divine. Image-worship, even within paganism, is generally more sophisticated than that. The wood and stone

may receive homage, not because they are themselves divine, but because they are media through which the god draws near to the people and the people to him.

b) Especially, the image represents a conduit of *power* from the god to the worshipper (victory, fertility, etc.).

c) Thus, the commandment proscribes, not only the crude belief in the deity of material objects, but also the more refined sacramentalism described above.

B. Relationship to the First Commandment.

1. In general, it can be said that the first commandment deals with the object of worship, while the second deals with the way in which worship is to be carried on. Cf. the two meanings of “idolatry”—either worshipping a false god or worshipping by means of an image. Cf. Deut. 12:4-5, 31.

2. The first commandment focuses on the heart-attitude, therefore, and the second focuses on the external fruit of that attitude. Cf. the general biblical relation between faith and works or between love and obedience, both of course, products of redemption.

3. The two involve one another. To worship God contrary to his will is in effect to worship a false god—our own imagination. And to worship a false god is to respond disobediently to the revelation of the true God. 1 Kings 14:9.

4. The first commandment, objectively, focuses on the uniqueness of the true God; the second focuses on the Son of God, as the exclusive revelation of the Father—[see C.3.c., below].

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5. The curse and blessing pertains to both the first two commandments, [cf. C.4.a., below]

6. The number-problem.

a) Augustine regarded our first two commandments as one commandment and divided our tenth commandment into two. In this, he is followed by the Roman Catholic and Lutheran traditions.

(1) Division of the tenth into two commandments is implausible.

(2) Union of the first two commandments makes some sense: both commandments dealing with worship, and the second concludes with a reference to God’s jealousy and a curse-blessing formula which on any numbering system may be seen as sanctioning both of our first two commandments. Other evidence, however, points in the other direction. Historically, the uniting of these commandments has been linked with a lax attitude toward the use of images, the prohibition of images being in effect “buried” in the middle of one commandment. That is a danger, though the problem is more basically one of human sin than of the proper numbering system.

b) The Jews from an early period regarded the historical prologue (Exodus 20:2) as the first commandment, and then united our first two commandments as the second. The prologue, however, cannot be plausibly regarded as a commandment, especially in the light of our current knowledge of the covenant structure. One could argue that the prologue could be seen as *dabar*, word. (The ten are grouped together as *debarim* in

Ex. 34:28 and elsewhere.) But in such contexts, *dabar* seems virtually equivalent to *mitzvah*—cf. especially the references in Esther.

C. Grounds for the Commandment.

1. God's sovereign invisibility, Deuteronomy 4:12, 15ff.

a) The invisibility of God is a somewhat paradoxical doctrine in Scripture.

(1) On the one hand, it is stated plainly and often, Ex. 33:20, 23, Romans 1:20; John 1:18; Colossians 1:15; I Timothy 1:17, 6:16.

(2) On the other hand, God does make himself seen. Theophany plays an important role in the history of redemption. Cf. Genesis 32:24ff.;

Exodus 33:18-23; Numbers 12:8 (*temunah*, used in second commandment); Isaiah 6. Cf. man and Christ as "image" [below, 2.],

Kline on the "glory cloud".

(3) We should distinguish between

(a) God's *essential* invisibility, John 1:18, Rom. 1:20, Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 1:17, 6:16.

(b) God hiding himself because of man's sin, lest divine judgment break out against man, Ex. 19:24, 33:20, 23. In these passages God *can* be seen, by theophany. But God restricts man's access to the theophany. This is what I call below God's "redemptive-historical invisibility."

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(4) Note paradoxical formulations, II Corinthians 4:18; Hebrews 11:27; John 14:7ff.

(5) Much of the difficulty in applying the second commandment arises because of this paradox: how do we do justice to God's invisibility without compromising what Scripture teaches about his visibility?

b) Coordination of the biblical teaching, especially as applied to the second commandment:

(1) Theophanies typically increase our awareness of God's incomprehensibility and transcendence.

(a) Isaiah, who saw the Lord, presents some of the strongest teaching against idolatry. He saw the Lord "high and lifted up" (6:1), from whom even the seraphim covered their faces (6:2). Through him, God says, "to whom will you liken me?", 40:25.

(b) Ezekiel (1:28) and John (Revelation 1:17) fell on their faces in response to the visions. Isaiah was overcome by his sin (6:5).

(c) The mentality of idolatry is quite opposite to this. The idolater produces an image to reduce the distinction between creator and creature, between Lord and sinner. He wants to have a more direct link to God on his own terms, more immediate access to use God's power.

(2) Theophanies are given by God—the result of God's sovereign initiative. The "essential invisibility" of God means that God is not limited to any visible form or to any particular visible form. God himself decides whether and when and how he will manifest himself visibly. Invisibility is a function of sovereignty.

(3) Deuteronomy 4 is not, however, primarily concerned with God's

“essential” invisibility, but with his “redemptive-historical” invisibility.

(a) Idols are prohibited, not because God is invisible in a general sense, but because there was no *temunah* (form) seen at Mount Sinai at the giving of the law (f:12, 15).

(b) God’s *temunah* is seen on other occasions—Numbers 12:8; Psalm 17:15; however at this particular point in redemptive history, it was concealed from the nation as a whole.

(c) Thus, the point is not only that God is sovereign over his visible manifestations [above, ii.], but also that, in fact, God sovereignly determined not to make himself visible in the Sinai revelation.

(d) The significance of this can be seen from a broader redemptive-historical perspective. The “seeing” of God is primarily an eschatological concept in Scripture. It is at the last day that “every eye shall see him” and that, in a particular way, the “pure in heart” will “see God” (Matthew 5:8). The eschaton, however, has its anticipations in history: in theophany, in Christ. The present kingdom of Christ is “semi-eschatological”—the kingdom already and not-yet.

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(i) The Old Covenant was primarily a time, therefore, of divine invisibility. God willed to be invisible in a special way to indicate the futurity of the kingdom in unequivocal terms. The theophanies underscored this emphasis by presenting the people with a contrast between their present kingdom and the kingdom to come.

(ii) The New Covenant is a time of paradox. The Father has been seen in the Son—touched, handled, etc. Yet, now, Christ has ascended. Though fully visible, he is not on earth as he was and as he will be. Thus, the more paradoxical assertions (found even in the Old Testament) are stressed especially in the New Testament—II Corinthians 4:18; Hebrews 11:27. Until the parousia, we walk by faith, not by sight: Hebrews 11:1, 13, II Corinthians 5:7; Romans 8:24. But the fact that Jesus has been seen makes all the difference. That “has been” can even be put in the present tense, Hebrews 2:9.

(4) During this redemptive-historical period, revelation is normally by word rather than by vision, theophany, image.

(a) In Exodus 20:22-23, the prohibition of images is connected with the fact that God spoke with Israel from heaven. (Interestingly, *ra`ah* is used: Israel saw that God spoke from heaven.) The point seems to be that use of images would hinder Israel’s memory of and / or obedience to the divine voice which defined the covenant terms.

(b) In Deuteronomy 4:12, “form” is repeatedly and emphatically contrasted with “voice”. At Sinai, Israel saw no form, but did hear the voice—the statutes and ordinances.

(c) In general, theophanies are given for the sake of hearing rather than

contemplation. The focus is on the words spoken, rather than on the shapes perceived. The latter only reinforce the former. The prophet, typically, does not describe the vision in great detail, but records the words given him to speak. Even in Ezekiel, where visions are described in greater detail than usual, note the emphatic transition from vision to word in 1:28-2:1f. The prophet does not gaze contemplatively at the vision; rather he falls down as though dead. Then, he hears the voice. Cf. Revelation 1:17-2:1.

(d) When Philip asks to see God, Jesus points to himself (John 14:9), specifically, his words (10). (His works are introduced also; I take it, however, that, in this context, they are introduced primarily as attestations to Jesus' words.)

(e) The image of the cherubim in the temple is clearly subordinate to the presence of the law in the ark.

(f) This principle, of course, is not absolute. As we have seen, there are theophanies, and there are images (Christ and man) during the 137

time before the *parousia*. There is also the visible revelation of God in the creation. However, the following points are beyond question:

(i) Between the fall and the *parousia*, visions and theophanies are given to few; but the word of God is available to all. Even the Gentiles have the work of the law written on their heart.

(ii) God calls us to obey his word, not to expect theophany.

Scripture is sufficient, as we argued in Part II.

(iii) Our time is predominantly a time of walking by faith rather than by sight, II Corinthians 5:7; Romans 8:24; Hebrews 11:1, 13.

(5) In expositions of the second commandment, it is sometimes said that since God is infinite, invisible, and immaterial, he cannot be pictured, and, thus, that any image is in effect a lie. This point contains some truth, but requires modification.

(a) Although the Scriptures do refer to God's invisibility in this connection, they also do justice to the ways in which God makes himself visible, and the sense in which his current invisibility is redemptively-historically conditioned [above].

(b) Even if God never took on visible form, even if he chose always to remain invisible, it could not be said, for that reason, that God cannot be pictured.

(i) Christ and man are God's "images," pictures of God, even in their physical characteristics. (Cf. Course in Doctrine of Man, Kline's articles.)

(ii) A picture is never identical with the thing pictured; nor does it claim to reproduce exhaustively the characteristics of the thing pictured (which would be the same). Your daughter does not feel like Kodak paper! "Picturing" is possible even when there are great differences between the picture and the thing pictured.

(iii) It is possible to "picture" something invisible—by producing something visible which corresponds to it and reminds us of it:

pictures of atoms, man's arm as picture of God's strength, etc.
(iv) In one sense, anything can be a picture of anything if we are trained to interpret the picture in a way which leads us to the thing pictured. "Picturing" is based not only in the characteristics of the picture and the thing pictured, but also in the social conventions which set the rules for "representing" and the abilities of individuals to see the applications of those rules. Cf. discussion of "seeing as" in Part Two.

(c) But isn't God incomprehensible and therefore, incomparable (Isaiah 40:18-26, 46:5)? And doesn't incomparability preclude picturing?

(i) Incomparability is a paradoxical notion, like invisibility. God is incomparable, but Scripture is constantly comparing him with creation—negatively, of course (God is not like . . .) but also positively (God is a rock, a lion, a king, etc.). In one sense,
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everything Scripture (and we) say about God is based on comparison.

(ii) The point in Isaiah 40, etc., is that alongside all the comparabilities between God and creation, there is a fundamental incomparability, namely, the creator / creature distinction itself. It is as important to note how God is unlike the world as to note how he is like it (even if, paradoxically, even our language of unlikeness presupposes likeness). Isaiah teaches that idolatry obscures the creator / creature distinction. The idolater ignores the obvious (and comical!) differences between his weak, beggarly idols and the eternal God.

(iii) Bowing down before an idol necessarily involves such confusion. One bows before an idol because he thinks the idol, as opposed to the ordinary creation, represents the distinctive character of God. To him, it represents, not so much the likeness between creator and creature, as the distinction between creator and creature. But, of course, he is deluded. The idol is wholly inadequate to represent that distinction.

(d) Conclusion: God can be pictured, though of course not exhaustively. However, idols are never adequate pictures of God, since their makers seek to minimize the creator / creature distinction. They are lies. The deception, however, has little to do with God's invisibility as such. There is no deception in representing the invisible by the visible, as long as necessary distinctions are made. The deceptiveness of idolatry, then, is better considered under the following heading:

2. God as the living God.

a) Idols cannot see, hear, smell, or [especially in the light of 1.b.iv. above] speak: Deuteronomy 4:28; Psalm 115:5-8; 135:15-18; Habakkuk 2:18f.; Isaiah 46:7; Jeremiah 10:5; I Corinthians 12:2; Isaiah 40-48.

b) Idols are made of wood, stone, gold, silver: Deuteronomy 4:28, 28:36, 64, 29:17, Exodus 20:23; Isaiah 40:18ff., etc.

c) Idols, therefore, mislead us about the most distinctive characteristics of God, as opposed to those of the false gods—his absoluteness [cf. 1. above] and his personality. It is not that a person cannot be pictured by an inanimate medium; rather, the point is that the use of idols distracts us from those characteristics of God which we should especially be concentrating on. Worse, people make idols to avoid being confronted with the absolute personality of the true and living God.

3. Respect for the structure of creation.

a) Note in Exodus 20 that all of creation is described: images are prohibited of anything in heaven, earth, or sea. This three-layer description is a common Scriptural way of describing the whole creation, hearkening back to Genesis 1:26. The point, therefore, is that worship is to be focused on the creator, as opposed to anything in creation.

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(1) Recall the statement of Romans 1:25 that idolatry involves “worshipping and serving the creature rather than the creator.”

(2) Recall 2.b. above, which reproaches idols for the base materials of which they are made.

b) The dignity of man himself is at stake, also.

(1) In Genesis 1:26f., to which allusion is made in the second commandment, man himself is the image of God. For man to bow down to an idol is not only to dishonor God, but also to dishonor his image in us. How can God’s image bow before something less than himself, something over which he has dominion? Even angels refuse human worship.

(2) Idols, far from conveying divine power, are far weaker even than men. Note the satire on idolatry in Isaiah 40-48 focusing on the weakness of the idols. Cf. Galatians 4:9.

(3) Over and over again, idols are described as human creations, the work of men’s hands, Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 4:28; Acts 7:41. Note emphasis on the ingenuity of the human idol-maker, finding ways to keep his god from falling over, etc.: Isaiah 40:18ff., 44:12ff. Idols are not only subject to us in the creation order [i., ii.], they are our products. Our very creativity, reflecting God’s ultimate creativity, is being prostituted.

(4) Those who make idols destroy themselves. The makers of idols shall be “like unto them” (Psalm 115:7, 135:18), i.e., dead.

(5) In redemption, we are renewed in the image of Christ. If it is blasphemy for God’s image to bow before an idol, it is surely blasphemous for one renewed in the image of Christ to do it.

c) Christ himself is the image of God in a distinctive sense. In redemption, he is the image through whom our relation to God is mediated. But the idolater claims precisely that his creation performs the function of mediation. Thus, he denies the exclusiveness of Christ’s redemptive work. It may be said that the second commandment refers to Christ—that it summons us to worship exclusively in his name. [Note 1.b.iv. above on the redemptive-historical thrust of this commandment.]

4. God's covenant jealousy, Exodus 20:5ff., Deuteronomy 4:24, 5:9f. Cf. Hebrews 12:29 which invokes the language of Deuteronomy 4:24 in the context of New Covenant worship.

a) The reference to jealousy and covenant sanctions probably refers to both of the first two commandments, rather than just the second. Jealousy is frequently invoked as a basis for the prohibition of the first commandment: Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 6:13-15.

b) Jealousy is a covenantal concept: God will not tolerate any deviation from the exclusiveness of our covenant loyalty to him. Deuteronomy 4:23f.

(1) God's name is jealous, Exodus 34:14. His covenant name binds him to his people and thus the people to him.

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(2) In our discussion of the seventh commandment, we shall note the frequent parallels drawn between idolatry and adultery. Idolatry is essentially violation of our marriage vow, our covenant with God.

God's jealousy is the jealousy of a husband toward an unfaithful wife.

The divine jealousy, therefore, begins with his covenant love. His anger burns against those who have offended that love.

(3) In Exodus 34:14, God's jealousy forbids the making of covenants with the inhabitants of the land.

(4) Note the covenantal language of II Kings 21:7f.; Ezekiel 8 describing idolatry in the place where God chose to set his name. Ezekiel 8:3 describes "the image" "which provokes to jealousy," i.e., the image in the temple itself.

c) The covenant jealousy is symbolized by "consuming fire."

(1) Though Israel did not see the "form" of God at Mount Sinai, they did see a remarkable visual display: lightnings, a thick cloud, smoke. The picture is one of a great fire.

(2) The fire is threatening. The people may not go up the mountain (Exodus 19:22) "lest Jehovah break forth upon them." The wrath of God is like a flame which reaches out to consume.

(3) Significantly, both man and beast are kept from the mountain, 19:13; Hebrews 12:20. Violators will be stoned. The distinction between creator and fallen creation is strictly maintained. [Cf. above, 3.]

(4) Scripture reminds us of the fire when we are tempted to covenant unfaithfulness, Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews 12:29.

d) Relations among the various grounds: God's jealousy guards the structure of creation—his own sovereign authority and distinctive nature as well as that of Christ and man, his created image. Since creation itself is structured covenantally, this is to be expected. His jealousy maintains that structure against all apparent threats. Hence:

D. Sanctions.

1. The curse: "visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children and upon the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."

a) Does this mean that children are punished for their fathers' sins, contrary to Ezekiel 18:14-17?

(1) The passage presupposes that the children are as guilty as the fathers.

Leson'ay = in relation to those who hate me. By its position, the word refers both to the fathers and to the children.

(2) The children do, therefore, suffer for their own sins. In a sense, however, they also suffer for their fathers' sins. Not that they bear the penalty deserved by their fathers; certainly not that the fathers go free. But the iniquity of the fathers begins a process whereby the wrath of God is stored up, to be released perhaps generations later in terrible fury. Cf. Leviticus 26:39; 2 Kings 17:7-23, Isaiah 65:7; Amos 7:17; Jeremiah 16:11ff.; Daniel 9:16; Romans 1:24ff. (on the increase of sin

141 from one generation to the next). In this sense, the punishment of the children for the fathers' sins is not denied by Ezekiel 18:14-17. Cf. also Matthew 23:29-33. The sins of the fathers corrupt the environment, the family and social life of the people, setting the scene for judgment.

(3) Scripture teaches that there is a remnant that escapes the judgment upon the wicked generation. Therefore, there is nothing fatalistic here. The converts at Pentecost heeded the apostolic injunction to "save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40), and they were saved. By God's grace, we can, amazingly enough, leave one generation and join another, the family of God! It is possible, however, even for members of the elect remnant to lose their earthly lives in God's historical judgments.

(4) Our solidarity with Adam is a special case. As he is our representative, we are directly guilty of his sin (Romans 5, cf. course in *Doctrine of Man*) in a way in which we are not responsible for the sins of our more recent ancestors.

b) Civil sanctions.

(1) The practice of idolatry (public enough to be witnessed) is a capital crime, Deuteronomy 17:2-7.

(2) The idols of Canaan are to be utterly destroyed; not even the silver and gold in them may be kept, Deuteronomy 7:25f., 12:3.

c) Note the emphasis upon God's justice, and upon the seriousness of sin, particularly idolatry. The idolater hates God, treasures up wrath for himself, and brings enormous spiritual damage on later generations. Recall the effects of secular humanism upon education, the media, etc., in our own time.

2. The blessing: "and showing lovingkindness unto a thousand generations of them that love me and keep my commandments."

a) Mercy is greater than wrath. Cf. Romans 5, "much more."

(1) *Dor*, generation, is not found in the Hebrew text of Exodus 20:5f. or Deuteronomy 5:9f. It is understood as that to which "third" and "fourth" apply, and, thus, should also be understood as following "thousand."

(2) *'alafim*, thousands, is, to be sure, a cardinal number, but there is no special ordinal form of *elef*.

(3) Cf. Deuteronomy 7:9, where *dor* is used, and God's *hesed* is extended to a thousand generations.

b) Note the implicit connection between covenant jealousy and mercy. Jealousy is not only negative; it guards the blessings of the faithful.

c) Note the promise also of material prosperity, Leviticus 26:1-13. The connection is not mechanical (Job, etc.), but God promises blessing to the whole person.

d) Ultimately, the promise is fulfilled in Christ, the one righteous man from the wicked generations of Adam. His generations are the ones who love
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God and keep his commandments. He refused idolatry (Matthew 4:8-10) even to gain all the kingdoms of the world. Now all the kingdoms are his, and ours in him—blessings unmeasured.

e) The lack of symmetry between judgment and mercy testifies to the greatness of the grace of God. The wicked get what they deserve; the righteous partake of utterly inexhaustible goodness in Christ. The blessing does come to those who obey; but it is out of all proportion to anything deserved by the obedient.

E. Broader Implications: The Positive Biblical Doctrine of Worship [Cf. I.A.1.b.]

1. Distinctively monotheistic: the strong prohibitions against worshipping other gods are positively reinforced by the central altar, Deuteronomy 12:1-4. One God, one altar, one law, one nation, one way of salvation. Ultimately, the cross is the one altar.

2. Redemptive: Biblical worship is focused on sin, forgiveness and rejoicing in redemption. There is nothing in it of magic or manipulation, our trying to gain God's favor or even to control God. Rather, we confess our sins and plead God's mercy on the basis of his sacrifice.

3. Imitative of God: Cf. Kline in *WTJ*, Spring and Fall, '77, Spring, '78. He argues that the tabernacle, the temple, the priests' garments and the human worshippers themselves are presented in Scripture as images of the "glory cloud" of God's presence. [Cf. C.1., above: images are not forbidden because images are impossible. Rather, images are forbidden because of the very richness of imagery supplied by God himself at his covenantal initiative.

4. By Divine Command: the "regulative principle."

a) Formulation: "But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture." (*Westminster Confession of Faith XXI:i*).

(1) Cf. XX:ii: "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his word; or beside it, in matters of faith or worship." Note position of the semicolon, distinguishing faith and worship from other matters.

(2) Note also two important qualifications in I:vi:

(a) "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his won glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be

deduced from Scripture” Worship is not limited to “express” teachings of Scripture, but is based also on legitimate inferences from Scripture. That is, applications. The Confession makes no sharp distinction between the meaning of Scripture and its

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application, and no distinction at all between these as to their authority.

(b) “. . . and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed.” Whenever a question arises as to whether or not a practice is justified by the regulative principle, we must ask whether that practice is an “element” of worship or a mere “circumstance”. Such questions are often difficult to answer. Yet, the Confession sees rightly that to apply Scripture to a situation always involves some Christian prudence, some knowledge of the situation, some extra-Scriptural premises. That cannot be avoided in worship or in life in general.

(3) Summary.

(a) What we do in worship must be prescribed by Scripture. “Whatever is not commanded is forbidden.” In Lutheranism, a different principle prevails—“Whatsoever is not forbidden is permitted.” Roman Catholicism is even further from the Reformed principle, claiming the right to command what Scripture neither commands nor forbids. Modernism is even worse, permitting and, at times, commanding what Scripture forbids.

(b) The regulative principle does not require that everything we do in worship be the response to a specific divine command. Acts performed as response to inferences from Scripture, approved examples in Scripture, or as circumstances of worship are permitted.

b) Scriptural Basis.

(1) Recall earlier discussions of the sufficiency of Scripture for ethics—for human life in general.

(2) Scripture is particularly jealous to guard this principle in the area of worship. [Cf. Exodus 25:40; Hebrews 8:5; Numbers 16:1-40, 20:10-13; I Samuel 13:8-14; I Chronicles 13, 15:1-15 (especially 15:13).] These passages set forth the principle that the commands of God concerning worship are not to be violated.

(3) Beyond this, there are also passages condemning idolatry on the ground that an idol is a product of human initiative, a human creation. [Cf. C.3.b.iii., above.] Not only are we not to violate God’s commands, but, more specifically, we are not to devise means of worship beyond what God has commanded. Cf. also C.1. on God’s sovereignty in revelation.

(4) Scripture teaches explicitly that God is not to be worshipped according

to human devices.

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(a) God condemns certain forms of worship simply on the ground that they were not commanded, Leviticus 10:1f., Jeremiah 8:31.

(b) Colossians 2:22f. condemns “will-worship”—worship arising from human initiative.

(5) In the New Covenant, the principle is fulfilled and confirmed in the finished sacrifice of Christ, to which no one may add. Ultimately, Christ is our priest, and we come before God in his name alone. (Hebrews 8-10).

(a) Even in the Old Covenant, there were “ordinances” (Hebrews 9:1). Christ performed the antitypical ordinances (9:11-28). The whole pattern of worship, then, is subject to God’s ordination—the regulative principle.

(b) Our regular worship is part of the pattern. We also enter the holy place (10:19), imitating the prior entering of Christ. This language pertains not only to salvation in general, but also to the worshipping assembly (verses 24-25). Cf. Shepherd’s argument, *Biblical Doctrine of Worship*, 52-55.

(6) As a matter of fact, when we assemble for worship, we are assembled to obey certain divine commands. Anything else we do while assembled cannot fairly be called “worship”.

c) Life and Worship: The point about the semicolon [a.i., above] raises the question of the relation between acts of worship and other kinds of acts. Cf. the treatment of this question from another angle in I.A.1.b.

(1) In creation in general, all things happen by God’s command. There is no permission without command.

(2) Human life in general is subject to God’s law alone as the ultimate standard: Deuteronomy 4:1f., 12:32, Proverbs 30:6, Acts 5:29.

(a) In a sense, all that we do is response to divine command. Some divine commands are so broad as to cover all of life, so that everything we do either obeys or disobeys them: Genesis 1:28; I Corinthians 10:31; Romans 14:23, etc. Cf. previous discussions of *sola scriptura*.

(b) Thus, there is no gray area of things which God neither approves nor disapproves. Everything we do ought to be approved by God. Cf. discussion of *adiaphora*.

(c) At the same time, there are many ways of fulfilling God’s commands, many ways of applying them to life situations. These applications require, as we have said, human prudence working within the general teaching of Scripture. And often, there is more than one way of obediently fulfilling a particular command—e.g., buying apples or oranges to feed your family.

(d) The pattern, then, is that all that we do should be the fulfillment of God’s commands, but that the application of these commands to situations involves godly human wisdom. So far, there is no clear

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difference between this general “regulative principle” and the more specific principle which is applied to worship.

(e) In our non-cultic life, there are subordinate authorities of various sorts—parents, rulers, teachers, landlords, etc., to whom we owe obedience, except when their word conflicts with God’s (cf. discussion of the Fifth Commandment). Is this different in principle from the cultic situation? Read on.

d) Elements and Circumstances

(1) I can accept the Confession’s distinction in a general sense. The basic things we do in worship (“elements”) must be commanded in Scripture; but in applying those commands, we may need to incorporate some things not mentioned in Scripture (“circumstances”). This is true of any divine command. God commands us to honor our parents, but to carry out that command, we must do some things that Scripture does not mention explicitly.

(2) However, in the extra-confessional writings of the Puritan and old Scots divines, they tried to define the elements/circumstances distinction with greater precision. I am not convinced that those precise definitions are scriptural.

(a) Elements

(i) the “essential” or “substantial” parts of worship.

(ii) Everything that has “religious significance.”

(iii) Specific to a particular kind of worship (tabernacle, temple, synagogue, NT church).

(iv) Each element has an independent Scriptural warrant. The warrant for prayer cannot be stretched to include song, even though many biblical songs are prayers.

(b) Circumstances: The “accidents,” as opposed to the “substance” of worship. These are of three kinds:

(i) Events “common to human actions and societies” (WCF 1.6).

Like the time and place of worship.

(ii) Specific ways of carrying out elements (words of prayers, etc.), sometimes called “forms” or “expressions.” With spiritual meaning.

(iii) Actions that “have no connection at all with worship *per se*” (Bushell). As the color of clothing worshippers wear. Unlike

(i), these are “separable” from worship.

(c) Objections

(i) None of these distinctions is warranted by Scripture: a great irony, in a system that is supposed to make worship more Scriptural.

(ii) Distinction between substance and accident is Aristotelian, not biblical.

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(iii) “Independence” of elements is atomistic. Elements of worship in Scripture are not separate in this way. In song we pray and receive instruction. We receive the preached Word with praise

and awe.

(iv) Distinction between “religious” and “non-religious” actions questionable.

(A) Time of worship, clothing of worshipers can affect the religious aspects of the service.

(B) All of life is religious in some senses (Kuyper).

(v) God has not provided a complete and specific list of elements for every form of worship.

(A) Even the temple worship lacks a precise *liturgy*, though much is said about the details of making sacrifice.

(B) Nothing on the synagogue, except that a “sacred assembly” is appropriate (Lev. 23:3).

(C) Nothing on baptism as an element of NT worship services.

(D) Nothing on a sermon as an element of NT worship.

(E) Nothing on private worship, family worship, etc., or “worship in the broad sense.”

(vi) Scripture fails to distinguish “circumstance” in any of its three meanings, or to determine precisely which circumstances are within the discretion of the church.

(vii) Hard to apply the element/circumstance distinction.

(A) Is song an element, or a circumstance?

(B) Is instrumental music an element, or a circumstance?

(C) Is marriage a proper element of worship?

e) Contra Traditionalism

(1) Notice how the catechism forbids additions to and subtractions from biblical worship “whether invented and taken up by ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom...”

(2) This is in line with the general Reformation emphasis of reforming tradition according to the Word of God: sola Scriptura.

(3) By this principle, the Reformers rejected large bodies of church tradition.

(4) It also made worship more contemporary, in the sense of emphasizing the use of the vernacular. Thus they applied Paul’s emphasis in 1 Cor. 14 on the need for intelligibility in worship so that all (even unbelievers!) might be edified.

(5) One should not, therefore, use the Regulative Principle to enforce past modes of worship, unless Scripture itself requires them.

(a) The cult of plainness.

(b) The cult of ceremony.

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F. Problem Areas.

1. Pedagogical Use of Images.

a) Advocates of images in the church have often claimed that while images should not be worshipped, they may be venerated (*douloo*), and may serve an important educational function, especially among the illiterate.

b) Protestants generally deny the distinction between worship and veneration

(but see later discussion on fifth commandment). Yet, they have sometimes defended the use of images as an educational tool. Such was Luther's argument: these are "books for the laity." Compare quotes from him in Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, III, 303f. Hodge does not himself contest Luther's point, though he opposes the introduction of images into places of public worship because of the possibility of abuse.

c) The Heidelberg Catechism, however, unambiguously opposes the pedagogical use of images (Questions 97, 98): God, it says, "has willed that his church be instructed, not by dumb images, but by the preaching of his word."

d) Comments.

(1) As we have seen, the second commandment is not dealing, at least directly, with the use of images to instruct, but rather with the use of images as mediators between God and man in worship. Does instruction through images, then, involve "bowing down" before them? That is the basic question.

(2) The question cannot be answered by saying that images are inaccurate representations of their objects. Cf. previous discussion, C.1.b.v. No picture is exhaustive in its correspondence with the thing pictured; but that does not imply any inaccuracy. Inaccuracy is found, often, not in pictures themselves, but in our interpretations of them; and of course, that sort of inaccuracy is found in verbal teaching also.

(3) Similarly, it is not adequate to say that since God cannot be pictured any image of him is a lie. As we have seen, there are images of God in the world. Further, there are ways of representing God which, rightly understood, do not mislead people about God's invisibility, etc. It would be ridiculous to say that the upper circle of Van Til's two circle diagram is a graven image in the sense of the second commandment. But short of ruling out such markers, where do we draw the line? And, even if we grant the substance of this objection, it does not apply to pictures that do not claim to represent God.

(4) As we have seen, it is true that between the fall and the *parousia* God instructs his people primarily by word rather than by image. However, that is not an absolute principle. There have been theophanies, and these have played an important role. Further, consider Jesus' use of illustrations of spiritual truths from the natural world, the use of vivid metaphors and "imagery" in the Bible, the temple ornaments, sacraments, etc.

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(a) This sort of teaching assumes that created objects are in some measure fitted to illustrate (and thus to "image") spiritual truth.

(b) This sort of teaching, but not only this sort, inevitably produces vivid mental images in us. If the instructional use of images is to be rejected, then, it would seem that even mental images must be avoided. Indeed, the Catechism opposes representations of God even "inwardly in our mind." However, I must take exception here to the Catechism. It seems almost impossible to think without some

mental imagery. (Think, “The Lord is my shepherd.”) This consideration doesn’t, of course, destroy the objection to images. If images as such are wrong, then mental images are too, and we must get rid of them no matter how hard it is. However, when the objection requires such an extreme asceticism, we ought to think hard about it.

(5) It seems to me that to deny the pedagogical use of images one would have to show that being instructed by an image amounts to bowing down to it. It is true that instruction is part of worship, and that we are called to respond to instruction in awe, reverence, obedience. That reverence, however, is not directed toward the medium of instruction in any sense parallel to that of the idolater. We do not worship our preacher as a representative of God. Thus, I am not convinced that an adequate case has been made against the pedagogical use of images.

(6) Still, we must be aware of the human tendency to worship the creature above the creator. The presence of pictures in the church is a very serious temptation for many people, especially when they become a permanent part of the church architecture.

2. Images of the Incarnate Christ.

a) Many have objected to the use of any pictures of the incarnate Christ on the ground of the second commandment. WLC opposes “the making of any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons.”

Arguments:

(1) Since God may not be pictured, and Jesus is God, Jesus may not be pictured either.

(2) Iconoclasts in the Eastern Church argued that those who venerated images of Christ were circumscribing Jesus’ divine nature. To worship the picture would involve the assumption that his divine nature is limited, circumscribed by the human nature and is therefore picturable. Or it would imply that the human nature alone is pictured and thus is separable from the divine nature.

(3) Some have argued that since we don’t know what Jesus looked like, any picture will be a lie.

(4) Some take the second commandment to exclude any representations of deity.

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(5) The danger of idolatry, at least, is always present when pictures of Jesus are used for any purpose.

b) Comments. Compare Jeffrey J. Myers, “*Vere Homo: The Case for Pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Niceville, FL: Biblical Horizons, 1993).

(1) I disagree with a.(1) on two grounds:

(a) As we have seen, Scripture does not teach purely and simply that God cannot be pictured.

(b) But even if God in himself were in every sense unpicturable, it is clear that Christ, God incarnate, was picturable. He could be seen, felt, touched, as well as heard. His face could be held in memory (and there is surely no suggestion in Scripture that such mental

images were sinful! On the contrary, recall the emphasis upon the eyewitness character of the apostolic testimony.) To deny this is docetism, pure and simple. In this respect, clearly, the Old and New Covenants are sharply different. At the establishment of the Old Covenant, there was emphatically no form (Deuteronomy 4:15). At the establishment of the New, there emphatically was (I John 1:1ff., etc.).

(2) Reply to a.(2): The relation between the two natures of Christ is, of course, a difficult matter at any point in theology. I would argue, however, that Jesus himself is, in both natures, in his person, image of God. In him, deity was in one sense “circumscribed,” for all its fullness dwelt in him; though in another sense, God was active beyond the body of Jesus. To picture Jesus is to picture a divine person, not one “nature” or other. To venerate such a picture, I believe, would be wrong for reasons already adduced. I do not, however, think that an adequate argument has been given against pedagogical use of such pictures.

(3) Reply to a.(3): As we’ve said earlier, a picture does not become a “lie” simply by being non-exhaustive. And, in fact, we do know something about Jesus’ looks: He was male, Semitic, in middle life, was known to wear a robe, etc. And if the shroud of Turin turns out to be authentic...

(4) Reply to a (4): As we have seen, the second commandment doesn’t forbid all images of God, only those intended for use in worship, as we earlier discussed it.

(5) Reply to a.(5): True.

3. Exclusive Psalmody: Many have argued for the exclusive use of Psalms in worship on the ground of the regulative principle. They argue that there is no command in Scripture to sing anything other than Psalms; thus, all other songs are excluded.

a) The logical status of song: What is song? Is it an “element” of worship [cf. above]? A “circumstance”? An aspect of some other element?

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(1) We must not simply assume that it is an independent element, as, e.g., John Murray does in his minority report to the OPC General Assembly. Some argument is needed.

(2) I maintain that song is not an independent “element” of worship, but a form by which other elements are carried on. It is a form of prayer, praise, teaching (Colossians 3:16), etc.

(a) There is no sharp distinction between sung and spoken words. Consider the continuum: speech, poetry, chanting, song. At each point, there are gray areas (even more in tonal languages!).

(b) Scripture regularly presents song as having the same functions in worship as spoken words. Song has no functions that cannot also be performed by spoken words.

(3) If song is really a form of prayer, teaching, etc., then, when we apply the regulative principle, we must ask, not what Scripture commands us to sing, but rather what Scripture commands us to pray, teach, etc. But

all Christians agree that extra-Scriptural words may be used in prayer, praise, and teaching.

b) Scripture does command that, not only the Psalms, but also the statutes of God (Psalm 119:54) and the deeds of God throughout Redemptive History (Psalm 107:22) be sung in worship. I agree with the argument of Vern Poythress (*WTJ*, Fall, `74; Winter, `75) that the “singing of Christ among his people” applies the whole history of redemption to all his people (application involving, as we’ve seen, extra-Scriptural content). This is unavoidable in any case. Even the translation of Scripture involves application in this sense.

c) Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19.

(1) It has been argued that “psalms, hymns, and odes” in these passages all refer to Psalms. I don’t think that point can be established either way.

(2) It has been argued that *pneumatikos* means “inspired,” meaning that the Church is to sing inspired songs. However, *pneumatikos* is not *theopneustos*. One may be “spiritual” without being “inspired,” I Corinthians 3:1, Colossians 1:9.

(3) Even if these passages refer exclusively to Psalms, they do not limit the church to the exclusive use of Psalms if, as we argued above, there are other Scriptural justifications for singing uninspired hymns.

(4) “Teaching” and “admonishing” suggest not verbatim repetitions of Scripture, but the application of Scriptural content. Cf. Poythress, *op. cit.*

d) There is no clear biblical command to sing the entire Book of Psalms.

(1) *Psalms* in Col. 3:16 and elsewhere is not a technical term for the biblical Book of Psalms. It simply refers to songs of praise.

(2) We should not assume, as many do, that the Book of Psalms was given to us as an inspired “hymnal.” There is evidence (see my WST) that the

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book is given, essentially, for meditation and instruction, as Psm. 1 suggests.

e) Those who worship using Psalms exclusively are never able to sing the name of Jesus. Nor are they able to praise God for the *completion* of his redemptive work in Christ.

f) My conclusion: God commands us to sing as part of worship, but there is no evident restriction on the words we sing, except, of course, that they be scriptural and appropriate to the purposes of worship.

4. The Use of Instruments in Worship.

a) Many of the same people who hold to exclusive psalmody also refuse the use of instruments in worship. Students, therefore, often ask questions about that issue at this point in the course. It is, however, a rather different sort of issue from the others—not nearly so closely focused on the regulative principle. After all, there are as many explicit commands to use instruments as anyone could wish in the Psalms themselves! Here, paradoxically, some of the strongest advocates of the regulative principle seek to show that those commands are not currently applicable.

b) The argument, essentially, is that instrumental music in Scripture is part of

the temple worship, specifically the sacrificial ritual, and passes away with the temple. New Covenant worship on this view is patterned on the synagogue, where there were no instruments.

c) Comments:

(1) A very strong argument is needed to overcome the explicit commands in the Psalms to use instruments. The argument under consideration is dubious at best.

(2) No adequate argument is given to show that instruments are necessarily connected with those aspects of temple worship which pass away.

(Obviously, many elements of temple worship do not pass away—praise, singing, prayer, etc.) It is true that the instruments accompanied the burnt offering (I Chronicles 29:27f.), but that was not their only use. Cf. Numbers 10:2ff.; Ex. 15: 20-21, II Kings 11:14; I Chronicles 13:3, 15:24, 28; II Chronicles 5:5, 11-14; Ezra 3:10; I Samuel 18:6f. It is impossible for all these and other references to pertain only to the offerings. Instruments are routinely mentioned in the Psalms as accompaniment to praise.

(3) No exegetical argument can be given to show that the “synagogue pattern” as such is in any sense normative for the Christian church.

Gerhard Delling, *Worship in the NT*, points out that the earliest references to Christian worship (as 1 Cor. 14) present a very informal, Spirit-driven worship; the quasi-synagogue liturgy is a later development.

(4) No adequate argument is given to show that the exclusion of instruments from the synagogue was based on principles binding within the New Covenant. Some have suggested that this exclusion is based

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on the *mourning* of the Jews in exile, over the loss of the temple and the promised land.

(5) Even if it were proven that instruments have no independent role in New Covenant worship, they cannot be ruled out. As a “circumstance”, they provide the important function of coordinating pitch and rhythm in the singing. Many Covenanter churches use pitch-instruments. If we can give the congregation pitch on the first note of a song, why not on the second, etc.? And if we can help with pitch of melody, why not pitch of harmony? rhythm? volume? tone quality? Why shouldn't they be used to teach the tunes before they are actually sung, etc.? Preludes, offertory music, etc., are harder to defend on this basis. However, it could be argued that some “background sound” in worship is unavoidable, and that such music is at least preferable to bus noises, screaming children or chattering women.

(6) The last point, plus the earlier Scripture references, suggests that instrumental music is basically a form of song, just as song is a form of speech [3.a., above]. Instruments are an extension of the human voice. By them, we praise, rejoice, etc. If this analysis is correct, then the use of instruments does not require any independent Scriptural justification. To find out what Scripture allows us to play, we ask what Scripture

allows us to sing, and ultimately, to speak. From this perspective, the prohibition of instruments begins to look like prohibition of microphones, hearing aids, etc. The idea that we can blow air across our vocal cords, or into electronic devices, but not through a mouthpiece, seems highly arbitrary.

PASTORAL AND SOCIAL ETHICS

Lecture Outline, Part Four: Exposition of the Law of God:

Third, Fourth and Fifth Commandments

by John M. Frame

III. The Third Commandment: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;

for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

Q. 112: What is required in the third commandment?

A. The third commandment requires, That the name of God, his titles, attributes, ordinances, the word, sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, lots, his works, and whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known, be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word, and writing; by an holy profession, and answerable conversation, to the glory of God, and the good of ourselves, and others.

Q. 113: What are the sins forbidden in the third commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the third commandment are, the not using of God’s name as is required; and the abuse of it in an ignorant, vain, irreverent, profane, superstitious, or wicked mentioning or otherwise using his titles, attributes, ordinances, or works, by blasphemy, perjury; all sinful cursings, oaths, vows, and lots; violating of our oaths and vows, if lawful, and fulfilling them, if of things unlawful; murmuring and quarreling at, curious prying into, and misapplying of God’s decrees and providences; misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the word, or any part of it, to profane jests, curious or unprofitable questions, vain janglings, or the maintaining of false doctrines; abusing it, the creatures, or any thing contained under the name of God, to charms, or sinful lusts and practices; the maligning, scorning, reviling, or any wise opposing of God’s truth, grace, and ways; making profession of religion in hypocrisy, or for sinister ends; being ashamed of it, or a shame to it, by unconformable, unwise, unfruitful, and offensive walking, or backsliding from it.

A. Main Thrust.

1. The Name of the Lord.

a) Functions of names in Scripture (cf. Lordship attributes).

(1) Naming is an exercise of sovereignty (Control).

(a) One who names has control over the person or thing that is named.

The father names the child, the conqueror names the conquered city, God names his people. God also names himself, indicating his aseity, his self-control.

(b) It was thought that to know someone’s name was to have power over that person—hence the belief in verbal magic, the use of names in curses to bring injury, etc. As with all pagan belief, this one is parasitic on the truth.

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(i) Knowing someone’s name involves knowing something about him [cf. ii., below], and hence having a certain advantage in our dealings with him.

(ii) When we know someone’s name, we can call on him and thus

locate him [below, iii.] and elicit a response.

(c) Sharing one's name with someone else, then, creates a quasicovenantal bond. It presupposes a particular kind of trust based on obligations and expectations.

(d) Remarkably, God shares his name with his people in Scripture.

(i) He reveals it to them, enabling them, not to use it as a kind of verbal magic, for their own purposes, but rather to call upon him for help (cf. Proverbs 18:10; Psalm 20:1f.). They have no power over him, but they may avail themselves of his power for the sake of the covenant. This is remarkable; it is very much like having power over God. Cf. Genesis 32:22-32, especially verse 29.

(ii) He calls the people by his name, identifying his future with theirs. Thus, his omnipotence will never fail to keep them safe.

(2) Naming is characterizing (Authority).

(a) In the biblical period, a person's name usually meant something; it was not, as often today, a mere marker chosen for its sound. Cf. the interpretations of "Abraham," "Israel," the name changes, etc. Cf. also the use of "name" for "reputation," 1 Kings 4:31 (of Solomon), Proverbs 22:1, etc. God's name is great, Psm. 8:1, 9.

(b) God's names also characterize him: *El Shaddai* as "God Almighty," etc.

(c) Therefore, God's name is revelation; it communicates knowledge of him. And God's revelation is always authoritative. Both second and third commandments focus on the revelation of God and its bearing on our lives.

(d) To deny God's power violates the name *El Shaddai*; to claim God's favor by our own righteousness violates "The Lord our righteousness" (Horton).

(3) Naming is locating (Presence)

(a) A name also serves to mark a person; it furnishes a way of locating a person in a crowd. We find him by calling his name, because where the name is, he is.

(b) The name becomes closely identified with the person. When someone laughs at your name, or forgets it, or mispronounces it, you feel slighted. This is even more true in the broader use of "name" to mean "reputation" (Proverbs 22:1, e.g.). To injure my good name is to injure me; to revere my name is to revere me, etc.

(c) God, too, is identified with his name.

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(i) To praise the name is to praise him, to despise the name is to despise him, etc. We are saved for "his name's sake," Psm. 106:8. Glory is due his name (Psm. 29:2, 66:2, 96:8).

(ii) To say that God's "name" dwells in the angel of the Lord, or the tabernacle, or the temple, or Israel, etc., is to say that God, Himself, dwells there.

(iii) The name has divine attributes: Deuteronomy 28:58, Psm. 8:1,

9, etc. We praise it, call upon it, etc. The name is God himself.

b) Breadth and narrowness of the name.

(1) Specific “names” of God: *Elohim*, *Yahweh*, *El Shaddai*, etc.

(2) The “name” is God’s total revelation of himself to man.

(3) The “name” of God himself [above, a.iii.].

c) Bearers of the name.

(1) Theophanies: the glory, the angel, the tabernacle, and the temple.

(2) Christ, Acts 4:12, Phil. 2:9-11, John 1:14, Rev. 13:5-9.

(3) God’s people.

(4) Creation. (Note here the way Jesus speaks in Matthew 5:33-37, an exposition of the third commandment, and Matthew 23:16-22. One cannot, he teaches, avoid the obligations of the commandment by substituting the name of a creature for the name of God. The reason is that all creation is inseparable from God, intimately involved with him. To invoke creation, then, is to invoke the name of God. Cf. Kline on creation as a reflection of the Glory-cloud.)

d) Implications.

(1) Since God’s name includes his total revelation of himself, extending to all creation and particularly including God’s own people, this commandment has unlimited breadth. God’s name is abused, not only when we misuse a word like “God” or “Jesus,” but also when we abuse ourselves (note interesting linguistic parallels in Psalm 24:4) or despise God’s creation. All sin, then, may be seen as violation of the third commandment.

(2) We can also see how the commandment is fulfilled in Christ. The name of Christ is the name of God *par excellence*, the only name by which we must be saved. He is the final revelation of God. To despise the name of God, ultimately, is to despise Jesus Christ.

2. “Taking” the Name.

a) We generally take the third commandment as a rule concerning our language, and certainly that is proper. However, the commandment itself does not refer to “speaking” or “uttering” the name (*amar*, *dibber*), but rather to “taking it up” (*nasa’*: bear, carry, lift up).

b) “Bearing” God’s name certainly includes our use of the name in our speech, but not only that: it includes all of our relationships to the name of God.

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(1) God’s people bear God’s name in the sense of carrying it in their own persons [cf. above, 1.c.]. Note, then, the remarkable parallel to the third commandment in Psalm 24:4. The reference to false swearing alludes to the commandment, and “lifted up his soul unto vanity” is a precise linguistic parallel to the commandment, with “his soul” substituted for “the name of the Lord thy God.” That very substitution is a remarkable thing. God is so identified with us that to defile our own souls is in effect to defile his name. Cf. the second commandment which, as we have seen, guards the uniqueness of man, particularly of redeemed man, as “image of God.” The commandments always have an

existential reference.

(2) Note also our relationships to the name of God in creation and in Christ. All created things will either be “lifted up” to God or to vanity.

(3) Note, therefore, the narrowness and breadth of the commandment. A commandment about false swearing but, by implication, about all of life.

3. “Vanity”.

a) The normal meaning of the Hebrew term is “emptiness,” “purposelessness”. On that basis, the commandment forbids us to use God’s name for unworthy purposes.

b) Some have suggested that in this context the term ought to mean “falsely,” since that is emphasized in parallels such as Leviticus 19:12, Psalm 24:4. Linguistic evidence for that use is lacking, however, and the hypothesis is really unnecessary. Falsehood is one kind of vanity, granted the first interpretation. Thus, even on the first view, Leviticus 19:12 and Psalm 24:4 present valid applications of the commandment.

c) Similarly, it could be argued that vanity is a form of falsehood. If you use God’s name in a pointless or worthless way, you are falsifying it, exchanging it for a lie (cf. Romans 1).

d) Thus, the argument between the two interpretations is somewhat academic.

e) On either view, we note again the breadth of meaning here. Not only are we forbidden to make false statements using God’s name, but also to make any use of it which is unworthy of God. I Corinthians 10:31.

4. The sanction: “for the Lord will not hold him guiltless.”

a) Blasphemy is considered a particularly serious crime in Scripture. The death penalty is administered for it—even to “strangers,” Leviticus 24:15f. Cf. the penalty for cursing parents, Exodus 21:17. The crucifixion of Christ was based on a charge of blasphemy. The worst sin noted by Jesus himself was the “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 12:22-32; Mark 3:22-30). This somberness, then, is reflected here in the lack of a blessing sanction.

(i) Douma, 80: “*willfully* misunderstanding and branding as a *devilish* act what in fact comes from the Holy Spirit.” The Jews

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had seen with their own eyes the work of God, in such a way that it could not have been missed.

(ii) Compare Heb. 10:26-31.

(iii) Though said to be against the Spirit, the focus of this sin is the Spirit’s witness to the work of Christ. It is in effect blasphemy against the holy name of Jesus.

b) The curse formula does not mean that forgiveness is excluded. The same curse attaches to every sin and is borne by Christ on behalf of his people. However, that blasphemy which, by its very nature, rejects forgiveness and rejects it unalterably will never be forgiven (Matthew 12:22-32, parallels).

5. Relation to First Two Commandments (see chart).

a) The first commandment requires us to worship God exclusively; the second requires us to worship him only according to his word. The third requires

us, in our worship, to make a right use (*nasa'*) of the word (the name). It is not enough to have God's revelation; one must use it rightly.

b) We can, then, see a parallel with the "three perspectives." The first commandment sets forth the situational perspective, the basic relation between the one God and his creatures. The second sets forth the normative perspective, the basic revelation by which they will be governed. The third sets forth the existential perspective, demanding a right application of that revelation.

c) Note, then, a certain trinitarian structure: the one God, the word he speaks, and the application of that word (always associated in Scripture with the Holy Spirit). We could summarize by saying that God demands wholehearted covenant loyalty to him in the fullness of his triune being, honoring his triune works. The first three commandments together are a "love command," requiring exclusive covenant loyalty to the triune God.

d) The three together (as well as individually) encompass, in a striking way, the totality of human life. Love for God is demanded in our basic heartorientation [I.], in word (our life-norms) [II.], and in deed [III.—the act of application]. In III, the word is applied to the heart as to all of life, completing the circle. Of course, each, obeyed seriously, involves obedience to the others.

B. Positive Uses of the Name of God.

We have seen that the commandment applies to all of life. Here, however, we shall focus on some of the matters to which the commandment applies more narrowly and specifically, namely, the uses of the divine name in speech. (Even these, to be sure, have a tendency to broaden out, as we shall see!) As a convenient division, let us consider the uses of God's name in terms of man's kingly, prophetic, and priestly functions (reflecting God's control, authority, covenant solidarity). These uses are oath (kingly), confession (prophetic), and blessing (priestly).

1. Oaths (kingly function).

a) Concept: In an oath, we call God to witness concerning the truth of a statement ("assertory") or promise ("promissory"). We call upon God to

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use his power against us if we lie, hence the emphasis on the power of an oath (kingly function). Cf. Hebrews 6:16.

(1) As such, an oath is an act of worship. It has a godward reference. The honor of God is primarily in view in the third commandment, the dangers of false oaths to our fellow men being central in the ninth commandment. In this regard, cf. Deut. 10:20-21, Isaiah 45:23, 19:18, 65:16; Deuteronomy 6:13; Psalm 63:11, where swearing by God's name is a mark of those who belong to God. (Notice how this "specific application" of the third commandment itself becomes in Scripture a figure for the whole covenant relation. In Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10, the "swearing" is equated with confession and the latter with recognition of Christ's lordship.)

(2) An oath also has a manward reference. It is a way of maintaining stability, dependability, in a fallen world. Under certain circumstances, a man's word was to be accepted without corroboration on the basis of

an oath (Exodus 22:10f.). The oath has always been a vital aspect of the administration of civil law. Where the oath is despised, the result is government corruption, civil injustice.

(3) It is possible to be under oath in effect even without uttering the name of God, although in general, oaths involve such utterances.

(a) Adjuration: In an adjuration, we are in effect put under oath by another party, generally, someone in authority. Cf. Joshua 7:19; Matthew 26:63f.

(b) Solemn attestation, without specific use of a divine name: Genesis 42:15, 31:53; Exodus 24:7; Deuteronomy 27:11ff.; I Samuel 1:26; Joshua 24:19-22; Jesus' "Verily, verily."

(c) Such borderline cases help us more clearly to see how, in a sense, the believer is always under oath. Cf. b.iv., below.

(4) A vow is a promise to God that we will perform a particular act. It is therefore, in effect, an oath-commitment.

b) Obligation.

(1) Scripture commands us to swear in God's name: Exod. 22:10-11, Deuteronomy 6:13, 10:20; Isaiah 65:16; Jeremiah 12:16; cf. Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10.

(a) The point is not that we ought to take oaths every so often as a means of grace; rather, it is that when an oath is necessary, it ought to be taken in the name of the true God, rather than in the name of another god.

(b) But once we come to believe in the true God, taking an oath is an act of religious worship (Deut. 10:20, Isa. 19:18), a way of confessing our faith in the true God.

(2) Examples.

(a) God himself: Genesis 22:16 (Hebrews 6:13-17), 26:3, Psalm 89:3, 49, 110:4, 132:11; Jeremiah 11:5; Ezekiel 33:11; Luke 1:73.

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(b) Jesus accepts the adjuration, Matthew 26:63f., gives solemn attestations ("verily").

(c) Paul: Romans 1:9, 9:1f.; II Corinthians 1:23, 11:31; Galatians 1:20; Philippians 1:8; I Thessalonians 2:5, 10, 5:27.

(d) An angel in Rev. 10:5-6.

(e) Many other biblical characters: Genesis 14:22ff., 21:23f., etc.

(f) Common practice, Heb. 6:13-20.

(g) Many examples of vows: cf. also Psalm 22:25, 50:14, 65:1, etc., where the paying of vows is a synecdoche for the whole of religious worship.

(3) Oath-bound commitment is the essence of covenant obligation and religious confession: Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10.

(4) The prohibition of oaths in Matthew 5:33-37; James 5:12.

(a) In view of (1) –(3) above, it would be strange indeed if these passages intended to forbid oaths as such. Nowhere else in Scripture is there any hint of rebuke to anyone for the mere act of taking an oath (though, of course, there are examples of false

oaths, unwise oaths, etc.) The fact that oath-bound commitment is essential to our relation with God is a particularly telling datum. The fact that God himself swears is also important—more important than it may appear on the surface. It might be argued that God’s right to swear does not imply our right to swear. On the other hand, in the context of Scripture, it is clear that God has far less reason to swear than we do. If he, who is perfectly trustworthy and self-attesting, sometimes confirms his word with an oath, surely, there are times when we ought to do the same.

(b) The context of Matthew 5:33-37 (cf. 23:16-22) suggests that Jesus is opposing a particular misuse of the oath, namely, the use of substitutes for the divine name to escape full obligation. Cf. below, c., also Murray, *Principles*, 168-174. James may be summarizing Matthew 5:33-37 to people already aware of that context. “Do not swear *at all*” means do not swear at all by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, etc.

(c) In Rabbinic sources, with strikingly similar language, the distinction is made between frivolous and unnecessary oaths on the one hand and solemn oaths on the other. The former are forbidden with the formula “Let your yes be yes and your no, no.” Jesus, doubtless, has this sort of problem in mind.

(d) So these passages in effect place us under continuous oath. Our yea is to be yea and our nay, nay. We are not to use the institution of the oath as an excuse for carelessness with the truth when not under oath (cf. the child’s “I said I would, but I didn’t promise.”) All of our speech ought to partake of the quality of “solemn attestation” [above, a.iii.b)]. The use of the oath ought, at most, to

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be an accommodation to a fallen situation. More on this under the ninth commandment.

c) Oaths Resulting in Sin.

(1) Oaths with wrong content (normative).

(a) Idolatrous: in the name of a false god, Exodus 23:13, cf. Deuteronomy 6:13, 10:20, etc.

(b) Pledging something unlawful, 1 Sam. 25, Matthew 14:7; Acts 23:12.

(i) It is often argued that general oaths of secrecy fall under this category—i.e., pledges to secrecy without knowledge of what is to be kept secret. Vs. secret societies, etc.

(ii) Similarly, oaths required in secret societies and labor unions to put the interests of the organization above all others—vs. the biblical “chief end of man.”

(c) The Catechism says that we should not even keep an existing oath if it is “of things unlawful.” When an existing oath requires us to sin, it at that point becomes an unlawful oath and we are released from keeping it. An oath cannot compel to sin.

(i) Scripture does tell us to keep oaths “to our own hurt” (Psm. 15:4), but not to the hurt of others, or injury to the name of

God.

(ii) An oath of office may not require us to obey unjust orders from governmental superiors (Nazis, etc.)

(iii) An oath of secrecy may not compel us to keep secret matters that God requires us to reveal.

(2) Oaths not kept (situational).

(a) Lying oaths, perjury, Leviticus 19:12; Psalm 109:17-19, cf. Deuteronomy 23:21-23; Psalm 66:15f.; Mark 14:71.

(b) Reneging on a vow which involves self-sacrifice, Psalm 15:7; Acts 5:4.

(c) Breaking vow to enemies: Gibeon, Josh. 9:1-27, 2 Sam. 21:1-14.

(d) Evasions through use of substitutes for God's name. [Cf. A.1.c., above; also Murray, 168-174].

(3) Oaths arising from wrong attitudes (existential).

(a) Rash, foolish oaths, I Samuel 14:24f.; Judges 11. On the difficult question of Jephthah's vow, I follow (with some hesitation) the view that Jephthah dedicated his daughter to serve God in perpetual virginity. [Cf. Keil and Delitsch, *ad loc.*]

(b) Presumptuous swearing, Isaiah 48:1f.—i.e., assuming our right to swear in God's name despite unrepentant sinfulness.

(c) Over-frequent or trivial swearing, [cf. above, b.iv.b) & c). Also, iv., below].

d) Trivialization of God's Name.

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(1) In an oath, we invoke the name of God to solemnize an affirmation or promise. In the last section c), we saw how certain oaths violate the solemnity and sanctity of the divine name, though all oaths assume that solemnity and appeal to it. However, it is also possible to sin by renouncing this solemnity altogether—by frivolous or trivial use of God's name. Such use of God's name is, in one sense, the opposite of the oath commanded in Scripture.

(2) Trivial cursing.

(a) "Damn," "Hell," etc., even "My God," "Jesus," used casually in our society, as mere exclamations.

(b) "Darn," "gosh," "golly," "jeez:"

(i) Many are not even aware of the religious origins of these terms.

(ii) If used in serious oaths, they would be a form of attempted mitigation (Matt. 23:16-22) condemned by Jesus; but most people don't take them as such.

(c) There is here usually no explicit intention to blaspheme, as in the curses condemned in Scripture. So we should not consider them to be as serious sins as self-conscious blasphemies.

(d) Still, such curses are a symptom (Douma) of the prevalent unbelief in society, unbelief that we cannot take casually. Were our society fully Christian, God's name would be taken much more seriously.

(e) It is impossible to rebuke every such curse that we hear. (Generally, it is impossible to rebuke every sin that we observe; there are just

too many.) But we should be alert to opportunities to use these moments in witness.

(3) Irreverence

(a) T-shirt: “This blood’s for you.” Wrong?

(b) Irreverence can be in the mind of the beholder. The wearer might have mainly an evangelistic motive: a holy desire to begin a conversation with someone about Christ. Perhaps there are things to be said both pro and con here.

(c) Use of popular musical styles in worship. See my CWM.

(4) Does this principle rule out all use of God’s name, even of God’s revelation, in humor?

(a) Ephesians 5:4 condemns “foolish talk” and “coarse jesting,” probably describing pointless silliness and gutter-type language. All humor, however, cannot be shown to have these qualities.

(b) There is humor in the Bible, but the jokes are too old and familiar for us to appreciate. Matthew 19:24, 23:24; Acts 12:12-16, etc.

(c) Humor has constructive, even serious purposes at times: to display graphically the Creator / creature distinction, etc. Even as sheer entertainment, it can have a recreative function. “Let there be light” uttered while pulling the light switch—shows, in an ironic way, both the analogy and the ridiculous disparity between man’s

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technology and God’s. Scripture always speaks well of a “cheerful,” “merry” or “glad” heart: Proverbs 15:13; II Corinthians 9:7, etc.

2. Confession (prophetic function): In confession, we acknowledge God’s covenant name as our own, ourselves as part of the covenant. In confessing before men, we also proclaim to them the word of the Lord.

a) Obligation (note connection with salvation): Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9f; I Peter 3:15.

b) Related Sins.

(1) Concealing our allegiance, John 12:42.

(2) Denying Christ, Matthew 26:69ff.

(3) Heresy.

(4) Blasphemy, Psalm 74:10-18; Isaiah 52:5f.; Revelation 16:9, 11, 21.

(a) Punished by death, Leviticus 24:16, even if a “stranger.”

(b) The most serious sin: blasphemy against the Spirit, Matthew 12:31, persistent, defiant refusal to acknowledge God in the face of the clearest knowledge.

(5) Giving occasion to pagans to blaspheme, 2 Sam. 12:14, Ezek. 36:20-32.

(6) Confessing God in a context in which it will likely lead only to ridicule and blasphemy. (Douma: sometimes “speech is silver, but silence is golden”), Matt. 26:63, 27:14.

(7) Invoking God’s name in support of causes without biblical warrant, 1 Phil. 3:6, Tim. 1:13. “God on our side.” “This is God’s will.”

Afrikaners, Nazis.

(8) Using Scripture to support heresy, 2 Pet. 2:1-3, 3:16.

3. Blessing (priestly function): Given to God by man, the blessing is equivalent to praise; directed to other men, it identifies them with God's name and thereby declares their right to inherit the covenant promises. It is a form of prayer for them in the name of God as well.

a) Obligation: Scripture calls us both to bless God's people and to intercede for all men in prayer.

b) Related Sins:

(1) Reviling man, Matthew 5:22; Ephesians 4:29; James 3:9.

(a) To mock the poor is to insult his maker, Prov. 17:5. Cf. Cursing the deaf, Lev. 19:14.

(b) The passages do not place a general condemnation on strong language. The prophets and apostles frequently use strong language against their hearers. Remarkably, Jesus Himself, having condemned some for using *moros* (Matthew 5:22), uses the same term against the Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:17, 19). [Cf. Paul, Galatians 1:8f].

(c) Evidently, just as there is a righteous and an unrighteous anger (cf. sixth commandment), so there is an unrighteous and a righteous use
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of strong language. The question is whether we are venting our own (murderous) hatred or being zealous for the honor of God.

(2) Incantations, use of God's name to control him, Acts 19:13-17.

C. Language in Literature and Drama.

1. I have sometimes been asked, particularly in the light of Ephesians 4:29, whether it is ever legitimate for a Christian actor to utter blasphemies, e.g., while impersonating a character, or for a Christian writer to put foul language in the mouth of a character.

2. Ephesians 4:29 clearly does not mean to forbid the mere physical act of uttering an unedifying expression. Scripture itself records (and when we read Scripture, we read) the unedifying and even blasphemous words of God's enemies. Of course, it records these for our edification: unedifying words in an edifying context.

3. The question, then, becomes: does a literary or dramatic blasphemy serve an edifying purpose in its larger context? It does, I think, when (as Scripture) it aims to portray unbelief as unbelief—when its portrayal is, on Christian criteria, true.

4. On this criterion, there ought, probably, to be more blasphemy and vulgarity in Christian drama than there usually is. These sins utterly pervade our society today, and any truthful portrayal of that society ought to be consistent with that pervasiveness.

5. We are not, however, on this basis, to wallow in filth for its own sake. Whether we like it or not, that is what our sinful nature would have us do. And we have great skill in rationalizing such desires.

6. The point is to present sin in its true colors—as something ugly, destructive and, in a certain way, ridiculous. That is the challenge to the Christian artist.

7. "Method" acting—where an actor motivates himself to portray, e.g., hate by generating feelings of hate within himself will often be forbidden to the

Christian. Yet, I suspect that morality and dramatic effectiveness are not thereby opposed to one another. A good artist must maintain both empathy with and distance from his subject, as did Jesus when he loved and suffered for sinners, without losing his own identity as the sinless, divine savior. A “method” which insists on identification without distance cannot express redemptive involvement.

IV. The Fourth Commandment: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt

thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the Lord thy God: in

it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” (Exodus 20:8-11). In Deuteronomy 5:12-15, it reads: “Observe the sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord thy God commanded thee. Six days shalt thou labor . . . nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. And thou shalt remember that thou was a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God

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brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.”

WLC, Q116: What is required in the fourth commandment?

A116: The fourth commandment requires of all men the sanctifying or keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word, expressly one whole day in seven; which was the seventh from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, and the first day of the week ever since, and so to continue to the end of the world; which is the Christian sabbath, and in the New Testament called The Lord's day.

Q117: How is the sabbath or the Lord's day to be sanctified?

A117: The sabbath or Lord's day is to be sanctified by an holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful; and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God's worship: and, to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose and seasonably dispatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.

Q119: What are the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment?

A119: The sins forbidden in the fourth commandment are, all omissions of the duties required, all careless, negligent, and unprofitable performing of them, and being weary of them; all profaning the day by idleness, and doing that which is in itself sinful; and by all needless works, words, and thoughts, about our worldly employments and recreations.

A. Place of the Fourth Commandment in the Decalogue (recall chart preceding discussion of First Commandment).

1. Despite Meredith Kline's refutation of the traditional “two table” notion, there is a broad progression in the Decalogue from commandments focusing on our relation to God to others focusing on our relation to one another.

2. In this progression, the Fourth Commandment is something of a transition from

the one focus to the other.

a) Like I-III, it stresses the nature of God's covenant with us and demands a certain kind of worship.

b) Like V-X, it emphasizes our obligation to love one another, to give rest as well as to rest ourselves, to relativize social distinctions.

3. The Fourth Commandment is more specific than I-III on the kind of obedience required. It begins the recapitulation of the creation ordinances which continues through X.

B. The Divine Sabbath (the rest of God himself from his creative work—Genesis 2:2f; Exodus 20:11).

1. The divine Sabbath is essentially a celebration of God's lordship over creation.
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a) At the start of the divine Sabbath, God's creative work (including his creation of man) was finished. It was at this point, then, that the creator first stood over against a finished creation. The covenant-lordship relation was fully established by creation itself. The divine Sabbath, then, was not enjoyed in the isolation of intra-divine life. From its beginning, it was the celebration of a relation.

b) Meredith Kline ("Primal *Parousia*," *WTJ*, Spring, 1978, 259ff.) describes the divine Sabbath as an "enthronement," citing parallels with God's enthronement in the microcosmic "temple-house". The enthronement follows divine victory and judgment (over the deep and darkness) and the creation of the world as his royal dwelling.

2. The Sabbath celebrates the lordship of God in its three aspects.

a) Control: Celebrates the divine victory—the "penetration of the darkness by the divine theophanic glory" (Kline, 263).

b) Authority: The Sabbath begins with the declaration that creation is good and finished. Cf. Kline, 261.

c) Presence in blessing and judgment:

(1) Presence of the glory-theophany is his completed temple.

(2) Judicial approbation [b., above], self-glorifying; cf. union of Sabbath with "Day of the Lord"—the day of judgment (and grace) (Kline). On this day, he judges all that he has made, and declares it good.

(3) When God blesses his own Sabbath, he blesses us. [cf. B.3.; C.1., below]

3. The divine Sabbath was offered to Adam and Eve.

a) In Hebrews 3-4, the divine Sabbath is an eschatological promise, representing the consummation of redemptive blessing that follows the last judgment. God entered the Sabbath at the end of creation, and his redeemed are to enter it at the end of this age. Note 4:4.

b) Since from the beginning the Sabbath celebrated a relation [1.a., above], it must have involved Adam and Eve in some way.

c) Since the account of the divine Sabbath follows the "cultural mandate", the command to work, it is hard to avoid the assumption that in the divine Sabbath God was promising rest to the man and woman as the fulfillment of this labor: had they completed the cultural mandate obediently, they would have entered the rest of God.

d) This inference is only a probable one; so far as I can tell, no passage of Scripture sets forth these concepts in so many words. However, throughout Scripture, the divine Sabbath does function as an eschatological promise, and it would be surprising if it did not also have that function before the fall.

C. The Human Sabbath: Its Meaning.

1. Human Sabbath and Divine Sabbath.

a) When God blessed his own Sabbath in Genesis 2:3, he did it with man in view [cf. B.1.a., above; also 3.b.].

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b) When God blessed his own Sabbath, he did it as an example for man (Exodus 20:11): Israel is to cease from work because God ceased from work.

c) When God blessed his own Sabbath, he also blessed man's. Exodus 20:11 clearly refers to the human Sabbath, which is the subject of the fourth commandment.

d) Exodus 20:11 seems to assume some sort of unity between the divine Sabbath and the human Sabbath, even though the former is unending and the latter is a weekly occurrence.

(i) "The" Sabbath referred to in the verse is the human Sabbath [above, c.], but also the divine Sabbath (context of Genesis 2:3).

(ii) Ex. 20:11 says that God blessed the human Sabbath in Gen. 2:3.

e) We shall see that the human Sabbath is a covenantal sign and seal, a sacrament in effect. In that framework, we could perhaps speak of the divine Sabbath as "present" in the human sacrament, as God is present in Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In the weekly Sabbath, we not only symbolize, but also enjoy by anticipation the divine Sabbath promised to God's people.

f) At the very least, the human Sabbath is a replica of the divine, as man himself is made in the image of God. As man himself is made to reflect God's glory, so the human Sabbath is made to reflect the glory of the divine Sabbath.

2. The Human Sabbath as a Meeting with God.

a) On the Sabbath, God's rest and man's intersect [1., above]. God who rests from his creative labors invites his creatures to share his rest in anticipation of their final rest.

b) If we share God's rest, then he must share ours. As his day belongs to us, so ours, our Sabbath, belongs to him. Our human Sabbath is set aside as his day.

(1) Exodus 20:8: We are to "remember" (active memorializing, not just recollecting) to keep the Sabbath "holy" (i.e., set apart, given over to him). Cf. Exodus 31:13-17; Jeremiah 17:22; Isaiah 58:13; Ezekiel 44:24. To "keep" God's Sabbaths, Lev. 19:3, 30, Isa. 56:4, Ezek. 20:10.

(2) Verses 9, 10: "Thou shalt labor . . ." "do all thy work," sharply contrasted with "the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." The six days are

for our work; the seventh exclusively for him.

(3) The contrasts between our pleasure and his day are frequent in the Old Testament. Note, e.g., Isaiah 58:13: “If thou turn thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day. . . .” (note repetitions of these contrasts in the passage).

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(4) That the human Sabbath belongs particularly to the Lord is to be expected, since it reflects the divine Sabbath, a celebration of God’s Lordship, B.3.

(5) Note the association of Christ with the Sabbath as its Lord: Matthew 12:8, parallels, John 5:16f.

(6) The “Lord’s day,” Revelation 1:10—D., below.

(7) As a covenant sign [3.b., below], the Sabbath is a mode of God’s presence among his people.

(8) Parallels between Sabbath and temple: Leviticus 19:30, 26:12; Matthew 12:5f.

(9) Parallel between the disciples’ Sabbath behavior and David’s holy soldiers, the holy labors of priests: I Samuel 21:1-6; Matthew 12:3ff.

(10) Sabbath legislation emphasizing the sanctification of the Sabbath (Exodus 31:12-17) follows legislation on the sanctification, the tabernacle and priesthood (25:1-31:11).

(11) Note relations between the Sabbath as the divine day of judgment, association of divine attributes with the latter, Kline, “Primal *Parousia*,” 265.

c) Thus, the Sabbath is a day of worship.

(1) Even if no cultic rites were prescribed, the Sabbath would be an act of worship, merely on the basis of what we have already said.

(a) To “meet with God” is to worship [2.a.].

(b) To “remember” a particular day, to keep it holy, is an act of worship [2.b.].

(c) Celebrating the Lordship of God [2.b.iv.] is an act of worship.

(2) References to worship on the Sabbath.

(a) Remember that “Sabbaths” are not only weekly Sabbaths, but also feast days.

(b) Weekly meetings of local worshippers (Lev. 23:3, the synagogue). Jesus did endorse the synagogue pattern in this respect: Luke 4:15ff., parallels.

(c) Sabbath offerings: Numbers 28:9f.; Ezekiel 45:17, 46:3; Nehemiah 10:32f.; Cf. Matthew 12:15f.

(d) Song for the Sabbath Day, Psm. 92:1.

(e) New Testament references to the first day of the week.

(i) Days on which the risen Christ meets his people: Matt. 28:9, Luke 24:13-51; John 20:1, 19, 26; Revelation 1:10. Did Mary rest in Luke 10:38-42 because the divine Sabbath was present in Christ (Cf. Matt. 11:28)? Cf. Christ as the temple-Sabbath, Matthew 12:5f.

(ii) Days on which the church met to worship, doubtless in

celebration of the Lord's victory, Acts 2:1, 20:6f., I Corinthians 16:1f., Revelation 1:10.

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3. The Human Sabbath is an Imitation of God.

The human Sabbath is one with God's [above, 2.] but also distinct from it. It is a "finite replica" (Kline). Thus, on the Sabbath, we not only share God's rest, but we also seek to copy that rest at a finite, recurring level. In copying it, we not only honor God's lordship [B.1.; C.2.]; we also seek to reflect that lordship in our own vassal kingship. We exert our own lordship in its "control, authority, presence."

a) Control: the sabbatical pattern as labor and rest.

(1) Labor: ". . . six days shalt thou labor . . ."

(a) It is sometimes overlooked that the fourth commandment deals not only with rest, but also with labor. It presupposes that we will work six days!

(b) Calvin argues that the language of the commandment does not present us with an obligation as much as a gift: God gives us six days to do our work. There is much truth in this, but, of course, divine gifts always come wrapped in obligations (and *vice-versa!*).

(c) In the larger context of Scripture, labor is a creation ordinance (Genesis 1:28ff.). In all periods of redemptive history, idleness is condemned (Proverbs; II Thessalonians 3:10f.).

(d) This commandment does not mean that we must work for a particular employer 48 hours out of every week. "Labor" in the Scriptural context, of course, includes more than the earning of family income. It includes maintenance of the home, general cultural activity, etc.

(e) Clearly, too, the commandment does not mean that we may rest from labor only on Sabbath! Daily rest, nourishment, recovery from illness, etc., is presupposed. Fanatical labor (the modern "workaholic") is condemned as lacking trust in God (Psalm 127:1f.). Cf. also Jesus in Mark 6:31.

(2) Rest.

(a) The Sabbath is essentially the celebration of a completed work.

(i) Cf. above, B.2. on the divine Sabbath.

(ii) Tabernacle and temple construction indicate provisional fulfillment of God's judgments and victory. Note sabbatical pattern in their consecration (Kline); also passages like Exodus 39:43, 40:33.

(iii) At the human level, the Sabbath is a pause from our labors to take satisfaction in them as we consecrate them to God.

(iv) As such, the Sabbath anticipates (and participates in!) the final rest from labor which we will enjoy in God's presence. Cf. b., below.

(b) What kind of work is prohibited?

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(i) *Daily* labor (Ex. 31:13-17), including plowing and harvesting

(34:21), commerce and transport of goods (Amos 8:4-6, Jer. 17:21).

(ii) Building of fires (Ex. 35:3, Num. 15:32-26)? I suspect these texts do not pertain to fires for heating and cooking. See James Jordan, *Sabbath Breaking and the Death Penalty*.

(A) Pi'el form in Ex. 35:3 typically refers to ceremonial burning (Lev. 6:12, Neh. 10:35, 2 Chron. 4:20, 13:11, etc.), or the fire of divine judgment (Ezek. 20:48, 39:9f, Isa. 4:4, etc.).

(B) On the Sabbath, God's altar-fire ("hearth fire") was intensified (Num. 28:1-10).

(C) So evidently this is a case like the "strange fire" in Lev. 10:1. No human fire must be intensified to rival God's ceremonial fire on the Sabbath day.

(D) The wood gatherer in Num. 15 is held in custody, because the precise penalty for his sin has not been revealed (verse 34).

1. Evidently his crime is not that of ordinary work on the Sabbath, but a "high handed" sin (discussed in context, verses 22ff). Mere working on the Sabbath was not a capital crime in Ex. 16:27-30, Neh. 13:19-22.

2. Evidently he was *attempting* to stoke up his fire in a way forbidden by Ex. 35:3.

(iii) So I take these references as ceremonial laws, not binding on New Testament Christians.

(c) After the fall, the Sabbath is a rest, not only from labor, but also from the toil and misery associated with labor in a fallen world. Hence its redemptive significance, cf. b., below.

(d) The rest is physical, not merely spiritual. Note emphasis on bearing burdens, Jeremiah 17:21f., Nehemiah 13:15ff, refreshment, Ex. 23:12, delight, Isa. 58:13.

(e) The Sabbath thus draws our attention to our nature as historical creatures, the importance of progress, development, goal.

(f) A blessing, Mark 2:27.

(3) Recreation: Does resting on the Sabbath preclude it?

(a) If recreation is pleasurable activity different from one's daily labors, then the Sabbath-rest is recreation, *par excellence*.

(i) Note earlier references to the Sabbath as a "celebration," association of Sabbaths with Old Testament feasts.

(ii) The Sabbath a "delight"—Isaiah 58:13f.

(b) As for the propriety of "pleasurable activities" on Sabbath, Scripture says nothing specific.

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(i) Isaiah 58:13f. forbids doing your "own pleasure" as opposed to God's. "Pleasure" here, however, means "will".

(ii) "Rest" is clearly not mere inactivity. If "rest" includes activities, these must be classified as recreations.

(iii) Note reference to “refreshment” in Exodus 31:17, 23:12.

(c) The *Westminster Confession* forbids on the Sabbath all “works, words and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations. . . .” (XXI:8) because it sees the function of the day wholly in terms of worship. We shall discuss later [below, D.] the precise nature of the New Covenant obligation. In the Old

Covenant, at any rate, such a statement would not be appropriate:

(i) Because under the Old Covenant, the day was not spent wholly in “public and private” worship, except insofar as the sanctification of the day itself was an act of worship.

(ii) Because the principle of “consecration of labor” requires that we think and speak about the activities of the six days.

(iii) Because the Old Covenant emphasis is upon rest rather than worship (at least worship in the cultic sense). The WCF sees rest only as a ceasing from daily labor to make time for worship. But in Scripture, the rest is important in itself. It speaks of “rest” and “refreshment” apart from worship.

(d) Clearly, however, even the Old Covenant forbids, by implication, any recreation that detracts from the meaning of the day.

(4) Works of Necessity.

(a) God did not intend the Sabbath to destroy man, but to be a blessing, Mark 2:27. This is characteristic of the law in general (cf. earlier discussion of the law as way of life).

(b) What is necessary to life and worship, therefore, may be done on the Sabbath.

(i) Eating, Matthew 12:1-8.

(ii) Arrangements for worship, Matthew 12:5f.

(iii) Healing, Matthew 12:10-13; Luke 14:1ff.; John 5:1ff. Actually, these passages are better characterized as “works of mercy” [c., below], since it was not strictly necessary for these to be done on Sabbath. However, the two categories do overlap.

“Necessity” is a relative matter. It could be argued that even eating is not strictly “necessary”. Yet, it is approved.

(iv) Rescuing of people and animals, Luke 14:5. Clearly, also certain forms of business maintenance are also necessary, by implication. Not only must oxen be rescued, but also fed, milked, etc. One might argue that the work of tending animals is forbidden to a strict Sabbatarian; however, Scripture never draws this inference. This work, though not absolutely

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necessary, and even though it involves some Sabbath labor, is accepted as a godly occupation.

(v) Warfare

(A) It was generally accepted that a people could defend themselves against attack on Sabbath (cf. I Maccabees 2:41)—an implication of the last point, as I see it.

(B) Israel circled Jericho seven times on the Sabbath, after which

the walls fell down (Josh 6:15-20).

(C) Jehoiada the priest carried out plot against wicked Queen Athaliah on Sabbath (2 Kings 11, 2 Chron. 22:10-23:15).

(vi) Travel to consult a prophet (2 Kings 4:23): Shunammite woman traveled 20 miles.

(vii) Possibility of an alternate day of worship for those who must travel on business, Num. 9:9-13 on the Passover. See Jordan, *Sabbath Breaking and the Death Penalty*, 89-90.

(viii) The “necessity” in view here, then, is not some sort of abstract “absolute” necessity, but the necessity of those activities which keep human life on an even keel. It can be only vaguely defined, and its application requires spiritual perception. There are many situations in modern business life, e.g., when some Sabbath work appears “necessary” on the above criteria. It is difficult to be dogmatic in such areas, but one must ask if the Sabbatarian does not have a responsibility to seek to minimize the cases where alleged, or even real, necessities arise.

b) Authority: the Sabbath as covenant sign, Ex. 31:13, Isa. 56:4, Ezek. 20:18-30.

The Divine Sabbath is a day on which God authoritatively declares his victory. Similarly, the human Sabbath, is a day on which the truth of God is to be declared and which, by its very nature, proclaims the covenant victory of God.

(1) Declaring God’s acts: Three dimensions of God’s Lordship over time.

(a) Past.

(i) Creation, Genesis 2:3; Exodus 20:11. The victory of God over the “deep darkness”. (?)

(ii) Redemption:

(a) From Egypt, Deuteronomy 5:15.

(b) Judgment on Canaan (Kline).

(c) The New Testament Lord’s Day as memorial of the Resurrection.

(b) Present: God’s meeting with us now as his Sabbath intersects ours [above B.; C.1; C.2.].

(c) Future: God’s eschatological victory (Kline).

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(2) Declaring our membership in the covenant.

(a) Before the fall, the Sabbath may have conveyed the promise of blessing within the Covenant of Works (Kline’s *Covenant of Creation*). If Adam had obeyed, the blessing would have been his.

(b) The Sabbath was given as a sign to Israel, Exodus 31:13-17; Ezekiel 20:12, 20.

(i) It declares the Lordship of God, 31:13, and, thus, Israel’s relation to God.

(ii) Sabbath-breaking is not only sin against God, but cuts one off from God’s people, (v. 14).

(iii) The Sabbath is identified with the covenant, v. 16.

(iv) The Sabbath therefore marks Israel as God's holy nation. It has a sacramental function.

(c) The prohibition of Sabbath labor, however, extended to "strangers," whose covenant status was ambiguous. (Some were uncircumcised and, thus, incapable of taking the Passover, or of sharing the liberation at the Jubilee. Yet, they had certain privileges and protections under the law, and they were involved in longrange covenant promises—e.g., Ezekiel 47:22ff.)

(d) The Sabbath's sacramental function is also seen in the fact that it signifies and embodies the presence of God's own rest [above, C.1., 2.]. On Sabbath and in the Sabbath, God is sacramentally present with his people.

(e) Revelation 1:10 suggests a sacramental significance for the "Lord's day" (*Kuriake hemera*) in the New Covenant. Cf. the Lord's Supper as *deipnon kuriakon* in I Corinthians 11:20. The "Lord's day" bears the same relation to the final "day of the Lord" as the "Lord's Supper" bears to the final Supper of the Lamb. Cf. below, D.4.c.i.c).

c) Presence in blessing and judgment: Man is to imitate God by dispensing blessing and judgment on the Sabbath. Judgment is seen in the disciplinary and preaching functions of the church to some extent (Isaiah 6), but the Scriptural emphasis (as with the divine Sabbath) is on the Sabbath as mercy. "Deeds of mercy" are presented in Scripture, not as a mere exception to the general prohibition of labor (as some Reformed treatments suggest), but as a central function of the Sabbath.

(1) Giving rest.

(a) We are not only to rest ourselves, but also to give rest—to our families, servants, animals, strangers (Exodus 20:10, 23:12; note particular emphasis on this point in Deuteronomy 5:14f.).

(b) Thus, the Sabbath is given covenantally—to the whole body, not just to individuals. [Cf. b.ii., above.] But notice also the ambiguous status of the "stranger", b.ii.c).

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(c) "The poor live as princes for one day a week," D. Wallace. On this day, no one gains economic advantage over anyone. As we come together before God, our essential oneness becomes clearer, and our priorities are adjusted.

(d) In the system of Sabbatical years, an extension of the weekly Sabbath, we also give rest to the land. Exodus 23:10f.; Leviticus 25:1ff. This is important to a biblical ecology, but also has reference to the needs of the poor, strangers, etc. Cf. Deuteronomy 15:1-6.

(e) Note contexts of Isaiah 58:13f., verses 3ff.

(f) The Sabbath law thus forbids God's people from giving supreme priority to economic gain or the other rewards of daily life.

(g) As noted earlier, the Sabbath typifies rest from toil, not from sin as

such. Yet, indirectly, it does encourage trust in grace rather than works. Our weekly rest must be taken, whether earned or not, because God has given it. The consummation of our week, its “meaning”, is not the result of anything we have done. Our “meeting with God” is not by works.

(2) Giving liberty.

(a) The Sabbath commemorates liberation from bondage, Deuteronomy 5:15. [Cf. above, i.c)-d)].

(b) Release of debts in sabbatical years, release of Hebrew servants, Exodus 21:1ff.; Deuteronomy 15:1-18; Jeremiah 34:8ff.

(c) Release of debts and return of sold property in the Jubilee, Leviticus 25:8-17. Note extensive implications of this for the economy of Israel, outlined in the rest of Leviticus.

(3) Healing: It appears that Jesus healed on the Sabbath, not out of necessity, but out of deliberate choice. He made this choice, not merely to provoke the Pharisees, but because of his conviction as to the nature of the Sabbath: Matthew 12:9-13; Mark 3:1-5; Luke 6:6-10; John 5:1-17. Even on the Sabbath, God desires “mercy and not sacrifice” (Matthew 12:8). It is “lawful to do well” on the Sabbath (12:12). The Pharisees had put such emphasis on the aspect of physical rest that they had missed this “weightier matter” of the law.

(4) Judgment: 1 Cor. 5:4-5, 11:31-2, 14:29.

d) Summary.

We are called to imitate God in rest, in declaring our union with him, and in showing mercy. In all of these activities, we declare that God is our Lord, that our hope is not bound up with our daily activities, but with his promise. Thus, we do not compete with one another for God’s blessing, but we share it liberally.

4. Sins connected with the Sabbath (Douma)

a. Working for selfish gain, Neh. 13:15-22.

b. Resting, but plotting ways of defrauding others, Amos 8:5.

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c. Scribes and Pharisees: defining Sabbath-breaking so precisely as to add to God’s Word, John 5:9-10.

D. The Sabbath as a New Covenant Obligation.

1. Reformed Views (moving from “least” to “most” Sabbatarian).

a) Calvin (*Institutes*, II, viii, 31-34) (Reflected in continental Reformed creeds).

(1) With the coming of the New Covenant, there is no particular day (or even weekly interval) at which Christians are obligated to abstain from work and engage in worship, etc.

(2) Such days are shadows which pass away in Christ. Calvin quotes Colossians 2:17; Galatians 4:10f.; Romans 14:5. He comments, “Who but madmen cannot see what the apostle means?”

(3) Positively, we keep the Fourth Commandment today:

(a) By laying aside our works and trusting God’s grace for salvation.

(b) By consecrating all our time to the Lord.

(c) By giving rest to servants, etc., and setting aside time for worship.

b) Donald Carson, *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Zondervan).

(1) As with Calvin, the Sabbath is abolished in the New Covenant: “If we keep the Sabbath in this dispensation, we are again denying Christ.”

(2) However, the Sabbath is now replaced by the Lord’s Day, which commemorates the Resurrection and symbolizes the accomplishment of our rest in Christ.

(3) We are obligated to keep the first day of the week (no other) as a day of worship. No cessation of work is required.

c) Early Kline (from my student notes in Old Testament Biblical Theology)

(1) Same as i., ii. under c., above.

(2) In the Mosaic Covenant, the emphasis is placed upon rest, rather than worship, as the essence of the Sabbath command.

(3) Therefore, the Westminster Confession cannot be followed when it insists that the whole day be taken up in deeds of worship, necessity and mercy. Rest, and hence recreation, are also appropriate, even centrally important, to the meaning of the day.

(4) Later, Kline revised his position to argue that in the New Covenant the Sabbath is a day of worship, but not a day of resting from all labor. He argued that the rest from labor was part of the “union of culture and cult” under the Mosaic theocracy. I don’t find that view persuasive, and I will not discuss it here.

d) The “Puritan” view (Westminster Standards).

(1) The New Testament Lord’s Day is essentially the same as the Old Testament Sabbath, now properly observed on the first day of the week rather than the seventh.

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(2) On this Christian Sabbath, believers must rest “from their own works, words and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations”

(*Westminster Confession of Faith*, XXI, 8).

(3) The whole day is to be taken up “in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.”

2. Sabbath and Creation.

a) A creation ordinance is a divine institution or command which is in effect from man’s creation until the consummation, such as labor (Genesis 1:28ff.), marriage (1:28; 2:24f.).

b) Creation ordinances do not pass away as the history of redemption progresses, because they are grounded in man’s nature as:

- created and
- not yet glorified—conditions which exist until the consummation.

c) Exodus 20:11 teaches that God’s blessing of “the Sabbath” in Genesis 2:3 was in effect the sanctifying of man’s Sabbath, and that, for that reason alone, the Sabbath must be observed, apart from anything peculiar to the Mosaic economy. [Cf. argument in C.1.a-c., above].

d) Note the “creation sanction” also in Exodus 31:17. Although this ground of Sabbath-keeping is not mentioned in Deuteronomy 5:12-15, the phrase “as the Lord thy God commanded thee” clearly refers back to Exodus

20:11 and reaffirms what was said there.

e) There is a lack of evidence for Sabbath-keeping prior to the Exodus from Egypt, and that poses a problem for the view that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance. If it were a creation ordinance, ought it not to have been observed perpetually?

(1) Exodus 16:22-30 shows that Sabbath observance was known before the giving of the Decalogue, and it presupposes some common knowledge of the custom.

(2) Many divine laws, clearly revealed, were neglected for long periods of time: monogamy, the Old Testament sabbatical years and Jubilee, etc.

f) Mark 2:27, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

(1) Here, Jesus grounds the Sabbath ordinance in the needs of man as man, not in anything distinctive to the Mosaic economy (*Anthropes*—generic man)

(2) "Was made" harks back to the original institution of the Sabbath at creation—with man on the scene.

(3) In context, Jesus draws a parallel between his disciples, who fed themselves on the Sabbath, and David's men, who took the consecrated bread. He says that the Sabbath was not intended to frustrate such natural needs, but to meet them. Again, the created nature of man (needing food and rest) is in view.

(4) Jesus here gives no hint that in his kingdom there will be any change in the nature of the Sabbath. One might have expected him to do so, by analogy with his teaching about the place of worship in John 4.

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g) Mark 2:28, ". . . so that the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

(1) It is unlikely that "Son of Man" here means simply "man." Rather, it is a title of Christ, correlate with his distinctive lordship over the Sabbath.

(2) "Son of Man" does not often focus on the distinctively human nature of Christ, but in this case, it does. Jesus says that the Sabbath is for man and that he is Lord of it by virtue of his Lordship over what pertains to man, that Lordship summarized in the expression "Son of Man."

(3) In Dan. 7, it appears that the Son of Man is a representative of "the saints" (verses 18), by whom the saints receive the kingdom (22).

Compare Paul's description of Christ as second Adam.

(4) Again, Jesus is dealing with his relation to mankind as such. He is not speaking specifically as Israel's Messiah, nor of any element of the Sabbath institution distinctive to Israel.

(5) In claiming Lordship "even" of the Sabbath, Jesus makes a momentous claim indeed. The Sabbath has always been "the Sabbath of the Lord your God". Jesus now places himself in the position of *Yahweh*. Yet, even in such a claim, Jesus gives no suggestion that he will abrogate or substantially alter the Sabbath obligation. Our impression is that he Sabbath continues in Jesus' kingdom as before, under his Lordship as Son of Man.

h) John 5:17: "My father worketh hitherto, and I work."

(1) Here, Jesus makes a clear claim to deity, for which the Jews seek to kill

him (v. 18).

(2) As deity, then, Jesus claims the right to set the terms for Sabbath observance.

(3) As incarnate deity, Jesus expresses submission to the Father. He is only imitating what the Father does, sharing the work of the Father (mercy). He claims the right to imitate not only the Father's Sabbath rest, but also the Father's Sabbath activity.

(4) Again, there is no hint of any basis for Sabbath observance distinctive to the Mosaic economy, or any major change to be brought in by Jesus. The basis of Sabbath observance here is the imitation of God's rest, the "creation sanction" of Exodus 20:11 and Genesis 2:3.

i) Hebrews 4.

(1) Here, the "rest" promised to the people of God is traced back to creation (compare 4:3f., 10 with Genesis 2:3). Note, also, the references to creation in Psalm 95 (quoted in Hebrews 3:7ff.) as the basis for the exhortation to hearken and enter God's rest.

(2) The Sabbath, as we have seen, is a sign of that eschatological rest, entered by God at creation, promised to man at the consummation (Gaffin in *OPC Minutes of the 40th General Assembly*).

(3) Thus, (however one translates *sabbatismos* in 4:9), the basis of Sabbath observance is traced back to the creation order, not to the distinctive provisions of the Mosaic Covenant.

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(4) Hebrews, incidentally, is much concerned with distinguishing the permanent from the temporary in God's purposes. But there is no indication here that Christ has abolished Sabbath observance .

j) Summary.

(1) Scripture presents the creation order as a sufficient ground of Sabbath observance. Since that creation structure will not change until the consummation, the Sabbath obligation continues along with it.

(2) These considerations more or less eliminate the views described as 1.ab., above. I say "more or less" because we have not yet considered some New Testament texts thought to militate against what we have said here. However, any view placing great weight on those texts must address itself to the arguments advanced here.

(3) Since the original creation ordinance deals with a cessation from work, and, since all references to the Sabbath which refer to creation speak in terms of a rest from labor, view 1.c. must be seriously questioned. However, we have yet to consider some of Kline's argumentation which attempts to account for the data.

3. Sabbath as Redemptive Promise.

a) Although the creation order is a sufficient ground for Sabbath observance, it is not the only ground given for it in Scripture. Scripture also calls us to keep the Sabbath because we are the redeemed people of God. Briefly: we are to remember our past deliverance from toil and to anticipate our future deliverance.

b) Rest as a redemptive blessing.

(1) Rest becomes a redemptive blessing because of the curse on the ground and on man's labor, Genesis 3:17-19. Had man not fallen, rest would have been a physical necessity and a precious time of communion with God, but would not have been a specifically redemptive category.

(a) References to man's labor as toil and misery, Ecclesiastes 2; Psalm 90.

(b) The wicked have no genuine peace, rest: Isaiah 48:22; 57:21.

(c) God gives his people rest: Psalm 127:2; Matthew 11:28 (rest in taking on a yoke!); Revelation 14:13. Note the descriptions of the toil in Egypt from which the people were redeemed.

(2) The focus in these passages is not on rest as a relief from sin as such, but as a relief from toil, sorrow, misery which sin brings into the world. Labor itself is not sinful, but is cursed because of sin. Similarly, rest is not itself redemption, but is a fruit of redemption, a blessing brought by redemption.

c) Sabbath as redemptive rest.

(1) The Sabbath is a present rest which recalls the redemptive rest given in the past and anticipates the greater rest to come.

(a) Deuteronomy 5:15 emphasizes this, and it is implicit in Exodus 20, when verses 8-11 are seen as motivated by the preface (verse 2).

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(b) This is also the major thrust of Hebrews 3-4, though as we mentioned earlier, the creation sanction is also in view here.

(2) As in the general references to rest [above, b.], these passages do not picture the Sabbath as a symbol of redemption as such, but as a symbol of rest from the toil and misery brought into the world by sin and the curse. The Sabbath, after all, is not a rest from sin, but from labor (which is good, though difficult). We are not told to sin six days and to be righteous the seventh, but to work six days and rest the seventh.

(3) If the Sabbath directly symbolized redemption from sin, one could argue that it is abrogated in the New Covenant since redemption has already been achieved. But on the contrary: the Sabbath symbolizes something still future—the final rest from toil. (Cf. Gaffin's arguments on the future reference of "rest" in Hebrews 3 and 4.) Thus, the Sabbath is not superfluous. As a symbol and a foretaste, it remains a great blessing.

(4) Review the passages dealing with Jesus' relation to the Sabbath: Mark 2:27f. and parallels; John 5:17f.; Hebrews 3:7-4:13. None of these suggest that Jesus intended the Sabbath to be abrogated or drastically changed in his kingdom. [Cf. above, 2.f. Cf. also Luke 4:15-28, parallels, 23:56].

d) Summary: There is nothing in the nature of the redemptive promise that would suggest some basic alteration in the law governing the weekly Sabbath. On the contrary, the continued keeping of the Sabbath is appropriate in the New Covenant as a type and foretaste of the final consummation rest which is yet to come.

4. "Day-Keeping" in the New Covenant: Romans 14:5; Galatians 4:9ff.; Colossians 2:16f.

a) These passages represent the strongest argument in favor of Calvin's view. On that view, the passages present the Sabbath and all "day-keeping" as Old Covenant "shadows" which pass away in Christ. The views of Carson and others can also appeal to these passages as presenting a radical change in the application of the fourth commandment.

b) Although I favor the "early Kline" view on the basis of the evidence presented under 2 and 3 above, I am not fully persuaded that adherents of this view have given a fully adequate account of these texts.

c) There are, however, some considerations which suggest alternative exegetical possibilities and which weaken arguments from these texts adduced to prove "less Sabbatarian" views.

(1) Clearly, these texts cannot be used to exclude day-keeping of every sort; for, elsewhere in the New Testament, day-keeping is required.

(a) The early church met at specific times, obviously, and Hebrews 10:25 makes it clear that attendance at such meetings is not an optional matter. Thus, in the New Covenant, there are some days and times set aside for certain specific purposes. [Cf. C.2.c.ii.d), above].

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(b) For the Corinthian church, Paul ordains a certain day, the first day, on which offerings are to be brought, I Corinthians 16:1f.

(c) The "Lord's day" (*kuriake hemera*) in Revelation 1:10.

(i) Not the final "day of the Lord". The context makes clear that this is a day in John's present experience.

(ii) It was probably a time of worship, as is suggested, but not required, by the phrase "in the Spirit".

(iii) Clearly, it is a day which belongs to the Lord in a special way. [Cf. *deipnon kuriakon* in I Corinthians 11:20. For sacramental sense, see above C.3.b.ii.e)].

(iv) The regular Scriptural reference to Sabbaths as "sabbath of the Lord" [C.2.b., above] suggests that the Lord's Day here is also a Sabbath.

(v) In any case, clearly, this is a special day, one which bears a distinctive relation to the Lord. It is not proper, in this case, to "regard every day alike" (Romans 14:5).

(vi) Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho*) refers to the Jewish Sabbath as *kuriake*. For other church Fathers, *kuriake* is Sunday (*Didache*, 14:1, Ignatius, *Magnesians* 9:1). Other references in Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon* under *kuriakos*.

(d) Though the Jews charges Paul with error on matters such as circumcision and the temple, there is no record of their charging him with breaking the Sabbath.

(e) Evidently, therefore, Romans 14:5 etc. do not rule out all observance of days or even make such observance optional in every case. It thus becomes necessary, on any view, to distinguish in these passages what sort of obligation is denied and what sort is not denied. Such a distinction, on any view, will not appear on the

surface. So, it is not a question of one view taking these texts at “face value” while the other views must engage in elaborate theological rationalizations. All must do some “theologizing” in interpreting these texts. We cannot simply take them at “face value” because it is clear that the first readers of these letters would have made certain assumptions, certain distinctions that do not appear evident to us from the passages themselves.

(2) Neither the Romans nor the Galatians passage mentions specifically the Sabbath. There were many other “days” observed in the Old Covenant economy, and it is certainly not impossible that the passages refer to these other days, or even to extra-biblical festivals. Remember that we must assume the Galatians and Romans capable of making some distinctions not explicitly noted in the passages. [Above, i.d.]

(3) Rom. 14:5

(a) In context, may refer to days of fasting; but the Sabbath, of course, is a day of feasting.

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(b) Note that it says we may abstain from any food; but obviously it is not saying that we may abstain from the Lord’s Supper.

(4) Galatians 4:10

(a) The specific problem in Galatians is works-righteousness. It is certainly possible to see Paul arguing here, not against observance of days as such, but against observance of days (even the Sabbath!) as a means of self-justification. Similarly: Paul might appear to be forbidding circumcision in Galatians 5:2f.; but, under other circumstances, when the issue of justification was not at stake, Paul not only permitted but performed circumcision, Acts 16:3. More broadly: Paul’s whole argument in Galatians opposes the doing of good works for justification. Yet, none of this argument forbids us to do good works or denies their obligation.

(b) Paul may well have the *Jewish* Sabbath (Saturday) in mind here.

(5) Colossians 2:16-17

(a) This passage does mention “sabbath” specifically, and it includes such Sabbaths among the “shadows” which pass away in the New Covenant. However, *sabbath* applied not only to the weekly Sabbath, but to various feast days of the Old Covenant calendar. The latter were clearly distinguished from the weekly Sabbath in the Old Testament, and it is not impossible to assume that the Colossians also made such distinctions naturally. Notice that Paul speaks of “a” Sabbath, not “the” Sabbath.

(b) John Mitchell made the argument that “feast, new moon and sabbath” regularly denotes official sacrifices in the Old Testament. (Report, *Minutes of the 40th General Assembly*, OPC, pp. 99ff.).

On this basis, the “shadows” would be occasions of Old Covenant sacrifices, not the weekly Sabbath. (Cf. Hebrews 10).

(c) Or the passage may refer to the weekly Sabbath; but then, the most likely reference is to the *Jewish* Sabbath (Saturday). This is the

most common understanding among Sabbatarians and the one I find most persuasive.

(d) As Douma points out, the “shadows” are no longer in effect; but there is a positive relation between the OT shadows and continuing NT ordinances: circumcision/baptism; passover/Lord’s Supper.

Why not also Sabbath/Lord’s Day?

d) Summary: The New Testament texts on “day-keeping”, therefore, do not present any evidence clearly contradicting strong Sabbatarian views, though it would certainly help matters if we could reach more definitive exegetical conclusions on the meanings of these passages.

e) Church-Historical Difficulty: It appears that the early Christians did not take off work on the first day of the week, or connect Sunday observance with the Fourth Commandment.

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(i) The Lord’s Day is honored by early writers, as the replacement of the Sabbath: Didache, Ignatius (*Magnesian*), Papias, Justin Martyr, Dionysius of Corinth, Tertullian. Only Tertullian (200 AD) mentions laying aside daily business on Sunday. The council of Laodicea (360) is the first to ask Christians to work Saturday and quit work on Sunday.

(ii) Douma suggests that the Fourth Commandment is not often invoked here, because of the predominant tendency to read the commandments allegorically.

(iii) But all regarded the Lord’s Day as a day for joyfully celebrating redemption, as the OT Sabbath.

(iv) And attending worship meant to some extent setting normal work aside.

(v) And to keep the day as a Lord’s *Day* (rather than hour or other period) naturally entailed a broader cessation from labor. In time the church came to see this.

(vi) Once this fact became evident, the parallel between the Lord’s Day and the fourth commandment became obvious, and theologians came to urge the Lord’s Day as a means of keeping the fourth commandment.

E. The Form of the Sabbath Under the New Covenant.

The above discussion indicates that the Sabbath continues under the New Covenant in a form not drastically different from its Old Covenant form. However, clearly, there are some changes, and we must also specify more concretely those modes of Sabbath observance sanctioned by both covenants. The general meaning of the Sabbath has been discussed under C, above. Now, we seek to translate the Sabbath-symbolism into specific policies particularly for our own period in redemptive history.

1. Worship and Rest.

a) See D.1., above, for various views.

b) My own position is closer to the “Early Kline view” than to the others.

(1) Clearly, the Sabbath is worship, the consecration of a particular day to the Lord [C.2.]. In that sense, the Westminster Standards are correct:

the whole day is a day of “worship” because the whole day is to be consecrated to God in a special way.

(2) However, the Confession is perhaps a bit too quick to equate “worship” with cultic exercises, thus reaching the conclusion that except for deeds of necessity and mercy the whole day is to be devoted to such exercises.

(a) Physical rest on the Sabbath (including recreation) does have a sacramental (and, thus, worshipful) function as it anticipates our sharing in the divine rest.

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(b) If the consecration of the day may be fulfilled only by cultic exercises, then “deeds of necessity and mercy” are appropriate to the day only by way of awkward exceptions.

(i) But mercy, as we’ve seen, is a central function of the Sabbath. This can be seen only if the idea of rest is made more central than in the Confession: mercy is a giving of rest [C.3.c.]. Thus, if rest is central, the emphasis on the Sabbath as a day of mercy becomes intelligible.

(ii) “Deeds of necessity” are also appropriate, because, on our view, the Sabbath has a manward reference as well as a Godward reference (Mark 2:27). In Scripture, “deeds of necessity” are not merely works necessary to keep men alive so they can worship (Jesus’ disciples might have fasted on Sabbath if that was the point), but, rather, those works necessary to maintain man’s full enjoyment of the Sabbath celebration. (Cf. Isaiah 58:13f.)

(3) I do not deny, of course, the appropriateness of cultic exercises on the Sabbath, only that these are exclusively appropriate. Certainly, no other day of the week is equally suited to the cultic “meeting” between God and his people [C.2.]. And no one may take it upon himself to spurn the assembly (Hebrews 10:25).

(4) Conclusion: The balance of the evidence indicates that under the New Covenant God requires us to consecrate the Sabbath and thereby to worship him, not only in cultic exercises, but also in resting from our labors, delighting in that rest, and sharing it with others in deeds of mercy.

2. The Change of day.

a) The problem: Apparently, the Old Covenant people of God rested on Saturday, the seventh day of the week, by divine order. Somehow, the New Covenant people of God have come to observe Sunday, the first day instead. But where in Scripture is there a divine command to make this change? And is it thinkable that such a change would be made without divine authority?

b) Ambiguity of “change of day”: Before discussing this matter, we must get clear on what we mean when we talk about a “change of day”. The phrase is not as perspicuous as it appears.

(1) “Change from Saturday to Sunday”: This could mean merely a change

in the name of the day on which we rest. But certainly, that is not what is at issue here. There is no divine mandate requiring the Sabbath to have a certain name. Names for the day rightly vary from language to language. Whether we call the Sabbath “Saturday” or “Sunday” is a matter of godly human initiative.

(2) “Change from the day observed in the Old Testament to the day following”:

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(a) Since the calendar has changed so often, in so many respects, we really do not know on what day of our week the Sabbath was observed in the Old Testament period. Even during that period, it is doubtful that the calendar remained entirely constant.

(b) Even when it did remain constant, the Sabbath may not have fallen regularly on the seventh day of the week, though it did occur at seven-day intervals. Cf. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, 134ff.

(i) The 15th of Abib, the first month (roughly =April) must be a Sabbath, for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The other Sabbaths are dated from this one, in Lev. 23:6-7, 11, 15-16, 21.

(ii) So the day of the month is constant, the day of the week variable, like your birthday. It did not fall regularly on Saturday.

(c) During the New Testament era, the calendar has also changed frequently, so we do not know precisely which day of our week was the “first day” of the apostolic church.

(d) Surely, it cannot be argued (especially in the New Testament period) that there is a divinely commanded calendar. Our inability to locate the precise day on which the biblical characters rested is not due to sin.

(e) There is no divinely commanded location for the international date line. Therefore, there must be some element of human initiative involved in determining which day of the week will be the seventh and which will be the first, etc.

(f) The idea, then, of determining the precise day on which the Old Testament people worshipped and setting aside the day following that one is an impossible notion, certainly not a matter of divine command, and not what is meant by “change of day” in this context.

(3) “Change in Symbolic Weight”:

(a) This, in my view, is the precise nature of the change under discussion. It is a change in the meaning of the day, a change in symbolism from end to beginning.

(b) In theory, the early church might have observed the new symbolism by continuing to worship on the seventh day, but regarding that seventh day as the first day of a cycle and investing that day with first-day symbolism. Such an approach, however, would have been inadequate in their situation, because:

(i) The change had to do with the appearances of the risen Christ on the day following the Jewish Sabbath. For them to have retained the old day would have obscured that fact.

(ii) A private change of calendar for the Christians only would have obscured their witness to the world and especially to the Jews.

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That witness required observation of a day different from that of Judaism.

(iii) Thus, a mere symbolic change without actual change of the time of worship would have been inexpedient in the first century.

Similarly, it would be inexpedient in most situations today. Yet, there is nothing inherently wrong with worshipping on another day as long as that day is seen as “first”, with all the symbolic weight attached to that “firstness”.

(4) The problem then becomes: what divine authorization is there for this change in symbolic weight?

c) Even during the Old Covenant, there was some Sabbatical symbolism associated with the “first day” or “eighth day” in a sequence.

(1) The divine Sabbath of Genesis 2:2f. began on the first complete day of man’s existence. God’s Sabbath (which he intended to share with man) marked the beginning of man’s life. Our life is the gift of God’s creation, his completed work, just as our salvation is the gift of God’s completed redemptive work. Note:

(a) Christ is the second Adam.

(b) Redemption is a new creation.

(2) First-fruits and Pentecost, Leviticus 23:9-21.

(a) Wave-offering on “morrow after the Sabbath,” v. 11.

(b) Meal-offering on “morrow after seventh Sabbath,” v. 16.

(c) Both days are Sabbaths, though the word is not used (14, 21). “Holy convocation,” “no servile work”.

(d) Symbolism: Christ, the first-fruits of the dead, Pentecost as the first-fruits of the gospel.

(e) Thus, even under the Old Covenant, God called his people to observe occasional first-day Sabbaths and, thus, to anticipate the coming great harvest, the accomplishment of redemption.

(3) Blowing of trumpets, Leviticus 23:24—on the first day of the seventh month. Trumpets tend to symbolize the approach of the divine presence.

(4) Feast of tabernacles, Leviticus 23:33-44.

(a) First- and eighth-day Sabbaths, vv. 35, 39.

(b) Symbolism: Christ tabernacling among his people.

(5) Jubilee, Leviticus 25:8-17.

(a) The Jubilee is the fiftieth year in the sequence, following the normal Sabbatical year, v. 10.

(b) Symbolism: the final rectification, the consummation.

(6) The Old Testament, therefore, pictures the coming (New Testament) history of redemption in Christ by a series of first-day Sabbaths. One

might even be led to anticipate that when these events are fulfilled, the
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first day will then achieve more prominence in the life of God's people.
Possibly:

(a) Even Israel's seventh-day Sabbath was, in a sense, a "first day yetto-come".

(b) Christ brings the first day in principle.

(c) In the consummation, God's seventh day again becomes fully our first day, as at creation.

d) The first day in the New Covenant.

(1) The essence of the Sabbath is the "meeting with God" (C.2.). But in Christ is the definitive meeting point of man with God. He is the Sabbath.

(a) He calls the disciples, in effect, to drop all their own work to follow him. Peter and the others, of course, did return to fishing from time to time during Jesus' earthly ministry, but notice how often he interrupts their fishing to draw their attention to himself.

(b) Did Mary, as opposed to Martha, recognize the presence of the Sabbath in Jesus (Luke 10:38-42)? Contrary to the normal pattern of guest / host relations, she saw her role to be one of rest, worship and enjoyment in the presence of Jesus.

(2) First-day resurrection and resurrection appearances, Luke 24:13-51 (36-47, maybe 48-52); John 20:1, 19, 26.

(3) First-day gatherings of the apostolic church: This is the only day concerning which there is apostolic example: Acts 2:1, 20:6f.; I Corinthians 16:1f.

(4) In the post-apostolic period, the first-day gatherings were taken for granted; they were non-controversial. That presupposes apostolic warrant.

(5) Conclusion:

(a) Apostolic practice justifies the use of the first day as the Christian day of worship.

(b) In all probability, the significance of the day is that it is a memorial to the day of resurrection. This fact, in turn, embraces all of the rich Old Testament symbolism concerning the first day.

e) Is Sunday the New Testament Sabbath?

(1) Douma:

(a) Both Sabbath and Sunday are special days, commemorative.

(b) Both are feasts.

(c) Both are days of worship.

(d) Both are "made for man."

(e) Both are violated by selfish labor and by Pharisaic casuistry.

(2) Calvin: since Sabbath symbolizes resting from works righteousness, we should celebrate it every day.

(a) But God rested only one day.

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(b) He appointed Israel to observe one day, though in the OT also the

Sabbath symbolized God's deliverance.

(c) The chief symbolism of the Sabbath is not rest from legalist works, but rest from the toil that sin brings into the world. We are not told to spend six days in legalistic works and rest on the seventh.

(3) Days of worship, "holy convocation," were Sabbaths in the Old Testament. The day of worship and the day of rest are never separated. Previous discussion shows the theological necessity of this.

(4) Since there is clearly a change in symbolic weight, from a predominantly seventh-day symbolism to a predominantly first-day symbolism, under the New Covenant, and, since that symbolic weight has been attached to the Sabbath [i., above], the day has, therefore, been changed.

(5) But do we still keep the letter of the fourth commandment, which specifies a sequence of six days of work and a rest on the seventh?

(a) The New Testament Sabbath is, like the Old, a day of rest between one six-day period and another. What do we rest from? As in the Old Covenant, we rest from the preceding six days of work.

(b) The Sabbath in either covenant, then, is both backward looking and forward looking. It is a memorial to God's acts in the past and a consecration of our own past labors, but also an anticipation of the history of redemption to come.

(c) The difference lies, not in any drastic change, not even a drastic change of symbolism, but in a change of symbolic weight. The New Testament Sabbath carries the same symbolism of the Old Testament Sabbath, but refocuses it to account for its distinctive historical position: it changes the Old Testament symbolism by stressing the new beginning made by the finished accomplishment of redemption.

(d) Thus, we still rest on the seventh day, as the fourth commandment says—the seventh day from the beginning of the work-week. But that seventh day is our first day in Christ.

3. Sabbath as a New Covenant Sign.

a) In all ages, the Sabbath is a distinguishing mark of God's people [C.3.b.; E.1.b.iv.d)]. Yet, it is given to the whole human race in creation and probably also in the earliest redemptive covenants (see earlier discussion of Kline).

(1) Since it "distinguishes" the whole race as God's covenant people, there is a sense in which it does not distinguish at all. All are given the Sabbath as a sign of promise.

(2) Though all have the obligation to keep the Sabbath, few do; that is one aspect of the covenant-breaking that characterizes the human race.

(3) Thus, Israel is called to be a nation of Sabbath-keepers. The language in Exodus 31:12ff. does not suggest that the Sabbath is something unknown to other nations or distinctive to Israel, but, rather, that Israel

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is to be unique as a Keeper of the Sabbath. In Exodus 20:8, Israel is told to remember the Sabbath. Again, the impression is that Israel is to observe a law that has been previously known but not observed.

b) Thus, the sign- or sacramental-character of the Sabbath does not distinguish the church in the sense that those outside the church are forbidden to observe it. It is not parallel to baptism and the Lord's Supper in this respect. Note again the obligation of "strangers" (Exodus 20:10) whether circumcised or not (Exodus 12:48).

c) Blue laws.

(1) There is, therefore, nothing theologically wrong with urging unbelievers to keep the Sabbath, just as we urge them not to kill or steal.

(2) Since we are called, as Sabbatarians, not only to rest, but also to give rest, it is proper for us to seek in society a slackening of the pace so that the populace as a whole may rest one day in seven, and also (incidentally!) to reduce the economic pressure on Christians to break the Sabbath in order to compete. The Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27)—a creation ordinance written into our being. We need to rest one day in seven. To promote this is to promote health in the fullest sense, not just to promote a feature of a particular redemptive covenant.

(3) For the role of government, see discussion of the fifth commandment. Generally, I see no objection to the use of the powers of government to enforce Sabbath-observance, though this may not be desirable in every situation. Even if one denies to government the right to enforce religion, one certainly must acknowledge the right of government to protect religion and to promote rest in society [above, ii.].

4. Sabbath Years and Jubilee

a) These have to do with the rest of the land.

b) So I take it that these were given to Israel as a theocracy, not to the Gentile nations who have no divine land grant.

c) Though not mandatory, they express important principles (see below).

5. Broader Implications.

a) Ecology.

(1) In the sabbatical years, and in the Jubilee, the land was to rest, just as on the weekly Sabbath, man was to give rest to his family, servants and animals. This completes the reference to those under man's dominion. Exodus 23:10f.; Leviticus 25:1-17.

(2) Thus, the cultural mandate is not intended as an exploitation of creation, but a "guarding and keeping", (Genesis 2:15).

(3) Scripture warns us, therefore, against coveting prosperity in such a way that we destroy the God-given source of our wealth. God's people not only take from the earth, but also give back.

b) Care for the poor.

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(1) In the sabbatical years, debts were remitted and Hebrew slaves set free, unless they voluntarily agreed to accept lifetime servitude, Deuteronomy 15:1-6, 12-18.

(2) One reason for the rest of the land was so that "the poor of thy people may eat" (Exodus 23:11).

(3) Again, then, we are being warned against precisely the acquisitive spirit

so common in modern America. The Sabbath, in all its forms, means that we will not put our own wealth ahead of the needs of others. [Cf. C.3.c.].

(4) Hence, the condemnation of Amos against the Sabbatarians of his day, 8:4-10. They kept the Sabbath, so far as the letter of the law was concerned, but they eagerly awaited the end of the Sabbath so that they could resume their oppression of the poor. Thus, they had not begun to appreciate the meaning of the Sabbath ordinance. The Sabbath commandment requires a Sabbatarian attitude of heart—a willingness to serve.

V. The Fifth Commandment: “Honor thy father and thy mother (Deuteronomy: as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee), that thy days may be long (Deuteronomy: and that it

might go well with thee) in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

WLC, Q124: Who are meant by father and mother in the fifth commandment?

A124: By father and mother, in the fifth commandment, are meant, not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts; and especially such as, by God's ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family, church, or commonwealth.

Q125: Why are superiors styled Father and Mother?

A125: Superiors are styled Father and Mother, both to teach them in all duties toward their inferiors, like natural parents, to express love and tenderness to them, according to their several relations; and to work inferiors to a greater willingness and cheerfulness in performing their duties to their superiors, as to their parents.

Q126: What is the general scope of the fifth commandment?

A126: The general scope of the fifth commandment is, the performance of those duties which we mutually owe in our several relations, as inferiors, superiors, or equals.

Q127: What is the honor that inferiors owe to their superiors.?

A127: The honor which inferiors owe to their superiors is, all due reverence in heart, word, and behavior; prayer and thanksgiving for them; imitation of their virtues and graces; willing obedience to their lawful commands and counsels; due submission to their corrections; fidelity to, defense and maintenance of their persons and authority, according to their several ranks, and the nature of their places; bearing with their infirmities, and covering them in love, that so they may be an honor to them and to their government.

Q128: What are the sins of inferiors against their superiors?

A128: The sins of inferiors against their superiors are, all neglect of the duties required toward them; envying at, contempt of, and rebellion against, their persons and places, in their lawful counsels, commands, and corrections; cursing, mocking, and all such

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refractory and scandalous carriage, as proves a shame and dishonor to them and their government.

Q129: What is required of superiors towards their inferiors?

A129: It is required of superiors, according to that power they receive from God, and that relation wherein they stand, to love, pray for, and bless their inferiors; to instruct, counsel, and admonish them; countenancing, commending, and rewarding such as do well;

and discountenancing, reproofing, and chastising such as do ill; protecting, and providing for them all things necessary for soul and body: and by grave, wise, holy, and exemplary

carriage, to procure glory to God, honor to themselves, and so to preserve that authority which God hath put upon them.

Q130: What are the sins of superiors?

A130: The sins of superiors are, besides the neglect of the duties required of them, an inordinate seeking of themselves, their own glory, ease, profit, or pleasure; commanding things unlawful, or not in the power of inferiors to perform; counseling, encouraging, or favoring them in that which is evil; dissuading, discouraging, or discountenancing them in

that which is good; correcting them unduly; careless exposing, or leaving them to wrong, temptation, and danger; provoking them to wrath; or any way dishonoring themselves, or lessening their authority, by an unjust, indiscreet, rigorous, or remiss behavior.

Q131: What are the duties of equals?

A131: The duties of equals are, to regard the dignity and worth of each other, in giving honor to go one before another; and to rejoice in each other's gifts and advancement, as their own.

Q132: What are the sins of equals?

A132: The sins of equals are, besides the neglect of the duties required, the undervaluing of the worth, envying the gifts, grieving at the advancement of prosperity one of another; and usurping preeminence one over another.

Q133: What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment, the more to enforce it?

A133: The reason annexed to the fifth commandment, in these words, That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, is an express promise of long life and prosperity, as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good, to all such as keep this commandment.

A. Place in the Decalogue

1. Transition from duty to God, to our duty to man.

a) Note Kline's reservations: no division between two tables.

b) But a striking transition nonetheless:

(1) Worship, reverence to God in I-IV

(2) Parallel (!) reverence to human beings in V. (How reconcile??)

2. The second creation ordinance

a) Worship and Sabbath, I-IV

b) Family, V-VII (Can murder be construed as a family crime? Note Gen.

4:1-15, restriction of vengeance in family context. No corresponding restriction outside that context, Romans 13:4. In some ways the human race is a family; in other ways not.)

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c) Labor VIII-X

(Can "false witness" be construed as a crime against property, an attempt to gain economic advantage through legal authority?)

B. General Thrust

1. Honor, *Kabad*: Calvin' distinctions still helpful.

a) Reverence, respect (Existential perspective)

(1) "Fear" used in parallel texts: Leviticus 19:3, Romans 13:7, I Peter 2:18

(2) Parallels language used concerning our worship of God.

(a) Sometimes Scripture contrasts the honor due to God with that due to any human being, Acts 4:19, 5:29, even father and mother!

Matthew 10:35-37, Mark 10:29f, Luke 14:26f. (Strong testimony to the deity of Christ.) First commandment!

(b) But in the fifth commandment, reverence to father and mother is a consequence of our reverence to God.

(i) Deut. “as the Lord thy God commanded thee”

(ii) Leviticus 19:32, Ephesians 6:1ff, Colossians 3:20ff

(iii) Matthew 15:4-6, Mark 7:10ff, *Corban*

(a) Pledge of money to temple, or legal notice disclaiming responsibility for parents' debts?

(b) In either case, an attempt to divest self of obligation, by religious, legal oath. Cf. Exodus 21:17.

(c) Jesus condemns this competition between loyalty to God and to parents. It actually dishonors by making his word void.

(c) Need for balanced perception

(i) Roman Catholic reverence of men: *latreia, douleia, uperdouleia*, clergy titles

(ii) Protestants + exaggerated reverence for theologians, pastors, traditions.

(iii) Existential perspective: need to “see as.”

(d) Importance of deference, Gen. 31:35, 1 Kings 2:19, 1 Tim. 5:1.

(e) Seriousness of cursing, Ex. 21:17, Lev. 20:9, Prov. 20:20, 30:11.

b) Submission (Normative perspective)

(1) General: reverence or respect entails hearing with respect, expecting to learn, being willing to change, not assuming too quickly that we know more than the one we listen to.

(a) I Timothy 5:1 - not blind obedience: we can exhort. But age is a factor in determining how we exhort.

(b) I Peter 5:5. In both of these-passages, “elder” may mean simply “older man,” not necessarily a church officer.

(c) Proverbs: the elderly are assumed to be wise, worth hearing. When they are not, they are pathetic cases.

(d) Note the negative example of Rehoboam, 1 Kings 12.

(e) Scripture presents parents (and the elderly generally) as *teachers*: Deut. 6:6-7, Prov. 1:10, 2:1, 3:1. Accepting the wisdom of parentsteachers leads to long life (Prov. 3:1-2, 4:10). The concept of

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parents as wisdom teachers is the logical link between honoring parents and the promise of long life and prosperity (Douma).

(2) Obedience: This is a particular form of submission, not submission itself. Sometimes submission entails obedience, sometimes not.

(a) Children and parents: for a child, submission to parents involves obedience, Ephesians 6:1, Colossians 3:20. But when the child comes of age, little is said about obedience. “Honor” then takes primarily the form of respect (a) and financial support (c).

(b) Civil authorities, Titus 3:1, I Peter 2:13f.

(c) Church authorities, Hebrews 13:17, Phil. 2:12, II Thes. 3:14.

(d) Wives, I Peter 3:6

(e) Servants, Colossians 3:20, I Peter 2:18ff (even to the cruel!)

(f) Limit on obedience: we must disobey human authorities when they command us to disobey God. When we sin against God, we may not offer as an excuse that we were commanded to do so by lawful authority. Ex. 1:17, 19-21, I Samuel 22:17ff, I Kings 12:28-30, 2 Chron. 26:16-21, Daniel 6:22f, Matt. 10:37, Luke 3:13f, 14:26, Acts 4:18-20, 5:29.

(i) Hezekiah followed his ancestor David, rather than his father Ahaz, 2 Kings 18:3.

(ii) Jesus was not uncritical of his parents (Luke 2:49), but was subject to them (2:51).

c) Financial support (Situational perspective)

(1) Financial connotation of *kabad*, Proverbs 13:9, Gen. 13:2, Isaiah 43:23, Malachi 1:6, 3:8; time, I Timothy 5:17.

(2) NT Obligation: I Timothy 5:4ff (note especially verse 8), Mark 7:10ff.

2. Father and Mother: The Larger Catechism sees the Fifth Commandment as covering all interpersonal relations: between superiors, inferiors, equals. Can this rather broad understanding of “father and mother” be justified?

a) Structure of family metaphors in Scripture

(1) Elders, rulers, military chiefs: Ex. 12:21, Duet. 5:23, II Kings 5:13, Gen. 45:8, Isaiah 49:23, Judges 5:7

(2) Prophets, wisdom teachers, church leaders: Ps. 34:11f, Proverbs 1:8, 10, 15, II Kings 2:12, 13.14, I Cor. 4:15, Gal. 4:19, I Thes. 5:12f (“esteem”), 1 Tim. 1:2, Tit. 1:4.

(3) Older people: I Timothy 5:1

(4) God: Malachi 1:6, Matt. 6:9, Ephesians 3:15

b) Family is the fundamental sphere from which all other spheres are derived; therefore, family “honor” is the tie that binds all society.

(1) Historically

(a) Adam played all roles: prophet, priest, king

(b) Noah: human race born anew in a single family

(c) Israel: its institutions are elaborations of its original family structure

(d) New Covenant: a new family, Matthew 12:48ff, Mark 10:29f,

Ephesians 1:5, Romans 14: 10ff

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(2) Developmentally: For young children, the family still performs all the functions of society: teaching, discipline, employment, religious leadership.

(3) Logically: “rule” in all spheres is similar, I Timothy 3:4, David as shepherd and king.

c) Similar “honor” required in all authority spheres: reverence, submission, support, promise of prosperity, “unto the Lord.” Proverbs 3:1-2, Ephesians 5:22ff (note verse 22, 6:5, 7, 9), Colossians 3:23ff, I Peter 2:17 [cf. Exodus 22:28, Proverbs 24:21, Psalm. 82:6].

d) Universality of “honor” in Scripture

(1) Honor attaches to all persons

- (a) Romans 13:7 - probably an allusion to fifth commandment; note reference to other commandments in verse 9.
- (b) I Peter 2:13, 17.
- (2) Mutual submission in the church
 - (a) Romans 12:10 - in honor preferring one another
 - (b) Ephesians 5:21ff - note reciprocal responsibilities.
 - (c) I Peter 1ff - note "honor" due the wife in verse 7, promise of prosperity in verse 9.
 - (d) I Corinthians 7:2-4 - surprising mutual "ownership"
 - (e) I Corinthians 11:11 - lest readers draw wrong inferences from female submission
- (3) Pattern of office in the new covenant, John 13:12-17, Matthew 20:20-28, I Peter 3. Unusual: instead of the "inferior" being preoccupied with the needs of the superior, *vice versa*. There ought to be an atmosphere of love in the church entirely different from that found in any secular institution.
- (4) Still, there is a real authority structure. Christ is over the church, parents have authority over children, husbands over wives. (Ephesians 5:21 does not make husband and wife equal authorities.)
- (5) Vs. egalitarianism, authoritarianism.
 - (a) God places all of us under authority. In itself, this is not demeaning or oppressive, contra feminism.
 - (b) God has not made us all equal in gifts and abilities.
 - (c) But no human ruler should claim divine power over all aspects of human life.
 - (d) And rulers should rule for the good of their subjects.
- 3. Promise of Prosperity
 - a) For obedience to God, but also for obedience to his representatives, Colossians 3:25, I Timothy 5:8, I Peter 2:18, 3:8-12.
 - b) Functions in new covenant as well as old: Mark 10:30, Colossians 3:24, Ephesians 6:1, I Peter 3:10 (quotes Psalm 34:12, which alludes to fifth commandment). "Land" is the whole earth now.
 - c) Does distinguish the righteous from the wicked, I Kings 3:14, Malachi 4:6.
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 - d) Not automatic, however. Some faithful people die young. That can be a blessing, 1 Kings 14:13, 2 Kings 22:20. But the ultimate fulfillment of this promise is in the life to come.
 - e) Still, there is blessing in this life for honoring God and his representatives, Mark 10:29-31, 1 Tim. 4:8.
 - f) Why is this promise attached specifically to the fifth commandment?
 - (1) Similar sanctions attached to worship, honor of God, obeying him: second commandment, Deuteronomy 6:3, 18 (note parallel language).
 - (2) Point of fifth commandment: attaches same sanctions to God's representatives.
 - (3) Extends to sources of life generally: 12:25, 28 (blood not to be eaten); 22:6f (don't take mother bird and eggs). Ecological implications.
 - (4) Parents as wisdom teachers: following their wisdom brings long life

(Prov. 3:1-2, 4:10, Psm. 1). Compare the function of God's law "for your good" (Deut. 6:24, 10:13, 12:28).

B. Sphere-relations: Historical Survey

1. Sophists

- a) Ethical irrationalism: moral norms neither true nor false.
- b) Ethical rationalism: man is the measure of all things.
- c) Irrationalism leads to anarchy in society.
- d) Rationalism leads to totalitarianism ("Justice is the interest of the stronger.")

2. Plato

- a) Rationalism: philosopher knows the forms, so he ought to rule.
 - b) Hence, totalitarianism
 - (1) No private property
 - (2) Communal wives, children for upper classes
 - (3) Eugenic supervision of marriages, births
 - (4) Compulsory education
 - (5) Censorship of art, literature
 - c) Tyranny? But it is supposed to bring fulfillment to each individual.
3. Aristotle: State is more important than the individual, since the whole is more important than any part. It is the partnership that includes all partnerships.
4. Stoics: similar reasoning, leading to conclusion of world government.

5. Aquinas

- a) Doctrine of the state can be established by natural (Aristotelian) reason.
 - (1) State is highest social whole of which all are parts.
 - (2) "Subsidiarily:" Let the parts do what they can.
- b) If man hadn't fallen, the state would be enough; but because of sin, we need the church also.
- c) The two are distinct, each autonomous in its own realm (nature/grace).
- d) Since grace is the higher sphere, the church is superior to the state. It is the extension of the incarnation itself.
 - (1) It prevails where conflict.
 - (2) It instructs the state concerning natural law (since the fall, it has a superior understanding of nature).
 - (3) The state may enter the sphere of grace insofar as it helps the church.

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(4) Boniface VIII: earthly power is delegated to the pope. He may remove a heretical ruler.

(5) Bellarmine - more moderate

- (a) Church and state are like soul and body.
- (b) Church's principal responsibility in state is to enlighten rulers, people on the extent and limits of their obligations.
- (c) The church has a right to intervene in temporal matters which affect the spiritual realm.

6. Maritain (modern, pre-1967 Roman Catholic)

- a) State is supreme embodiment of natural reason.
- b) Its work: promote the common welfare, maintain law, administer public affairs.
- c) Church is superior because man is spiritual.

(1) That supremacy, however, must be applied “analogously” - differently in different situations.

(2) In democracy, authoritarianism inappropriate. A more spiritual approach better befits the church's nature: moral enlightenment.

(3) Don't compromise with moral law, but don't enforce rules too heavy for the common good.

d) State may help church

(1) By creating conditions of order

(2) By acknowledging God

(3) Specific help (no more than it would give to any other group)

7. Vatican II - now room for all sorts of views in Roman church.

8. Machiavelli (1469-1527)

a) Christianity makes men passive, discourages political involvement; thus power of the church must be sharply curbed.

b) Law alone makes men virtuous, hunger alone makes him industrious.

c) Until population is purified, the state requires as absolute despot to maintain strength.

d) That despot may do anything (lie, trick, force) to achieve his ends. He is above the sphere of individual morality.

9. Bodin, Hobbes, Rousseau: “Social contract.” Once the people have transferred their authority to the state, the state becomes absolute in authority, irrevocably in power.

10. Locke: Social contract modified in direction of Rutherford.

11. Anabaptism (Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*)

a) Sword-bearing of state is radically incompatible with Jesus' teaching concerning non-resistance.

(1) Rev. 13: state is satanic.

(2) Romans 13

(a) State is one of the tribulations the church must endure until the last day (verses 11-14).

(b) Church must relate to state in attitude of suffering love (Chap. 12, 13:8-10), meek submission.

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(c) “Be subject” - not obedience, but subordination. Christians may often have to disobey, but must accept the penalty.

(d) “Ordained by God” - ordered by God; so no divine approval involved.

(e) “Good (4) and “evil” are not obedience or disobedience to the state, but living according to the standards of Rom. 12.

(f) “Minister of God” - the Christian, not the civil magistrate.

(g) Use of force is evil. True power only in suffering.

(h) Conclusion: state is an evil which God uses for his purpose.

b) So Christians ought not to participate in the state at all.

c) Reply:

(1) Does no justice O.T.

(2) Hard to eliminate element of divine sanction from Romans 13.

(3) *Hypotasso* does regularly mean to obey out of obligation, not just to

submit to superior force. See Luke 2:51, 10:17, 20, Rom. 8:7, 1 Cor. 14:34, 37, 16:16, Eph. 5:24, Col. 3:18, 1 Pet. 2:13, 18, 3:1, 5, 5:5, Tit. 2:9, 3:1, Jas. 4:7, Heb. 12:9.

(4) Anabaptist reading of “good,” “evil,” and “minister of God” not plausible.

(5) Is power as force always evil? 1 Tim. 6:15, Rev. 5:5, 12, 12:5, 21:24.

(6) Anabaptists accept authority of parents, husbands, teachers. Why not of state?

12. Lutheranism: “the doctrine of the two kingdoms”

a) God approves of state, but it is less than God's best.

b) It is an emergency measure to preserve life, order, family after fall.

c) Uses forces unleashed by the fall, but in interest of love.

d) “God's left hand.” Contradiction in God's nature? (Thielicke)

e) Powers of state, then, must be limited.

f) Kingdom of God: based on entirely different principles. Rule only through word, spirit.

g) Prince can be Christian, but in different order.

h) Cf. law/gospel distinction: threat may never be a means to a godly end.

i) Church and state

(1) State not arm of church, but ought to be Christian.

(2) Ought to protect church, help organize it.

(3) Cannot intervene in purely religious issues.

(4) Erastianism: church under state control.

13. Calvin

a) State is a gracious provision of God. (vs. RC, Anabaptist, Lutheran)

b) Scripture determines the state's prerogatives.

c) Church and state: difference is competence, jurisdiction.

d) Limits of state's jurisdiction: somewhat unclear.

e) Ground of revolution? Generally no, but:

(1) Sermon on Daniel 6:22 - When rulers rise against God, people should put them down.

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(2) Last page of *Institutes*: lesser magistrates must not simply agree to unjust policies.

14. S. Rutherford (*Lex, Rex*, 1644)

a) Government is from God, but ratified by people (Saul, David).

b) King is subject to God's law.

c) In accepting a ruler, the community does not surrender all its rights (as Rousseau thought), but only the right to do violence. They maintain the right of self-defense.

d) If the king breaks the contract, the people are free from their obligations.

e) Romans 13 includes “inferior magistrates.”

(1) So the king is not the sole interpreter of the law.

(2) Separation of powers is desirable.

(3) Inferior judges also have power of sword.

15. A. Kuyper (*Lectures on Calvinism*, 1898)

a) Authority of the state is from God, subject to the word.

b) Its responsibilities: Compel mutual respect, defend the weak, collect taxes or national purposes

c) Other spheres also sovereign - their rights from God, not state.

d) Thus state must respect their rights - basis of freedom. May not interfere in their "internal workings"

e) State is "unnatural" institution. (vs. Van Ruler)

(1) Post-fall

(2) Vs. man's natural impulses - replaces organic with mechanical motivation.

(3) But necessary in fallen world.

f) State under God's law, but not theocracy (Urim)

(1) Must protect church

(2) Cannot extirpate idolatry, since state not competent to decide which church is right.

(3) Ought to penalize blasphemy, not because of its impiety, but because God rules over the state.

g) Comments

(1) Not specific enough in reference to Scriptural law.

(2) Limits on state not precise.

(3) Reformed resistance, though, to anarch/totalitarian dialectic.

16. Dooyeweerd

a) More elaborate account of family, church, state as belonging to distinct spheres, freedom grounded in this diversity under God.

b) Problems: grounding for distinctions, precision on powers, limits of state power.

c) His disciples, therefore, differ greatly in their view of the power of the state: cf. the conservative Van Riessen, the socialistic Bob Goudswaard. No "limit in principle" to governmental interference, because no clearly exegetical approach.

17. Theonomy (see general discussion of normative perspective)

a) Scripture sets limits on state powers.

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b) O.T.: church/state distinguished by priesthood/kingship.

c) Emulate OT laws (with cultural and redemptive-historical adjustments).

18. Clowney ("The Politics of the Kingdom")

a) Kingdom of God: the coming of God himself in Christ.

b) Kingdom power - radically different from earthly power.

c) Christ fulfills creation mandate, Matthew 28, Ephesians 4:10, dominion promises to Israel.

d) Our work: not to seek dominion, but to endure the sufferings of Christ in bringing the gospel to the world. The glory comes later.

e) The church is the new theo-political form of the kingdom, but radically different from the O.T. theocracy. No sword.

(1) It is the form of the heavenly city, while the state is the form of the earthly city.

(2) Sword is for Christians, non-Christians alike (Genesis 9); cf. Kline.

f) Applications

- (1) Don't link Christianity to political hopes.
- (2) Cultural mandate no longer in force.
- (3) God does not promise us skill in world politics, etc.
- (4) Don't amass wealth, but give to the needy.

g) Comments

(1) Brings out more clearly than the Kuyperians the distinctive nature of the church.

(2) Cultural mandate and great commission: see previous discussion.

(3) Secularity of the state.

(a) Scripture does teach that the civil magistrate does not lose his authority because of unbelief.

(b) But why should we not strive to increase Christian influence in the state? Unbelieving magistrates may have lawful authority, but they are hardly ideal.

(4) God does give worldly wisdom to Christians: Proverbs

(5) Christians are promised prosperity; and prosperity is necessary if we are to help the needy in meaningful way.

19. Frame, "Toward a Theology of the State."

20. Some conclusions (tentative)

a) Scripture must govern our thinking in this area in detail as well as general drift.

b) The church is the fundamental form of the kingdom of God. As such it performs for God's people many functions otherwise performed by the state.

c) Authority of the state is limited:

(1) By God's commission which is limited.

(2) By other institutions, especially church.

(3) By Scriptural norms.

d) Insofar as state is obedient to Scripture, it may be and ought to be Christian.

e) Cautious imitation of Old Covenant Israel is desirable for avoiding subjectivism, maintaining liberty.

f) Should churches be politically active?

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(i) The church should proclaim the whole counsel of God, which often bears upon questions of political debate: freedom of religion, abortion, care for the poor, race, gender roles, homosexuality, political corruption, and many others.

(ii) This proclamation should not be limited to church services. It is appropriate for Christians to write letters to representatives, write to public media, picket, demonstrate, etc. to make their desires known.

(iii) Any genuine application of the Word is legitimate in preaching and teaching. In some situations, it might even seem necessary to oppose or endorse a particular candidate (Hitler as limiting concept!), though a church could forfeit its tax exemption if it makes a partisan endorsement.

(iv) But on many issues, political decisions require expertise not generally found among preachers:

(A) Federal budget allocations, military hardware, effects of government on the economy, etc. More humility is required on such matters.

(B) Making decisions on issues that are not black and white.

(C) Deciding what weight to put on each issue when making a political decision.

(v) Often, churches can provide better services than government to alleviate social problems: Christian schools, working with the homeless, etc.

(vi) Churches need to be alert to attacks on their liberty to proclaim Christ: anti-church zoning policies, restrictions on religious speech, draconian restrictions against anti-abortion demonstrations, etc.

C. Civil Disobedience, Revolution

1. Generally, Scripture is anti-revolutionary.

a) Suffering obedience, even to froward, cruel rulers: Romans 13, I Peter 2, Revelation 13, Matthew 22:15-22. (taxes were 40%)

b) Emigration is a possibility if matters are intolerable.

2. Nevertheless, we must refuse any command contrary to God's will [I, B, 1, b, ii].

3. Obedience to law is fundamentally obedience to the whole system.

a) We may break a lower law if we believe that a higher law transcends it.

(Often we must, to obtain justice.)

b) Calvin: Lower magistrates must resist tyranny from the higher, for the higher magistrate is accountable to the law.

c) Sometimes, therefore, a ruler must be replaced.

(i) Best if peaceful.

(ii) In an extreme situation, perhaps violence is justified. Police and military power should be used not only to quell lawlessness among the subjects, but also among the rulers.

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(iii) Vs. anarchy, however. The leadership must either be part of the governing body already, or must represent a viable alternative regime. The American Revolution?

4. A government may cease to be a government. (Hard to judge)

a) Losing all standards of justice, becoming like a crime organization (*contra* Romans 13)

b) Becoming too weak to maintain order.

c) Breaking contracts with the people.

5. If power is being contested, the Christian is under no obligation to support the previous status quo. Make the decision using biblical criteria of justice.

6. An alternative government must be available. Anarchy is not an acceptable result. The Christian is under authority (Romans 13).

D. Punishment

1. Theories

a) Deterrence (of offender or of others in society): Proverbs 22:15, Deuteronomy 13:11, Cleansings, offerings.

b) Reformation (Proverbs, I Corinthians 5:5)

- c) Restitution (most prominent in biblical theft-law)
 - d) Restraint (quarantine, exile, capital punishment)
 - e) Taxation (not in Scripture - a non-moral motive)
 - f) Retribution (*talion*; basic to all punishment)
2. Problems today
- a) Deterrence and reformation have contrary applications.
 - b) Little restitution in modern civil law.
 - c) Resistance to retribution (but what basis do we have for punishing anyone, or “curing” anyone, if that treatment is not deserved?)
3. Forms of civil punishment
- a) Imprisonment
 - (1) In Scripture, prison used only to hold people for trial. No prison terms as penalties.
 - (2) Prison terms as-punishments are a modern idea designed for humanitarian and reformatory purposes.
 - (3) Prison systems are dismal failures on both counts.
 - (4) Biblical alternative:
 - (a) Double restitution for theft (strict justice: the criminal loses precisely what he would have gained).
 - (b) Incurable criminals: execution.
 - (i) Contempt for society (“High hand”)
 - (ii) Vs. development of criminal class.
 - b) Restitution (above)
 - (1) Strict justice
 - (2) Benefit to victim
 - c) Slavery (“household apprenticeship”)
 - (1) Various forms: enslavement through war, voluntary slavery. We will consider the enslavement of believers for debt or theft.
 - (2) Live with family, learn a trade, learn responsible habits.
 - (3) Beating allowed, since lack of motivation.
 - (4) Set free in 7th year.
 - (5) Gifts for celebration, establish in trade, Deuteronomy 15:14, 18.
 - (6) Model of “second childhood”
 - (7) Slavery in American South
 - (a) Based on kidnapping, a capital crime in Scripture.
 - (b) Based on racism
 - (c) Believing slaves were not set free after six years, nor were they trained for post-slavery responsibilities.
- d) Capital Punishment: objections
 - (1) Sixth commandment
 - (a) But Sixth commandment is opposed to unlawful killing (*ratzach*). Lawfulness is relative to Scripture.
 - (b) Background of Sixth commandment is Genesis 9:6 which provides precisely for the shedding of blood by the state.
 - (c) The law as a whole provides for capital punishment.
 - (2) “N.T. prohibits revenge.”

- (a) O.T. also teaches love of enemies, limits personal vengeance, yet sees no conflict with capital punishment.
- (b) Note contrast between Romans 12 and 13.
- (3) “Capital punishment doesn't deter.”
- (a) Deterrence is not the final issue.
- (b) Statistics on swift execution policy not available. Swift and certainty are crucial to deterrence.
- (c) Clearly the one executed is sufficiently deterred and that is a gain for society.

E. Women's Roles (Foh, Hurley)

1. In the home

- a. Subjection to her husband (Eph. 5:22, Col. 3:18, Tit. 2:5, “headship” = authority).
- b. Joint authority with him (Ex. 20:12, Lev. 19:3, Prov. 23:22).
- c. Mutual “ownership” (1 Cor. 7:2-4).

2. In the church

- a. I Corinthians 14 context of judging the prophets.
- b. I Timothy 2: office of elder in view, not general teaching.
- c. General principle: a woman can do anything in the church that an unordained man can do.
- d. Diaconate? Yes, because it is a serving office (Phoebe).
- e. Older women as the primary teachers of younger women (Tit. 2:4).
- f. Women teaching men and women in non-official capacity, Acts 18:26.

3. In society

- a. Does Titus 2:5 require women to be homemakers?
 - i. The verse seems to presuppose that most women were homemakers, that being their usual cultural occupation.
 - ii. But anyone charged with home responsibilities should be busy with them, as they should be “self-controlled” and “pure.”
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- iii. Prov. 31 implies a wider social role for women, though still centered in the home.
- iv. The calling of Deborah, Ruth, the NT prophetesses, the NT order of widows, and others indicate that God sometimes calls women to work outside the home, or without a home-centered focus.
- v. It depends on age, gifts, marital status, etc.
- vi. Women seem to be uniquely equipped to be the primary nurturers of young children. See my paper on “The Biblical Doctrine of the Family.”
- b. Should female equality be mandated in society?
 - (i) Although I think women may legitimately work outside the home under some conditions, I certainly do not think that all occupations should contain equal populations of male and female workers. There are good reasons why there are and should be fewer women than men in many professions.
 - (ii) Equal pay for equal work? A proper policy must, of course, take into account the fact that women tend to attain less seniority than men, tend more often to work part-time, etc.

Better: equal pay for equal value.

(iii) These issues require consideration of individual cases and are best resolved in the marketplace rather than in government.

PASTORAL AND SOCIAL ETHICS

Lecture Outline, Part Four: Exposition of the Law of God:

Third, Fourth and Fifth Commandments

by John M. Frame

III. The Third Commandment: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;

for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

Q. 112: What is required in the third commandment?

A. The third commandment requires, That the name of God, his titles, attributes, ordinances, the word, sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, lots, his works, and whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known, be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word, and writing; by an holy profession, and answerable conversation, to the glory of God, and the good of ourselves, and others.

Q. 113: What are the sins forbidden in the third commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the third commandment are, the not using of God’s name as is required; and the abuse of it in an ignorant, vain, irreverent, profane, superstitious, or wicked mentioning or otherwise using his titles, attributes, ordinances, or works, by blasphemy, perjury; all sinful cursings, oaths, vows, and lots; violating of our oaths and vows, if lawful, and fulfilling them, if of things unlawful; murmuring and quarreling at, curious prying into, and misapplying of God’s decrees and providences; misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the word, or any part of it, to profane jests, curious or unprofitable questions, vain janglings, or the maintaining of false doctrines; abusing it, the creatures, or any thing contained under the name of God, to charms, or sinful lusts and practices; the maligning, scorning, reviling, or any wise opposing of God’s truth, grace, and ways; making profession of religion in hypocrisy, or for sinister ends; being ashamed of it, or a shame to it, by unconformable, unwise, unfruitful, and offensive walking, or backsliding from it.

A. Main Thrust.

1. The Name of the Lord.

a) Functions of names in Scripture (cf. Lordship attributes).

(1) Naming is an exercise of sovereignty (Control).

(a) One who names has control over the person or thing that is named.

The father names the child, the conqueror names the conquered city, God names his people. God also names himself, indicating his aseity, his self-control.

(b) It was thought that to know someone’s name was to have power over that person—hence the belief in verbal magic, the use of names in curses to bring injury, etc. As with all pagan belief, this one is parasitic on the truth.

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(i) Knowing someone’s name involves knowing something about him [cf. ii., below], and hence having a certain advantage in our dealings with him.

(ii) When we know someone’s name, we can call on him and thus

locate him [below, iii.] and elicit a response.

(c) Sharing one's name with someone else, then, creates a quasicovenantal bond. It presupposes a particular kind of trust based on obligations and expectations.

(d) Remarkably, God shares his name with his people in Scripture.

(i) He reveals it to them, enabling them, not to use it as a kind of verbal magic, for their own purposes, but rather to call upon him for help (cf. Proverbs 18:10; Psalm 20:1f.). They have no power over him, but they may avail themselves of his power for the sake of the covenant. This is remarkable; it is very much like having power over God. Cf. Genesis 32:22-32, especially verse 29.

(ii) He calls the people by his name, identifying his future with theirs. Thus, his omnipotence will never fail to keep them safe.

(2) Naming is characterizing (Authority).

(a) In the biblical period, a person's name usually meant something; it was not, as often today, a mere marker chosen for its sound. Cf. the interpretations of "Abraham," "Israel," the name changes, etc. Cf. also the use of "name" for "reputation," 1 Kings 4:31 (of Solomon), Proverbs 22:1, etc. God's name is great, Psm. 8:1, 9.

(b) God's names also characterize him: *El Shaddai* as "God Almighty," etc.

(c) Therefore, God's name is revelation; it communicates knowledge of him. And God's revelation is always authoritative. Both second and third commandments focus on the revelation of God and its bearing on our lives.

(d) To deny God's power violates the name *El Shaddai*; to claim God's favor by our own righteousness violates "The Lord our righteousness" (Horton).

(3) Naming is locating (Presence)

(a) A name also serves to mark a person; it furnishes a way of locating a person in a crowd. We find him by calling his name, because where the name is, he is.

(b) The name becomes closely identified with the person. When someone laughs at your name, or forgets it, or mispronounces it, you feel slighted. This is even more true in the broader use of "name" to mean "reputation" (Proverbs 22:1, e.g.). To injure my good name is to injure me; to revere my name is to revere me, etc.

(c) God, too, is identified with his name.

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(i) To praise the name is to praise him, to despise the name is to despise him, etc. We are saved for "his name's sake," Psm. 106:8. Glory is due his name (Psm. 29:2, 66:2, 96:8).

(ii) To say that God's "name" dwells in the angel of the Lord, or the tabernacle, or the temple, or Israel, etc., is to say that God, Himself, dwells there.

(iii) The name has divine attributes: Deuteronomy 28:58, Psm. 8:1,

9, etc. We praise it, call upon it, etc. The name is God himself.

b) Breadth and narrowness of the name.

(1) Specific “names” of God: *Elohim*, *Yahweh*, *El Shaddai*, etc.

(2) The “name” is God’s total revelation of himself to man.

(3) The “name” of God himself [above, a.iii.].

c) Bearers of the name.

(1) Theophanies: the glory, the angel, the tabernacle, and the temple.

(2) Christ, Acts 4:12, Phil. 2:9-11, John 1:14, Rev. 13:5-9.

(3) God’s people.

(4) Creation. (Note here the way Jesus speaks in Matthew 5:33-37, an exposition of the third commandment, and Matthew 23:16-22. One cannot, he teaches, avoid the obligations of the commandment by substituting the name of a creature for the name of God. The reason is that all creation is inseparable from God, intimately involved with him. To invoke creation, then, is to invoke the name of God. Cf. Kline on creation as a reflection of the Glory-cloud.)

d) Implications.

(1) Since God’s name includes his total revelation of himself, extending to all creation and particularly including God’s own people, this commandment has unlimited breadth. God’s name is abused, not only when we misuse a word like “God” or “Jesus,” but also when we abuse ourselves (note interesting linguistic parallels in Psalm 24:4) or despise God’s creation. All sin, then, may be seen as violation of the third commandment.

(2) We can also see how the commandment is fulfilled in Christ. The name of Christ is the name of God *par excellence*, the only name by which we must be saved. He is the final revelation of God. To despise the name of God, ultimately, is to despise Jesus Christ.

2. “Taking” the Name.

a) We generally take the third commandment as a rule concerning our language, and certainly that is proper. However, the commandment itself does not refer to “speaking” or “uttering” the name (*amar*, *dibber*), but rather to “taking it up” (*nasa’*: bear, carry, lift up).

b) “Bearing” God’s name certainly includes our use of the name in our speech, but not only that: it includes all of our relationships to the name of God.

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(1) God’s people bear God’s name in the sense of carrying it in their own persons [cf. above, 1.c.]. Note, then, the remarkable parallel to the third commandment in Psalm 24:4. The reference to false swearing alludes to the commandment, and “lifted up his soul unto vanity” is a precise linguistic parallel to the commandment, with “his soul” substituted for “the name of the Lord thy God.” That very substitution is a remarkable thing. God is so identified with us that to defile our own souls is in effect to defile his name. Cf. the second commandment which, as we have seen, guards the uniqueness of man, particularly of redeemed man, as “image of God.” The commandments always have an

existential reference.

(2) Note also our relationships to the name of God in creation and in Christ. All created things will either be “lifted up” to God or to vanity.

(3) Note, therefore, the narrowness and breadth of the commandment. A commandment about false swearing but, by implication, about all of life.

3. “Vanity”.

a) The normal meaning of the Hebrew term is “emptiness,” “purposelessness”. On that basis, the commandment forbids us to use God’s name for unworthy purposes.

b) Some have suggested that in this context the term ought to mean “falsely,” since that is emphasized in parallels such as Leviticus 19:12, Psalm 24:4. Linguistic evidence for that use is lacking, however, and the hypothesis is really unnecessary. Falsehood is one kind of vanity, granted the first interpretation. Thus, even on the first view, Leviticus 19:12 and Psalm 24:4 present valid applications of the commandment.

c) Similarly, it could be argued that vanity is a form of falsehood. If you use God’s name in a pointless or worthless way, you are falsifying it, exchanging it for a lie (cf. Romans 1).

d) Thus, the argument between the two interpretations is somewhat academic.

e) On either view, we note again the breadth of meaning here. Not only are we forbidden to make false statements using God’s name, but also to make any use of it which is unworthy of God. I Corinthians 10:31.

4. The sanction: “for the Lord will not hold him guiltless.”

a) Blasphemy is considered a particularly serious crime in Scripture. The death penalty is administered for it—even to “strangers,” Leviticus 24:15f. Cf. the penalty for cursing parents, Exodus 21:17. The crucifixion of Christ was based on a charge of blasphemy. The worst sin noted by Jesus himself was the “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 12:22-32; Mark 3:22-30). This somberness, then, is reflected here in the lack of a blessing sanction.

(i) Douma, 80: “*willfully* misunderstanding and branding as a *devilish* act what in fact comes from the Holy Spirit.” The Jews

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had seen with their own eyes the work of God, in such a way that it could not have been missed.

(ii) Compare Heb. 10:26-31.

(iii) Though said to be against the Spirit, the focus of this sin is the Spirit’s witness to the work of Christ. It is in effect blasphemy against the holy name of Jesus.

b) The curse formula does not mean that forgiveness is excluded. The same curse attaches to every sin and is borne by Christ on behalf of his people. However, that blasphemy which, by its very nature, rejects forgiveness and rejects it unalterably will never be forgiven (Matthew 12:22-32, parallels).

5. Relation to First Two Commandments (see chart).

a) The first commandment requires us to worship God exclusively; the second requires us to worship him only according to his word. The third requires

us, in our worship, to make a right use (*nasa'*) of the word (the name). It is not enough to have God's revelation; one must use it rightly.

b) We can, then, see a parallel with the "three perspectives." The first commandment sets forth the situational perspective, the basic relation between the one God and his creatures. The second sets forth the normative perspective, the basic revelation by which they will be governed. The third sets forth the existential perspective, demanding a right application of that revelation.

c) Note, then, a certain trinitarian structure: the one God, the word he speaks, and the application of that word (always associated in Scripture with the Holy Spirit). We could summarize by saying that God demands wholehearted covenant loyalty to him in the fullness of his triune being, honoring his triune works. The first three commandments together are a "love command," requiring exclusive covenant loyalty to the triune God.

d) The three together (as well as individually) encompass, in a striking way, the totality of human life. Love for God is demanded in our basic heartorientation [I.], in word (our life-norms) [II.], and in deed [III.—the act of application]. In III, the word is applied to the heart as to all of life, completing the circle. Of course, each, obeyed seriously, involves obedience to the others.

B. Positive Uses of the Name of God.

We have seen that the commandment applies to all of life. Here, however, we shall focus on some of the matters to which the commandment applies more narrowly and specifically, namely, the uses of the divine name in speech. (Even these, to be sure, have a tendency to broaden out, as we shall see!) As a convenient division, let us consider the uses of God's name in terms of man's kingly, prophetic, and priestly functions (reflecting God's control, authority, covenant solidarity). These uses are oath (kingly), confession (prophetic), and blessing (priestly).

1. Oaths (kingly function).

a) Concept: In an oath, we call God to witness concerning the truth of a statement ("assertory") or promise ("promissory"). We call upon God to

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use his power against us if we lie, hence the emphasis on the power of an oath (kingly function). Cf. Hebrews 6:16.

(1) As such, an oath is an act of worship. It has a godward reference. The honor of God is primarily in view in the third commandment, the dangers of false oaths to our fellow men being central in the ninth commandment. In this regard, cf. Deut. 10:20-21, Isaiah 45:23, 19:18, 65:16; Deuteronomy 6:13; Psalm 63:11, where swearing by God's name is a mark of those who belong to God. (Notice how this "specific application" of the third commandment itself becomes in Scripture a figure for the whole covenant relation. In Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10, the "swearing" is equated with confession and the latter with recognition of Christ's lordship.)

(2) An oath also has a manward reference. It is a way of maintaining stability, dependability, in a fallen world. Under certain circumstances, a man's word was to be accepted without corroboration on the basis of

an oath (Exodus 22:10f.). The oath has always been a vital aspect of the administration of civil law. Where the oath is despised, the result is government corruption, civil injustice.

(3) It is possible to be under oath in effect even without uttering the name of God, although in general, oaths involve such utterances.

(a) Adjuration: In an adjuration, we are in effect put under oath by another party, generally, someone in authority. Cf. Joshua 7:19; Matthew 26:63f.

(b) Solemn attestation, without specific use of a divine name: Genesis 42:15, 31:53; Exodus 24:7; Deuteronomy 27:11ff.; I Samuel 1:26; Joshua 24:19-22; Jesus' "Verily, verily."

(c) Such borderline cases help us more clearly to see how, in a sense, the believer is always under oath. Cf. b.iv., below.

(4) A vow is a promise to God that we will perform a particular act. It is therefore, in effect, an oath-commitment.

b) Obligation.

(1) Scripture commands us to swear in God's name: Exod. 22:10-11, Deuteronomy 6:13, 10:20; Isaiah 65:16; Jeremiah 12:16; cf. Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10.

(a) The point is not that we ought to take oaths every so often as a means of grace; rather, it is that when an oath is necessary, it ought to be taken in the name of the true God, rather than in the name of another god.

(b) But once we come to believe in the true God, taking an oath is an act of religious worship (Deut. 10:20, Isa. 19:18), a way of confessing our faith in the true God.

(2) Examples.

(a) God himself: Genesis 22:16 (Hebrews 6:13-17), 26:3, Psalm 89:3, 49, 110:4, 132:11; Jeremiah 11:5; Ezekiel 33:11; Luke 1:73.

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(b) Jesus accepts the adjuration, Matthew 26:63f., gives solemn attestations ("verily").

(c) Paul: Romans 1:9, 9:1f.; II Corinthians 1:23, 11:31; Galatians 1:20; Philippians 1:8; I Thessalonians 2:5, 10, 5:27.

(d) An angel in Rev. 10:5-6.

(e) Many other biblical characters: Genesis 14:22ff., 21:23f., etc.

(f) Common practice, Heb. 6:13-20.

(g) Many examples of vows: cf. also Psalm 22:25, 50:14, 65:1, etc., where the paying of vows is a synecdoche for the whole of religious worship.

(3) Oath-bound commitment is the essence of covenant obligation and religious confession: Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10.

(4) The prohibition of oaths in Matthew 5:33-37; James 5:12.

(a) In view of (1) –(3) above, it would be strange indeed if these passages intended to forbid oaths as such. Nowhere else in Scripture is there any hint of rebuke to anyone for the mere act of taking an oath (though, of course, there are examples of false

oaths, unwise oaths, etc.) The fact that oath-bound commitment is essential to our relation with God is a particularly telling datum. The fact that God himself swears is also important—more important than it may appear on the surface. It might be argued that God’s right to swear does not imply our right to swear. On the other hand, in the context of Scripture, it is clear that God has far less reason to swear than we do. If he, who is perfectly trustworthy and self-attesting, sometimes confirms his word with an oath, surely, there are times when we ought to do the same.

(b) The context of Matthew 5:33-37 (cf. 23:16-22) suggests that Jesus is opposing a particular misuse of the oath, namely, the use of substitutes for the divine name to escape full obligation. Cf. below, c., also Murray, *Principles*, 168-174. James may be summarizing Matthew 5:33-37 to people already aware of that context. “Do not swear *at all*” means do not swear at all by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, etc.

(c) In Rabbinic sources, with strikingly similar language, the distinction is made between frivolous and unnecessary oaths on the one hand and solemn oaths on the other. The former are forbidden with the formula “Let your yes be yes and your no, no.” Jesus, doubtless, has this sort of problem in mind.

(d) So these passages in effect place us under continuous oath. Our yea is to be yea and our nay, nay. We are not to use the institution of the oath as an excuse for carelessness with the truth when not under oath (cf. the child’s “I said I would, but I didn’t promise.”) All of our speech ought to partake of the quality of “solemn attestation” [above, a.iii.b)]. The use of the oath ought, at most, to

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be an accommodation to a fallen situation. More on this under the ninth commandment.

c) Oaths Resulting in Sin.

(1) Oaths with wrong content (normative).

(a) Idolatrous: in the name of a false god, Exodus 23:13, cf. Deuteronomy 6:13, 10:20, etc.

(b) Pledging something unlawful, 1 Sam. 25, Matthew 14:7; Acts 23:12.

(i) It is often argued that general oaths of secrecy fall under this category—i.e., pledges to secrecy without knowledge of what is to be kept secret. Vs. secret societies, etc.

(ii) Similarly, oaths required in secret societies and labor unions to put the interests of the organization above all others—vs. the biblical “chief end of man.”

(c) The Catechism says that we should not even keep an existing oath if it is “of things unlawful.” When an existing oath requires us to sin, it at that point becomes an unlawful oath and we are released from keeping it. An oath cannot compel to sin.

(i) Scripture does tell us to keep oaths “to our own hurt” (Psm. 15:4), but not to the hurt of others, or injury to the name of

God.

(ii) An oath of office may not require us to obey unjust orders from governmental superiors (Nazis, etc.)

(iii) An oath of secrecy may not compel us to keep secret matters that God requires us to reveal.

(2) Oaths not kept (situational).

(a) Lying oaths, perjury, Leviticus 19:12; Psalm 109:17-19, cf. Deuteronomy 23:21-23; Psalm 66:15f.; Mark 14:71.

(b) Reneging on a vow which involves self-sacrifice, Psalm 15:7; Acts 5:4.

(c) Breaking vow to enemies: Gibeon, Josh. 9:1-27, 2 Sam. 21:1-14.

(d) Evasions through use of substitutes for God's name. [Cf. A.1.c., above; also Murray, 168-174].

(3) Oaths arising from wrong attitudes (existential).

(a) Rash, foolish oaths, I Samuel 14:24f.; Judges 11. On the difficult question of Jephthah's vow, I follow (with some hesitation) the view that Jephthah dedicated his daughter to serve God in perpetual virginity. [Cf. Keil and Delitsch, *ad loc.*]

(b) Presumptuous swearing, Isaiah 48:1f.—i.e., assuming our right to swear in God's name despite unrepentant sinfulness.

(c) Over-frequent or trivial swearing, [cf. above, b.iv.b) & c). Also, iv., below].

d) Trivialization of God's Name.

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(1) In an oath, we invoke the name of God to solemnize an affirmation or promise. In the last section c), we saw how certain oaths violate the solemnity and sanctity of the divine name, though all oaths assume that solemnity and appeal to it. However, it is also possible to sin by renouncing this solemnity altogether—by frivolous or trivial use of God's name. Such use of God's name is, in one sense, the opposite of the oath commanded in Scripture.

(2) Trivial cursing.

(a) "Damn," "Hell," etc., even "My God," "Jesus," used casually in our society, as mere exclamations.

(b) "Darn," "gosh," "golly," "jeez:"

(i) Many are not even aware of the religious origins of these terms.

(ii) If used in serious oaths, they would be a form of attempted mitigation (Matt. 23:16-22) condemned by Jesus; but most people don't take them as such.

(c) There is here usually no explicit intention to blaspheme, as in the curses condemned in Scripture. So we should not consider them to be as serious sins as self-conscious blasphemies.

(d) Still, such curses are a symptom (Douma) of the prevalent unbelief in society, unbelief that we cannot take casually. Were our society fully Christian, God's name would be taken much more seriously.

(e) It is impossible to rebuke every such curse that we hear. (Generally, it is impossible to rebuke every sin that we observe; there are just

too many.) But we should be alert to opportunities to use these moments in witness.

(3) Irreverence

(a) T-shirt: “This blood’s for you.” Wrong?

(b) Irreverence can be in the mind of the beholder. The wearer might have mainly an evangelistic motive: a holy desire to begin a conversation with someone about Christ. Perhaps there are things to be said both pro and con here.

(c) Use of popular musical styles in worship. See my CWM.

(4) Does this principle rule out all use of God’s name, even of God’s revelation, in humor?

(a) Ephesians 5:4 condemns “foolish talk” and “coarse jesting,” probably describing pointless silliness and gutter-type language. All humor, however, cannot be shown to have these qualities.

(b) There is humor in the Bible, but the jokes are too old and familiar for us to appreciate. Matthew 19:24, 23:24; Acts 12:12-16, etc.

(c) Humor has constructive, even serious purposes at times: to display graphically the Creator / creature distinction, etc. Even as sheer entertainment, it can have a recreative function. “Let there be light” uttered while pulling the light switch—shows, in an ironic way, both the analogy and the ridiculous disparity between man’s

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technology and God’s. Scripture always speaks well of a “cheerful,” “merry” or “glad” heart: Proverbs 15:13; II Corinthians 9:7, etc.

2. Confession (prophetic function): In confession, we acknowledge God’s covenant name as our own, ourselves as part of the covenant. In confessing before men, we also proclaim to them the word of the Lord.

a) Obligation (note connection with salvation): Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9f; I Peter 3:15.

b) Related Sins.

(1) Concealing our allegiance, John 12:42.

(2) Denying Christ, Matthew 26:69ff.

(3) Heresy.

(4) Blasphemy, Psalm 74:10-18; Isaiah 52:5f.; Revelation 16:9, 11, 21.

(a) Punished by death, Leviticus 24:16, even if a “stranger.”

(b) The most serious sin: blasphemy against the Spirit, Matthew 12:31, persistent, defiant refusal to acknowledge God in the face of the clearest knowledge.

(5) Giving occasion to pagans to blaspheme, 2 Sam. 12:14, Ezek. 36:20-32.

(6) Confessing God in a context in which it will likely lead only to ridicule and blasphemy. (Douma: sometimes “speech is silver, but silence is golden”), Matt. 26:63, 27:14.

(7) Invoking God’s name in support of causes without biblical warrant, 1 Phil. 3:6, Tim. 1:13. “God on our side.” “This is God’s will.”

Afrikaners, Nazis.

(8) Using Scripture to support heresy, 2 Pet. 2:1-3, 3:16.

3. Blessing (priestly function): Given to God by man, the blessing is equivalent to praise; directed to other men, it identifies them with God's name and thereby declares their right to inherit the covenant promises. It is a form of prayer for them in the name of God as well.

a) Obligation: Scripture calls us both to bless God's people and to intercede for all men in prayer.

b) Related Sins:

(1) Reviling man, Matthew 5:22; Ephesians 4:29; James 3:9.

(a) To mock the poor is to insult his maker, Prov. 17:5. Cf. Cursing the deaf, Lev. 19:14.

(b) The passages do not place a general condemnation on strong language. The prophets and apostles frequently use strong language against their hearers. Remarkably, Jesus Himself, having condemned some for using *moros* (Matthew 5:22), uses the same term against the Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:17, 19). [Cf. Paul, Galatians 1:8f].

(c) Evidently, just as there is a righteous and an unrighteous anger (cf. sixth commandment), so there is an unrighteous and a righteous use
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of strong language. The question is whether we are venting our own (murderous) hatred or being zealous for the honor of God.

(2) Incantations, use of God's name to control him, Acts 19:13-17.

C. Language in Literature and Drama.

1. I have sometimes been asked, particularly in the light of Ephesians 4:29, whether it is ever legitimate for a Christian actor to utter blasphemies, e.g., while impersonating a character, or for a Christian writer to put foul language in the mouth of a character.

2. Ephesians 4:29 clearly does not mean to forbid the mere physical act of uttering an unedifying expression. Scripture itself records (and when we read Scripture, we read) the unedifying and even blasphemous words of God's enemies. Of course, it records these for our edification: unedifying words in an edifying context.

3. The question, then, becomes: does a literary or dramatic blasphemy serve an edifying purpose in its larger context? It does, I think, when (as Scripture) it aims to portray unbelief as unbelief—when its portrayal is, on Christian criteria, true.

4. On this criterion, there ought, probably, to be more blasphemy and vulgarity in Christian drama than there usually is. These sins utterly pervade our society today, and any truthful portrayal of that society ought to be consistent with that pervasiveness.

5. We are not, however, on this basis, to wallow in filth for its own sake. Whether we like it or not, that is what our sinful nature would have us do. And we have great skill in rationalizing such desires.

6. The point is to present sin in its true colors—as something ugly, destructive and, in a certain way, ridiculous. That is the challenge to the Christian artist.

7. "Method" acting—where an actor motivates himself to portray, e.g., hate by generating feelings of hate within himself will often be forbidden to the

Christian. Yet, I suspect that morality and dramatic effectiveness are not thereby opposed to one another. A good artist must maintain both empathy with and distance from his subject, as did Jesus when he loved and suffered for sinners, without losing his own identity as the sinless, divine savior. A “method” which insists on identification without distance cannot express redemptive involvement.

IV. The Fourth Commandment: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt

thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the Lord thy God: in

it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” (Exodus 20:8-11). In Deuteronomy 5:12-15, it reads: “Observe the sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord thy God commanded thee. Six days shalt thou labor . . . nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. And thou shalt remember that thou was a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God

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brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.”

WLC, Q116: What is required in the fourth commandment?

A116: The fourth commandment requires of all men the sanctifying or keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word, expressly one whole day in seven; which was the seventh from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, and the first day of the week ever since, and so to continue to the end of the world; which is the Christian sabbath, and in the New Testament called The Lord's day.

Q117: How is the sabbath or the Lord's day to be sanctified?

A117: The sabbath or Lord's day is to be sanctified by an holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful; and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to betaken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God's worship: and, to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose and seasonably dispatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.

Q119: What are the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment?

A119: The sins forbidden in the fourth commandment are, all omissions of the duties required, all careless, negligent, and unprofitable performing of them, and being weary of them; all profaning the day by idleness, and doing that which is in itself sinful; and by all needless works, words, and thoughts, about our worldly employments and recreations.

A. Place of the Fourth Commandment in the Decalogue (recall chart preceding discussion of First Commandment).

1. Despite Meredith Kline's refutation of the traditional “two table” notion, there is a broad progression in the Decalogue from commandments focusing on our relation to God to others focusing on our relation to one another.

2. In this progression, the Fourth Commandment is something of a transition from

the one focus to the other.

a) Like I-III, it stresses the nature of God's covenant with us and demands a certain kind of worship.

b) Like V-X, it emphasizes our obligation to love one another, to give rest as well as to rest ourselves, to relativize social distinctions.

3. The Fourth Commandment is more specific than I-III on the kind of obedience required. It begins the recapitulation of the creation ordinances which continues through X.

B. The Divine Sabbath (the rest of God himself from his creative work—Genesis 2:2f; Exodus 20:11).

1. The divine Sabbath is essentially a celebration of God's lordship over creation.
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a) At the start of the divine Sabbath, God's creative work (including his creation of man) was finished. It was at this point, then, that the creator first stood over against a finished creation. The covenant-lordship relation was fully established by creation itself. The divine Sabbath, then, was not enjoyed in the isolation of intra-divine life. From its beginning, it was the celebration of a relation.

b) Meredith Kline ("Primal *Parousia*," *WTJ*, Spring, 1978, 259ff.) describes the divine Sabbath as an "enthronement," citing parallels with God's enthronement in the microcosmic "temple-house". The enthronement follows divine victory and judgment (over the deep and darkness) and the creation of the world as his royal dwelling.

2. The Sabbath celebrates the lordship of God in its three aspects.

a) Control: Celebrates the divine victory—the "penetration of the darkness by the divine theophanic glory" (Kline, 263).

b) Authority: The Sabbath begins with the declaration that creation is good and finished. Cf. Kline, 261.

c) Presence in blessing and judgment:

(1) Presence of the glory-theophany is his completed temple.

(2) Judicial approbation [b., above], self-glorifying; cf. union of Sabbath with "Day of the Lord"—the day of judgment (and grace) (Kline). On this day, he judges all that he has made, and declares it good.

(3) When God blesses his own Sabbath, he blesses us. [cf. B.3.; C.1., below]

3. The divine Sabbath was offered to Adam and Eve.

a) In Hebrews 3-4, the divine Sabbath is an eschatological promise, representing the consummation of redemptive blessing that follows the last judgment. God entered the Sabbath at the end of creation, and his redeemed are to enter it at the end of this age. Note 4:4.

b) Since from the beginning the Sabbath celebrated a relation [1.a., above], it must have involved Adam and Eve in some way.

c) Since the account of the divine Sabbath follows the "cultural mandate", the command to work, it is hard to avoid the assumption that in the divine Sabbath God was promising rest to the man and woman as the fulfillment of this labor: had they completed the cultural mandate obediently, they would have entered the rest of God.

d) This inference is only a probable one; so far as I can tell, no passage of Scripture sets forth these concepts in so many words. However, throughout Scripture, the divine Sabbath does function as an eschatological promise, and it would be surprising if it did not also have that function before the fall.

C. The Human Sabbath: Its Meaning.

1. Human Sabbath and Divine Sabbath.

a) When God blessed his own Sabbath in Genesis 2:3, he did it with man in view [cf. B.1.a., above; also 3.b.].

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b) When God blessed his own Sabbath, he did it as an example for man (Exodus 20:11): Israel is to cease from work because God ceased from work.

c) When God blessed his own Sabbath, he also blessed man's. Exodus 20:11 clearly refers to the human Sabbath, which is the subject of the fourth commandment.

d) Exodus 20:11 seems to assume some sort of unity between the divine Sabbath and the human Sabbath, even though the former is unending and the latter is a weekly occurrence.

(i) "The" Sabbath referred to in the verse is the human Sabbath [above, c.], but also the divine Sabbath (context of Genesis 2:3).

(ii) Ex. 20:11 says that God blessed the human Sabbath in Gen. 2:3.

e) We shall see that the human Sabbath is a covenantal sign and seal, a sacrament in effect. In that framework, we could perhaps speak of the divine Sabbath as "present" in the human sacrament, as God is present in Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In the weekly Sabbath, we not only symbolize, but also enjoy by anticipation the divine Sabbath promised to God's people.

f) At the very least, the human Sabbath is a replica of the divine, as man himself is made in the image of God. As man himself is made to reflect God's glory, so the human Sabbath is made to reflect the glory of the divine Sabbath.

2. The Human Sabbath as a Meeting with God.

a) On the Sabbath, God's rest and man's intersect [1., above]. God who rests from his creative labors invites his creatures to share his rest in anticipation of their final rest.

b) If we share God's rest, then he must share ours. As his day belongs to us, so ours, our Sabbath, belongs to him. Our human Sabbath is set aside as his day.

(1) Exodus 20:8: We are to "remember" (active memorializing, not just recollecting) to keep the Sabbath "holy" (i.e., set apart, given over to him). Cf. Exodus 31:13-17; Jeremiah 17:22; Isaiah 58:13; Ezekiel 44:24. To "keep" God's Sabbaths, Lev. 19:3, 30, Isa. 56:4, Ezek. 20:10.

(2) Verses 9, 10: "Thou shalt labor . . ." "do all thy work," sharply contrasted with "the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." The six days are

for our work; the seventh exclusively for him.

(3) The contrasts between our pleasure and his day are frequent in the Old Testament. Note, e.g., Isaiah 58:13: “If thou turn thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day. . . .” (note repetitions of these contrasts in the passage).

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(4) That the human Sabbath belongs particularly to the Lord is to be expected, since it reflects the divine Sabbath, a celebration of God’s Lordship, B.3.

(5) Note the association of Christ with the Sabbath as its Lord: Matthew 12:8, parallels, John 5:16f.

(6) The “Lord’s day,” Revelation 1:10—D., below.

(7) As a covenant sign [3.b., below], the Sabbath is a mode of God’s presence among his people.

(8) Parallels between Sabbath and temple: Leviticus 19:30, 26:12; Matthew 12:5f.

(9) Parallel between the disciples’ Sabbath behavior and David’s holy soldiers, the holy labors of priests: I Samuel 21:1-6; Matthew 12:3ff.

(10) Sabbath legislation emphasizing the sanctification of the Sabbath (Exodus 31:12-17) follows legislation on the sanctification, the tabernacle and priesthood (25:1-31:11).

(11) Note relations between the Sabbath as the divine day of judgment, association of divine attributes with the latter, Kline, “Primal *Parousia*,” 265.

c) Thus, the Sabbath is a day of worship.

(1) Even if no cultic rites were prescribed, the Sabbath would be an act of worship, merely on the basis of what we have already said.

(a) To “meet with God” is to worship [2.a.].

(b) To “remember” a particular day, to keep it holy, is an act of worship [2.b.].

(c) Celebrating the Lordship of God [2.b.iv.] is an act of worship.

(2) References to worship on the Sabbath.

(a) Remember that “Sabbaths” are not only weekly Sabbaths, but also feast days.

(b) Weekly meetings of local worshippers (Lev. 23:3, the synagogue). Jesus did endorse the synagogue pattern in this respect: Luke 4:15ff., parallels.

(c) Sabbath offerings: Numbers 28:9f.; Ezekiel 45:17, 46:3; Nehemiah 10:32f.; Cf. Matthew 12:15f.

(d) Song for the Sabbath Day, Psm. 92:1.

(e) New Testament references to the first day of the week.

(i) Days on which the risen Christ meets his people: Matt. 28:9, Luke 24:13-51; John 20:1, 19, 26; Revelation 1:10. Did Mary rest in Luke 10:38-42 because the divine Sabbath was present in Christ (Cf. Matt. 11:28)? Cf. Christ as the temple-Sabbath, Matthew 12:5f.

(ii) Days on which the church met to worship, doubtless in

celebration of the Lord's victory, Acts 2:1, 20:6f., I Corinthians 16:1f., Revelation 1:10.

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3. The Human Sabbath is an Imitation of God.

The human Sabbath is one with God's [above, 2.] but also distinct from it. It is a "finite replica" (Kline). Thus, on the Sabbath, we not only share God's rest, but we also seek to copy that rest at a finite, recurring level. In copying it, we not only honor God's lordship [B.1.; C.2.]; we also seek to reflect that lordship in our own vassal kingship. We exert our own lordship in its "control, authority, presence."

a) Control: the sabbatical pattern as labor and rest.

(1) Labor: ". . . six days shalt thou labor . . ."

(a) It is sometimes overlooked that the fourth commandment deals not only with rest, but also with labor. It presupposes that we will work six days!

(b) Calvin argues that the language of the commandment does not present us with an obligation as much as a gift: God gives us six days to do our work. There is much truth in this, but, of course, divine gifts always come wrapped in obligations (and *vice-versa!*).

(c) In the larger context of Scripture, labor is a creation ordinance (Genesis 1:28ff.). In all periods of redemptive history, idleness is condemned (Proverbs; II Thessalonians 3:10f.).

(d) This commandment does not mean that we must work for a particular employer 48 hours out of every week. "Labor" in the Scriptural context, of course, includes more than the earning of family income. It includes maintenance of the home, general cultural activity, etc.

(e) Clearly, too, the commandment does not mean that we may rest from labor only on Sabbath! Daily rest, nourishment, recovery from illness, etc., is presupposed. Fanatical labor (the modern "workaholic") is condemned as lacking trust in God (Psalm 127:1f.). Cf. also Jesus in Mark 6:31.

(2) Rest.

(a) The Sabbath is essentially the celebration of a completed work.

(i) Cf. above, B.2. on the divine Sabbath.

(ii) Tabernacle and temple construction indicate provisional fulfillment of God's judgments and victory. Note sabbatical pattern in their consecration (Kline); also passages like Exodus 39:43, 40:33.

(iii) At the human level, the Sabbath is a pause from our labors to take satisfaction in them as we consecrate them to God.

(iv) As such, the Sabbath anticipates (and participates in!) the final rest from labor which we will enjoy in God's presence. Cf. b., below.

(b) What kind of work is prohibited?

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(i) *Daily* labor (Ex. 31:13-17), including plowing and harvesting

(34:21), commerce and transport of goods (Amos 8:4-6, Jer. 17:21).

(ii) Building of fires (Ex. 35:3, Num. 15:32-26)? I suspect these texts do not pertain to fires for heating and cooking. See James Jordan, *Sabbath Breaking and the Death Penalty*.

(A) Pi'el form in Ex. 35:3 typically refers to ceremonial burning (Lev. 6:12, Neh. 10:35, 2 Chron. 4:20, 13:11, etc.), or the fire of divine judgment (Ezek. 20:48, 39:9f, Isa. 4:4, etc.).

(B) On the Sabbath, God's altar-fire ("hearth fire") was intensified (Num. 28:1-10).

(C) So evidently this is a case like the "strange fire" in Lev. 10:1. No human fire must be intensified to rival God's ceremonial fire on the Sabbath day.

(D) The wood gatherer in Num. 15 is held in custody, because the precise penalty for his sin has not been revealed (verse 34).

1. Evidently his crime is not that of ordinary work on the Sabbath, but a "high handed" sin (discussed in context, verses 22ff). Mere working on the Sabbath was not a capital crime in Ex. 16:27-30, Neh. 13:19-22.

2. Evidently he was *attempting* to stoke up his fire in a way forbidden by Ex. 35:3.

(iii) So I take these references as ceremonial laws, not binding on New Testament Christians.

(c) After the fall, the Sabbath is a rest, not only from labor, but also from the toil and misery associated with labor in a fallen world. Hence its redemptive significance, cf. b., below.

(d) The rest is physical, not merely spiritual. Note emphasis on bearing burdens, Jeremiah 17:21f., Nehemiah 13:15ff, refreshment, Ex. 23:12, delight, Isa. 58:13.

(e) The Sabbath thus draws our attention to our nature as historical creatures, the importance of progress, development, goal.

(f) A blessing, Mark 2:27.

(3) Recreation: Does resting on the Sabbath preclude it?

(a) If recreation is pleasurable activity different from one's daily labors, then the Sabbath-rest is recreation, *par excellence*.

(i) Note earlier references to the Sabbath as a "celebration," association of Sabbaths with Old Testament feasts.

(ii) The Sabbath a "delight"—Isaiah 58:13f.

(b) As for the propriety of "pleasurable activities" on Sabbath, Scripture says nothing specific.

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(i) Isaiah 58:13f. forbids doing your "own pleasure" as opposed to God's. "Pleasure" here, however, means "will".

(ii) "Rest" is clearly not mere inactivity. If "rest" includes activities, these must be classified as recreations.

(iii) Note reference to “refreshment” in Exodus 31:17, 23:12.

(c) The *Westminster Confession* forbids on the Sabbath all “works, words and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations. . . .” (XXI:8) because it sees the function of the day wholly in terms of worship. We shall discuss later [below, D.] the precise nature of the New Covenant obligation. In the Old

Covenant, at any rate, such a statement would not be appropriate:

(i) Because under the Old Covenant, the day was not spent wholly in “public and private” worship, except insofar as the sanctification of the day itself was an act of worship.

(ii) Because the principle of “consecration of labor” requires that we think and speak about the activities of the six days.

(iii) Because the Old Covenant emphasis is upon rest rather than worship (at least worship in the cultic sense). The WCF sees rest only as a ceasing from daily labor to make time for worship. But in Scripture, the rest is important in itself. It speaks of “rest” and “refreshment” apart from worship.

(d) Clearly, however, even the Old Covenant forbids, by implication, any recreation that detracts from the meaning of the day.

(4) Works of Necessity.

(a) God did not intend the Sabbath to destroy man, but to be a blessing, Mark 2:27. This is characteristic of the law in general (cf. earlier discussion of the law as way of life).

(b) What is necessary to life and worship, therefore, may be done on the Sabbath.

(i) Eating, Matthew 12:1-8.

(ii) Arrangements for worship, Matthew 12:5f.

(iii) Healing, Matthew 12:10-13; Luke 14:1ff.; John 5:1ff. Actually, these passages are better characterized as “works of mercy” [c., below], since it was not strictly necessary for these to be done on Sabbath. However, the two categories do overlap.

“Necessity” is a relative matter. It could be argued that even eating is not strictly “necessary”. Yet, it is approved.

(iv) Rescuing of people and animals, Luke 14:5. Clearly, also certain forms of business maintenance are also necessary, by implication. Not only must oxen be rescued, but also fed, milked, etc. One might argue that the work of tending animals is forbidden to a strict Sabbatarian; however, Scripture never draws this inference. This work, though not absolutely

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necessary, and even though it involves some Sabbath labor, is accepted as a godly occupation.

(v) Warfare

(A) It was generally accepted that a people could defend themselves against attack on Sabbath (cf. I Maccabees 2:41)—an implication of the last point, as I see it.

(B) Israel circled Jericho seven times on the Sabbath, after which

the walls fell down (Josh 6:15-20).

(C) Jehoiada the priest carried out plot against wicked Queen Athaliah on Sabbath (2 Kings 11, 2 Chron. 22:10-23:15).

(vi) Travel to consult a prophet (2 Kings 4:23): Shunammite woman traveled 20 miles.

(vii) Possibility of an alternate day of worship for those who must travel on business, Num. 9:9-13 on the Passover. See Jordan, *Sabbath Breaking and the Death Penalty*, 89-90.

(viii) The “necessity” in view here, then, is not some sort of abstract “absolute” necessity, but the necessity of those activities which keep human life on an even keel. It can be only vaguely defined, and its application requires spiritual perception. There are many situations in modern business life, e.g., when some Sabbath work appears “necessary” on the above criteria. It is difficult to be dogmatic in such areas, but one must ask if the Sabbatarian does not have a responsibility to seek to minimize the cases where alleged, or even real, necessities arise.

b) Authority: the Sabbath as covenant sign, Ex. 31:13, Isa. 56:4, Ezek. 20:18-30.

The Divine Sabbath is a day on which God authoritatively declares his victory. Similarly, the human Sabbath, is a day on which the truth of God is to be declared and which, by its very nature, proclaims the covenant victory of God.

(1) Declaring God’s acts: Three dimensions of God’s Lordship over time.

(a) Past.

(i) Creation, Genesis 2:3; Exodus 20:11. The victory of God over the “deep darkness”. (?)

(ii) Redemption:

(a) From Egypt, Deuteronomy 5:15.

(b) Judgment on Canaan (Kline).

(c) The New Testament Lord’s Day as memorial of the Resurrection.

(b) Present: God’s meeting with us now as his Sabbath intersects ours [above B.; C.1; C.2.].

(c) Future: God’s eschatological victory (Kline).

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(2) Declaring our membership in the covenant.

(a) Before the fall, the Sabbath may have conveyed the promise of blessing within the Covenant of Works (Kline’s *Covenant of Creation*). If Adam had obeyed, the blessing would have been his.

(b) The Sabbath was given as a sign to Israel, Exodus 31:13-17; Ezekiel 20:12, 20.

(i) It declares the Lordship of God, 31:13, and, thus, Israel’s relation to God.

(ii) Sabbath-breaking is not only sin against God, but cuts one off from God’s people, (v. 14).

(iii) The Sabbath is identified with the covenant, v. 16.

(iv) The Sabbath therefore marks Israel as God's holy nation. It has a sacramental function.

(c) The prohibition of Sabbath labor, however, extended to "strangers," whose covenant status was ambiguous. (Some were uncircumcised and, thus, incapable of taking the Passover, or of sharing the liberation at the Jubilee. Yet, they had certain privileges and protections under the law, and they were involved in longrange covenant promises—e.g., Ezekiel 47:22ff.)

(d) The Sabbath's sacramental function is also seen in the fact that it signifies and embodies the presence of God's own rest [above, C.1., 2.]. On Sabbath and in the Sabbath, God is sacramentally present with his people.

(e) Revelation 1:10 suggests a sacramental significance for the "Lord's day" (*Kuriake hemera*) in the New Covenant. Cf. the Lord's Supper as *deipnon kuriakon* in I Corinthians 11:20. The "Lord's day" bears the same relation to the final "day of the Lord" as the "Lord's Supper" bears to the final Supper of the Lamb. Cf. below, D.4.c.i.c).

c) Presence in blessing and judgment: Man is to imitate God by dispensing blessing and judgment on the Sabbath. Judgment is seen in the disciplinary and preaching functions of the church to some extent (Isaiah 6), but the Scriptural emphasis (as with the divine Sabbath) is on the Sabbath as mercy. "Deeds of mercy" are presented in Scripture, not as a mere exception to the general prohibition of labor (as some Reformed treatments suggest), but as a central function of the Sabbath.

(1) Giving rest.

(a) We are not only to rest ourselves, but also to give rest—to our families, servants, animals, strangers (Exodus 20:10, 23:12; note particular emphasis on this point in Deuteronomy 5:14f.).

(b) Thus, the Sabbath is given covenantally—to the whole body, not just to individuals. [Cf. b.ii., above.] But notice also the ambiguous status of the "stranger", b.ii.c).

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(c) "The poor live as princes for one day a week," D. Wallace. On this day, no one gains economic advantage over anyone. As we come together before God, our essential oneness becomes clearer, and our priorities are adjusted.

(d) In the system of Sabbatical years, an extension of the weekly Sabbath, we also give rest to the land. Exodus 23:10f.; Leviticus 25:1ff. This is important to a biblical ecology, but also has reference to the needs of the poor, strangers, etc. Cf. Deuteronomy 15:1-6.

(e) Note contexts of Isaiah 58:13f., verses 3ff.

(f) The Sabbath law thus forbids God's people from giving supreme priority to economic gain or the other rewards of daily life.

(g) As noted earlier, the Sabbath typifies rest from toil, not from sin as

such. Yet, indirectly, it does encourage trust in grace rather than works. Our weekly rest must be taken, whether earned or not, because God has given it. The consummation of our week, its “meaning”, is not the result of anything we have done. Our “meeting with God” is not by works.

(2) Giving liberty.

(a) The Sabbath commemorates liberation from bondage, Deuteronomy 5:15. [Cf. above, i.c)-d)].

(b) Release of debts in sabbatical years, release of Hebrew servants, Exodus 21:1ff.; Deuteronomy 15:1-18; Jeremiah 34:8ff.

(c) Release of debts and return of sold property in the Jubilee, Leviticus 25:8-17. Note extensive implications of this for the economy of Israel, outlined in the rest of Leviticus.

(3) Healing: It appears that Jesus healed on the Sabbath, not out of necessity, but out of deliberate choice. He made this choice, not merely to provoke the Pharisees, but because of his conviction as to the nature of the Sabbath: Matthew 12:9-13; Mark 3:1-5; Luke 6:6-10; John 5:1-17. Even on the Sabbath, God desires “mercy and not sacrifice” (Matthew 12:8). It is “lawful to do well” on the Sabbath (12:12). The Pharisees had put such emphasis on the aspect of physical rest that they had missed this “weightier matter” of the law.

(4) Judgment: 1 Cor. 5:4-5, 11:31-2, 14:29.

d) Summary.

We are called to imitate God in rest, in declaring our union with him, and in showing mercy. In all of these activities, we declare that God is our Lord, that our hope is not bound up with our daily activities, but with his promise. Thus, we do not compete with one another for God’s blessing, but we share it liberally.

4. Sins connected with the Sabbath (Douma)

a. Working for selfish gain, Neh. 13:15-22.

b. Resting, but plotting ways of defrauding others, Amos 8:5.

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c. Scribes and Pharisees: defining Sabbath-breaking so precisely as to add to God’s Word, John 5:9-10.

D. The Sabbath as a New Covenant Obligation.

1. Reformed Views (moving from “least” to “most” Sabbatarian).

a) Calvin (*Institutes*, II, viii, 31-34) (Reflected in continental Reformed creeds).

(1) With the coming of the New Covenant, there is no particular day (or even weekly interval) at which Christians are obligated to abstain from work and engage in worship, etc.

(2) Such days are shadows which pass away in Christ. Calvin quotes Colossians 2:17; Galatians 4:10f.; Romans 14:5. He comments, “Who but madmen cannot see what the apostle means?”

(3) Positively, we keep the Fourth Commandment today:

(a) By laying aside our works and trusting God’s grace for salvation.

(b) By consecrating all our time to the Lord.

(c) By giving rest to servants, etc., and setting aside time for worship.

b) Donald Carson, *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Zondervan).

(1) As with Calvin, the Sabbath is abolished in the New Covenant: “If we keep the Sabbath in this dispensation, we are again denying Christ.”

(2) However, the Sabbath is now replaced by the Lord’s Day, which commemorates the Resurrection and symbolizes the accomplishment of our rest in Christ.

(3) We are obligated to keep the first day of the week (no other) as a day of worship. No cessation of work is required.

c) Early Kline (from my student notes in Old Testament Biblical Theology)

(1) Same as i., ii. under c., above.

(2) In the Mosaic Covenant, the emphasis is placed upon rest, rather than worship, as the essence of the Sabbath command.

(3) Therefore, the Westminster Confession cannot be followed when it insists that the whole day be taken up in deeds of worship, necessity and mercy. Rest, and hence recreation, are also appropriate, even centrally important, to the meaning of the day.

(4) Later, Kline revised his position to argue that in the New Covenant the Sabbath is a day of worship, but not a day of resting from all labor. He argued that the rest from labor was part of the “union of culture and cult” under the Mosaic theocracy. I don’t find that view persuasive, and I will not discuss it here.

d) The “Puritan” view (Westminster Standards).

(1) The New Testament Lord’s Day is essentially the same as the Old Testament Sabbath, now properly observed on the first day of the week rather than the seventh.

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(2) On this Christian Sabbath, believers must rest “from their own works, words and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations”

(*Westminster Confession of Faith*, XXI, 8).

(3) The whole day is to be taken up “in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.”

2. Sabbath and Creation.

a) A creation ordinance is a divine institution or command which is in effect from man’s creation until the consummation, such as labor (Genesis 1:28ff.), marriage (1:28; 2:24f.).

b) Creation ordinances do not pass away as the history of redemption progresses, because they are grounded in man’s nature as:

- created and
- not yet glorified—conditions which exist until the consummation.

c) Exodus 20:11 teaches that God’s blessing of “the Sabbath” in Genesis 2:3 was in effect the sanctifying of man’s Sabbath, and that, for that reason alone, the Sabbath must be observed, apart from anything peculiar to the Mosaic economy. [Cf. argument in C.1.a-c., above].

d) Note the “creation sanction” also in Exodus 31:17. Although this ground of Sabbath-keeping is not mentioned in Deuteronomy 5:12-15, the phrase “as the Lord thy God commanded thee” clearly refers back to Exodus

20:11 and reaffirms what was said there.

e) There is a lack of evidence for Sabbath-keeping prior to the Exodus from Egypt, and that poses a problem for the view that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance. If it were a creation ordinance, ought it not to have been observed perpetually?

(1) Exodus 16:22-30 shows that Sabbath observance was known before the giving of the Decalogue, and it presupposes some common knowledge of the custom.

(2) Many divine laws, clearly revealed, were neglected for long periods of time: monogamy, the Old Testament sabbatical years and Jubilee, etc.

f) Mark 2:27, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”

(1) Here, Jesus grounds the Sabbath ordinance in the needs of man as man, not in anything distinctive to the Mosaic economy (*Anthropes*—generic man)

(2) “Was made” harks back to the original institution of the Sabbath at creation—with man on the scene.

(3) In context, Jesus draws a parallel between his disciples, who fed themselves on the Sabbath, and David’s men, who took the consecrated bread. He says that the Sabbath was not intended to frustrate such natural needs, but to meet them. Again, the created nature of man (needing food and rest) is in view.

(4) Jesus here gives no hint that in his kingdom there will be any change in the nature of the Sabbath. One might have expected him to do so, by analogy with his teaching about the place of worship in John 4.

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g) Mark 2:28, “. . . so that the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

(1) It is unlikely that “Son of Man” here means simply “man.” Rather, it is a title of Christ, correlate with his distinctive lordship over the Sabbath.

(2) “Son of Man” does not often focus on the distinctively human nature of Christ, but in this case, it does. Jesus says that the Sabbath is for man and that he is Lord of it by virtue of his Lordship over what pertains to man, that Lordship summarized in the expression “Son of Man.”

(3) In Dan. 7, it appears that the Son of Man is a representative of “the saints” (verses 18), by whom the saints receive the kingdom (22).

Compare Paul’s description of Christ as second Adam.

(4) Again, Jesus is dealing with his relation to mankind as such. He is not speaking specifically as Israel’s Messiah, nor of any element of the Sabbath institution distinctive to Israel.

(5) In claiming Lordship “even” of the Sabbath, Jesus makes a momentous claim indeed. The Sabbath has always been “the Sabbath of the Lord your God”. Jesus now places himself in the position of *Yahweh*. Yet, even in such a claim, Jesus gives no suggestion that he will abrogate or substantially alter the Sabbath obligation. Our impression is that he Sabbath continues in Jesus’ kingdom as before, under his Lordship as Son of Man.

h) John 5:17: “My father worketh hitherto, and I work.”

(1) Here, Jesus makes a clear claim to deity, for which the Jews seek to kill

him (v. 18).

(2) As deity, then, Jesus claims the right to set the terms for Sabbath observance.

(3) As incarnate deity, Jesus expresses submission to the Father. He is only imitating what the Father does, sharing the work of the Father (mercy). He claims the right to imitate not only the Father's Sabbath rest, but also the Father's Sabbath activity.

(4) Again, there is no hint of any basis for Sabbath observance distinctive to the Mosaic economy, or any major change to be brought in by Jesus. The basis of Sabbath observance here is the imitation of God's rest, the "creation sanction" of Exodus 20:11 and Genesis 2:3.

i) Hebrews 4.

(1) Here, the "rest" promised to the people of God is traced back to creation (compare 4:3f., 10 with Genesis 2:3). Note, also, the references to creation in Psalm 95 (quoted in Hebrews 3:7ff.) as the basis for the exhortation to hearken and enter God's rest.

(2) The Sabbath, as we have seen, is a sign of that eschatological rest, entered by God at creation, promised to man at the consummation (Gaffin in *OPC Minutes of the 40th General Assembly*).

(3) Thus, (however one translates *sabbatismos* in 4:9), the basis of Sabbath observance is traced back to the creation order, not to the distinctive provisions of the Mosaic Covenant.

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(4) Hebrews, incidentally, is much concerned with distinguishing the permanent from the temporary in God's purposes. But there is no indication here that Christ has abolished Sabbath observance .

j) Summary.

(1) Scripture presents the creation order as a sufficient ground of Sabbath observance. Since that creation structure will not change until the consummation, the Sabbath obligation continues along with it.

(2) These considerations more or less eliminate the views described as 1.ab., above. I say "more or less" because we have not yet considered some New Testament texts thought to militate against what we have said here. However, any view placing great weight on those texts must address itself to the arguments advanced here.

(3) Since the original creation ordinance deals with a cessation from work, and, since all references to the Sabbath which refer to creation speak in terms of a rest from labor, view 1.c. must be seriously questioned. However, we have yet to consider some of Kline's argumentation which attempts to account for the data.

3. Sabbath as Redemptive Promise.

a) Although the creation order is a sufficient ground for Sabbath observance, it is not the only ground given for it in Scripture. Scripture also calls us to keep the Sabbath because we are the redeemed people of God. Briefly: we are to remember our past deliverance from toil and to anticipate our future deliverance.

b) Rest as a redemptive blessing.

(1) Rest becomes a redemptive blessing because of the curse on the ground and on man's labor, Genesis 3:17-19. Had man not fallen, rest would have been a physical necessity and a precious time of communion with God, but would not have been a specifically redemptive category.

(a) References to man's labor as toil and misery, Ecclesiastes 2; Psalm 90.

(b) The wicked have no genuine peace, rest: Isaiah 48:22; 57:21.

(c) God gives his people rest: Psalm 127:2; Matthew 11:28 (rest in taking on a yoke!); Revelation 14:13. Note the descriptions of the toil in Egypt from which the people were redeemed.

(2) The focus in these passages is not on rest as a relief from sin as such, but as a relief from toil, sorrow, misery which sin brings into the world. Labor itself is not sinful, but is cursed because of sin. Similarly, rest is not itself redemption, but is a fruit of redemption, a blessing brought by redemption.

c) Sabbath as redemptive rest.

(1) The Sabbath is a present rest which recalls the redemptive rest given in the past and anticipates the greater rest to come.

(a) Deuteronomy 5:15 emphasizes this, and it is implicit in Exodus 20, when verses 8-11 are seen as motivated by the preface (verse 2).

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(b) This is also the major thrust of Hebrews 3-4, though as we mentioned earlier, the creation sanction is also in view here.

(2) As in the general references to rest [above, b.], these passages do not picture the Sabbath as a symbol of redemption as such, but as a symbol of rest from the toil and misery brought into the world by sin and the curse. The Sabbath, after all, is not a rest from sin, but from labor (which is good, though difficult). We are not told to sin six days and to be righteous the seventh, but to work six days and rest the seventh.

(3) If the Sabbath directly symbolized redemption from sin, one could argue that it is abrogated in the New Covenant since redemption has already been achieved. But on the contrary: the Sabbath symbolizes something still future—the final rest from toil. (Cf. Gaffin's arguments on the future reference of "rest" in Hebrews 3 and 4.) Thus, the Sabbath is not superfluous. As a symbol and a foretaste, it remains a great blessing.

(4) Review the passages dealing with Jesus' relation to the Sabbath: Mark 2:27f. and parallels; John 5:17f.; Hebrews 3:7-4:13. None of these suggest that Jesus intended the Sabbath to be abrogated or drastically changed in his kingdom. [Cf. above, 2.f. Cf. also Luke 4:15-28, parallels, 23:56].

d) Summary: There is nothing in the nature of the redemptive promise that would suggest some basic alteration in the law governing the weekly Sabbath. On the contrary, the continued keeping of the Sabbath is appropriate in the New Covenant as a type and foretaste of the final consummation rest which is yet to come.

4. "Day-Keeping" in the New Covenant: Romans 14:5; Galatians 4:9ff.; Colossians 2:16f.

a) These passages represent the strongest argument in favor of Calvin's view. On that view, the passages present the Sabbath and all "day-keeping" as Old Covenant "shadows" which pass away in Christ. The views of Carson and others can also appeal to these passages as presenting a radical change in the application of the fourth commandment.

b) Although I favor the "early Kline" view on the basis of the evidence presented under 2 and 3 above, I am not fully persuaded that adherents of this view have given a fully adequate account of these texts.

c) There are, however, some considerations which suggest alternative exegetical possibilities and which weaken arguments from these texts adduced to prove "less Sabbatarian" views.

(1) Clearly, these texts cannot be used to exclude day-keeping of every sort; for, elsewhere in the New Testament, day-keeping is required.

(a) The early church met at specific times, obviously, and Hebrews 10:25 makes it clear that attendance at such meetings is not an optional matter. Thus, in the New Covenant, there are some days and times set aside for certain specific purposes. [Cf. C.2.c.ii.d), above].

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(b) For the Corinthian church, Paul ordains a certain day, the first day, on which offerings are to be brought, I Corinthians 16:1f.

(c) The "Lord's day" (*kuriake hemera*) in Revelation 1:10.

(i) Not the final "day of the Lord". The context makes clear that this is a day in John's present experience.

(ii) It was probably a time of worship, as is suggested, but not required, by the phrase "in the Spirit".

(iii) Clearly, it is a day which belongs to the Lord in a special way. [Cf. *deipnon kuriakon* in I Corinthians 11:20. For sacramental sense, see above C.3.b.ii.e)].

(iv) The regular Scriptural reference to Sabbaths as "sabbath of the Lord" [C.2.b., above] suggests that the Lord's Day here is also a Sabbath.

(v) In any case, clearly, this is a special day, one which bears a distinctive relation to the Lord. It is not proper, in this case, to "regard every day alike" (Romans 14:5).

(vi) Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho*) refers to the Jewish Sabbath as *kuriake*. For other church Fathers, *kuriake* is Sunday (*Didache*, 14:1, Ignatius, *Magnesians* 9:1). Other references in Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon* under *kuriakos*.

(d) Though the Jews charges Paul with error on matters such as circumcision and the temple, there is no record of their charging him with breaking the Sabbath.

(e) Evidently, therefore, Romans 14:5 etc. do not rule out all observance of days or even make such observance optional in every case. It thus becomes necessary, on any view, to distinguish in these passages what sort of obligation is denied and what sort is not denied. Such a distinction, on any view, will not appear on the

surface. So, it is not a question of one view taking these texts at “face value” while the other views must engage in elaborate theological rationalizations. All must do some “theologizing” in interpreting these texts. We cannot simply take them at “face value” because it is clear that the first readers of these letters would have made certain assumptions, certain distinctions that do not appear evident to us from the passages themselves.

(2) Neither the Romans nor the Galatians passage mentions specifically the Sabbath. There were many other “days” observed in the Old Covenant economy, and it is certainly not impossible that the passages refer to these other days, or even to extra-biblical festivals. Remember that we must assume the Galatians and Romans capable of making some distinctions not explicitly noted in the passages. [Above, i.d.]

(3) Rom. 14:5

(a) In context, may refer to days of fasting; but the Sabbath, of course, is a day of feasting.

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(b) Note that it says we may abstain from any food; but obviously it is not saying that we may abstain from the Lord’s Supper.

(4) Galatians 4:10

(a) The specific problem in Galatians is works-righteousness. It is certainly possible to see Paul arguing here, not against observance of days as such, but against observance of days (even the Sabbath!) as a means of self-justification. Similarly: Paul might appear to be forbidding circumcision in Galatians 5:2f.; but, under other circumstances, when the issue of justification was not at stake, Paul not only permitted but performed circumcision, Acts 16:3. More broadly: Paul’s whole argument in Galatians opposes the doing of good works for justification. Yet, none of this argument forbids us to do good works or denies their obligation.

(b) Paul may well have the *Jewish* Sabbath (Saturday) in mind here.

(5) Colossians 2:16-17

(a) This passage does mention “sabbath” specifically, and it includes such Sabbaths among the “shadows” which pass away in the New Covenant. However, *sabbath* applied not only to the weekly Sabbath, but to various feast days of the Old Covenant calendar. The latter were clearly distinguished from the weekly Sabbath in the Old Testament, and it is not impossible to assume that the Colossians also made such distinctions naturally. Notice that Paul speaks of “a” Sabbath, not “the” Sabbath.

(b) John Mitchell made the argument that “feast, new moon and sabbath” regularly denotes official sacrifices in the Old Testament. (Report, *Minutes of the 40th General Assembly*, OPC, pp. 99ff.).

On this basis, the “shadows” would be occasions of Old Covenant sacrifices, not the weekly Sabbath. (Cf. Hebrews 10).

(c) Or the passage may refer to the weekly Sabbath; but then, the most likely reference is to the *Jewish* Sabbath (Saturday). This is the

most common understanding among Sabbatarians and the one I find most persuasive.

(d) As Douma points out, the “shadows” are no longer in effect; but there is a positive relation between the OT shadows and continuing NT ordinances: circumcision/baptism; passover/Lord’s Supper.

Why not also Sabbath/Lord’s Day?

d) Summary: The New Testament texts on “day-keeping”, therefore, do not present any evidence clearly contradicting strong Sabbatarian views, though it would certainly help matters if we could reach more definitive exegetical conclusions on the meanings of these passages.

e) Church-Historical Difficulty: It appears that the early Christians did not take off work on the first day of the week, or connect Sunday observance with the Fourth Commandment.

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(i) The Lord’s Day is honored by early writers, as the replacement of the Sabbath: Didache, Ignatius (*Magnesian*), Papias, Justin Martyr, Dionysius of Corinth, Tertullian. Only Tertullian (200 AD) mentions laying aside daily business on Sunday. The council of Laodicea (360) is the first to ask Christians to work Saturday and quit work on Sunday.

(ii) Douma suggests that the Fourth Commandment is not often invoked here, because of the predominant tendency to read the commandments allegorically.

(iii) But all regarded the Lord’s Day as a day for joyfully celebrating redemption, as the OT Sabbath.

(iv) And attending worship meant to some extent setting normal work aside.

(v) And to keep the day as a Lord’s *Day* (rather than hour or other period) naturally entailed a broader cessation from labor. In time the church came to see this.

(vi) Once this fact became evident, the parallel between the Lord’s Day and the fourth commandment became obvious, and theologians came to urge the Lord’s Day as a means of keeping the fourth commandment.

E. The Form of the Sabbath Under the New Covenant.

The above discussion indicates that the Sabbath continues under the New Covenant in a form not drastically different from its Old Covenant form. However, clearly, there are some changes, and we must also specify more concretely those modes of Sabbath observance sanctioned by both covenants. The general meaning of the Sabbath has been discussed under C, above. Now, we seek to translate the Sabbath-symbolism into specific policies particularly for our own period in redemptive history.

1. Worship and Rest.

a) See D.1., above, for various views.

b) My own position is closer to the “Early Kline view” than to the others.

(1) Clearly, the Sabbath is worship, the consecration of a particular day to the Lord [C.2.]. In that sense, the Westminster Standards are correct:

the whole day is a day of “worship” because the whole day is to be consecrated to God in a special way.

(2) However, the Confession is perhaps a bit too quick to equate “worship” with cultic exercises, thus reaching the conclusion that except for deeds of necessity and mercy the whole day is to be devoted to such exercises.

(a) Physical rest on the Sabbath (including recreation) does have a sacramental (and, thus, worshipful) function as it anticipates our sharing in the divine rest.

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(b) If the consecration of the day may be fulfilled only by cultic exercises, then “deeds of necessity and mercy” are appropriate to the day only by way of awkward exceptions.

(i) But mercy, as we’ve seen, is a central function of the Sabbath. This can be seen only if the idea of rest is made more central than in the Confession: mercy is a giving of rest [C.3.c.]. Thus, if rest is central, the emphasis on the Sabbath as a day of mercy becomes intelligible.

(ii) “Deeds of necessity” are also appropriate, because, on our view, the Sabbath has a manward reference as well as a Godward reference (Mark 2:27). In Scripture, “deeds of necessity” are not merely works necessary to keep men alive so they can worship (Jesus’ disciples might have fasted on Sabbath if that was the point), but, rather, those works necessary to maintain man’s full enjoyment of the Sabbath celebration. (Cf. Isaiah 58:13f.)

(3) I do not deny, of course, the appropriateness of cultic exercises on the Sabbath, only that these are exclusively appropriate. Certainly, no other day of the week is equally suited to the cultic “meeting” between God and his people [C.2.]. And no one may take it upon himself to spurn the assembly (Hebrews 10:25).

(4) Conclusion: The balance of the evidence indicates that under the New Covenant God requires us to consecrate the Sabbath and thereby to worship him, not only in cultic exercises, but also in resting from our labors, delighting in that rest, and sharing it with others in deeds of mercy.

2. The Change of day.

a) The problem: Apparently, the Old Covenant people of God rested on Saturday, the seventh day of the week, by divine order. Somehow, the New Covenant people of God have come to observe Sunday, the first day instead. But where in Scripture is there a divine command to make this change? And is it thinkable that such a change would be made without divine authority?

b) Ambiguity of “change of day”: Before discussing this matter, we must get clear on what we mean when we talk about a “change of day”. The phrase is not as perspicuous as it appears.

(1) “Change from Saturday to Sunday”: This could mean merely a change

in the name of the day on which we rest. But certainly, that is not what is at issue here. There is no divine mandate requiring the Sabbath to have a certain name. Names for the day rightly vary from language to language. Whether we call the Sabbath “Saturday” or “Sunday” is a matter of godly human initiative.

(2) “Change from the day observed in the Old Testament to the day following”:

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(a) Since the calendar has changed so often, in so many respects, we really do not know on what day of our week the Sabbath was observed in the Old Testament period. Even during that period, it is doubtful that the calendar remained entirely constant.

(b) Even when it did remain constant, the Sabbath may not have fallen regularly on the seventh day of the week, though it did occur at seven-day intervals. Cf. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, 134ff.

(i) The 15th of Abib, the first month (roughly =April) must be a Sabbath, for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The other Sabbaths are dated from this one, in Lev. 23:6-7, 11, 15-16, 21.

(ii) So the day of the month is constant, the day of the week variable, like your birthday. It did not fall regularly on Saturday.

(c) During the New Testament era, the calendar has also changed frequently, so we do not know precisely which day of our week was the “first day” of the apostolic church.

(d) Surely, it cannot be argued (especially in the New Testament period) that there is a divinely commanded calendar. Our inability to locate the precise day on which the biblical characters rested is not due to sin.

(e) There is no divinely commanded location for the international date line. Therefore, there must be some element of human initiative involved in determining which day of the week will be the seventh and which will be the first, etc.

(f) The idea, then, of determining the precise day on which the Old Testament people worshipped and setting aside the day following that one is an impossible notion, certainly not a matter of divine command, and not what is meant by “change of day” in this context.

(3) “Change in Symbolic Weight”:

(a) This, in my view, is the precise nature of the change under discussion. It is a change in the meaning of the day, a change in symbolism from end to beginning.

(b) In theory, the early church might have observed the new symbolism by continuing to worship on the seventh day, but regarding that seventh day as the first day of a cycle and investing that day with first-day symbolism. Such an approach, however, would have been inadequate in their situation, because:

(i) The change had to do with the appearances of the risen Christ on the day following the Jewish Sabbath. For them to have retained the old day would have obscured that fact.

(ii) A private change of calendar for the Christians only would have obscured their witness to the world and especially to the Jews.

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That witness required observation of a day different from that of Judaism.

(iii) Thus, a mere symbolic change without actual change of the time of worship would have been inexpedient in the first century.

Similarly, it would be inexpedient in most situations today. Yet, there is nothing inherently wrong with worshipping on another day as long as that day is seen as “first”, with all the symbolic weight attached to that “firstness”.

(4) The problem then becomes: what divine authorization is there for this change in symbolic weight?

c) Even during the Old Covenant, there was some Sabbatical symbolism associated with the “first day” or “eighth day” in a sequence.

(1) The divine Sabbath of Genesis 2:2f. began on the first complete day of man’s existence. God’s Sabbath (which he intended to share with man) marked the beginning of man’s life. Our life is the gift of God’s creation, his completed work, just as our salvation is the gift of God’s completed redemptive work. Note:

(a) Christ is the second Adam.

(b) Redemption is a new creation.

(2) First-fruits and Pentecost, Leviticus 23:9-21.

(a) Wave-offering on “morrow after the Sabbath,” v. 11.

(b) Meal-offering on “morrow after seventh Sabbath,” v. 16.

(c) Both days are Sabbaths, though the word is not used (14, 21). “Holy convocation,” “no servile work”.

(d) Symbolism: Christ, the first-fruits of the dead, Pentecost as the first-fruits of the gospel.

(e) Thus, even under the Old Covenant, God called his people to observe occasional first-day Sabbaths and, thus, to anticipate the coming great harvest, the accomplishment of redemption.

(3) Blowing of trumpets, Leviticus 23:24—on the first day of the seventh month. Trumpets tend to symbolize the approach of the divine presence.

(4) Feast of tabernacles, Leviticus 23:33-44.

(a) First- and eighth-day Sabbaths, vv. 35, 39.

(b) Symbolism: Christ tabernacling among his people.

(5) Jubilee, Leviticus 25:8-17.

(a) The Jubilee is the fiftieth year in the sequence, following the normal Sabbatical year, v. 10.

(b) Symbolism: the final rectification, the consummation.

(6) The Old Testament, therefore, pictures the coming (New Testament) history of redemption in Christ by a series of first-day Sabbaths. One

might even be led to anticipate that when these events are fulfilled, the
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first day will then achieve more prominence in the life of God's people.
Possibly:

(a) Even Israel's seventh-day Sabbath was, in a sense, a "first day yetto-come".

(b) Christ brings the first day in principle.

(c) In the consummation, God's seventh day again becomes fully our first day, as at creation.

d) The first day in the New Covenant.

(1) The essence of the Sabbath is the "meeting with God" (C.2.). But in Christ is the definitive meeting point of man with God. He is the Sabbath.

(a) He calls the disciples, in effect, to drop all their own work to follow him. Peter and the others, of course, did return to fishing from time to time during Jesus' earthly ministry, but notice how often he interrupts their fishing to draw their attention to himself.

(b) Did Mary, as opposed to Martha, recognize the presence of the Sabbath in Jesus (Luke 10:38-42)? Contrary to the normal pattern of guest / host relations, she saw her role to be one of rest, worship and enjoyment in the presence of Jesus.

(2) First-day resurrection and resurrection appearances, Luke 24:13-51 (36-47, maybe 48-52); John 20:1, 19, 26.

(3) First-day gatherings of the apostolic church: This is the only day concerning which there is apostolic example: Acts 2:1, 20:6f.; I Corinthians 16:1f.

(4) In the post-apostolic period, the first-day gatherings were taken for granted; they were non-controversial. That presupposes apostolic warrant.

(5) Conclusion:

(a) Apostolic practice justifies the use of the first day as the Christian day of worship.

(b) In all probability, the significance of the day is that it is a memorial to the day of resurrection. This fact, in turn, embraces all of the rich Old Testament symbolism concerning the first day.

e) Is Sunday the New Testament Sabbath?

(1) Douma:

(a) Both Sabbath and Sunday are special days, commemorative.

(b) Both are feasts.

(c) Both are days of worship.

(d) Both are "made for man."

(e) Both are violated by selfish labor and by Pharisaic casuistry.

(2) Calvin: since Sabbath symbolizes resting from works righteousness, we should celebrate it every day.

(a) But God rested only one day.

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(b) He appointed Israel to observe one day, though in the OT also the

Sabbath symbolized God's deliverance.

(c) The chief symbolism of the Sabbath is not rest from legalist works, but rest from the toil that sin brings into the world. We are not told to spend six days in legalistic works and rest on the seventh.

(3) Days of worship, "holy convocation," were Sabbaths in the Old Testament. The day of worship and the day of rest are never separated. Previous discussion shows the theological necessity of this.

(4) Since there is clearly a change in symbolic weight, from a predominantly seventh-day symbolism to a predominantly first-day symbolism, under the New Covenant, and, since that symbolic weight has been attached to the Sabbath [i., above], the day has, therefore, been changed.

(5) But do we still keep the letter of the fourth commandment, which specifies a sequence of six days of work and a rest on the seventh?

(a) The New Testament Sabbath is, like the Old, a day of rest between one six-day period and another. What do we rest from? As in the Old Covenant, we rest from the preceding six days of work.

(b) The Sabbath in either covenant, then, is both backward looking and forward looking. It is a memorial to God's acts in the past and a consecration of our own past labors, but also an anticipation of the history of redemption to come.

(c) The difference lies, not in any drastic change, not even a drastic change of symbolism, but in a change of symbolic weight. The New Testament Sabbath carries the same symbolism of the Old Testament Sabbath, but refocuses it to account for its distinctive historical position: it changes the Old Testament symbolism by stressing the new beginning made by the finished accomplishment of redemption.

(d) Thus, we still rest on the seventh day, as the fourth commandment says—the seventh day from the beginning of the work-week. But that seventh day is our first day in Christ.

3. Sabbath as a New Covenant Sign.

a) In all ages, the Sabbath is a distinguishing mark of God's people [C.3.b.; E.1.b.iv.d)]. Yet, it is given to the whole human race in creation and probably also in the earliest redemptive covenants (see earlier discussion of Kline).

(1) Since it "distinguishes" the whole race as God's covenant people, there is a sense in which it does not distinguish at all. All are given the Sabbath as a sign of promise.

(2) Though all have the obligation to keep the Sabbath, few do; that is one aspect of the covenant-breaking that characterizes the human race.

(3) Thus, Israel is called to be a nation of Sabbath-keepers. The language in Exodus 31:12ff. does not suggest that the Sabbath is something unknown to other nations or distinctive to Israel, but, rather, that Israel

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is to be unique as a Keeper of the Sabbath. In Exodus 20:8, Israel is told to remember the Sabbath. Again, the impression is that Israel is to observe a law that has been previously known but not observed.

b) Thus, the sign- or sacramental-character of the Sabbath does not distinguish the church in the sense that those outside the church are forbidden to observe it. It is not parallel to baptism and the Lord's Supper in this respect. Note again the obligation of "strangers" (Exodus 20:10) whether circumcised or not (Exodus 12:48).

c) Blue laws.

(1) There is, therefore, nothing theologically wrong with urging unbelievers to keep the Sabbath, just as we urge them not to kill or steal.

(2) Since we are called, as Sabbatarians, not only to rest, but also to give rest, it is proper for us to seek in society a slackening of the pace so that the populace as a whole may rest one day in seven, and also (incidentally!) to reduce the economic pressure on Christians to break the Sabbath in order to compete. The Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27)—a creation ordinance written into our being. We need to rest one day in seven. To promote this is to promote health in the fullest sense, not just to promote a feature of a particular redemptive covenant.

(3) For the role of government, see discussion of the fifth commandment. Generally, I see no objection to the use of the powers of government to enforce Sabbath-observance, though this may not be desirable in every situation. Even if one denies to government the right to enforce religion, one certainly must acknowledge the right of government to protect religion and to promote rest in society [above, ii.].

4. Sabbath Years and Jubilee

a) These have to do with the rest of the land.

b) So I take it that these were given to Israel as a theocracy, not to the Gentile nations who have no divine land grant.

c) Though not mandatory, they express important principles (see below).

5. Broader Implications.

a) Ecology.

(1) In the sabbatical years, and in the Jubilee, the land was to rest, just as on the weekly Sabbath, man was to give rest to his family, servants and animals. This completes the reference to those under man's dominion. Exodus 23:10f.; Leviticus 25:1-17.

(2) Thus, the cultural mandate is not intended as an exploitation of creation, but a "guarding and keeping", (Genesis 2:15).

(3) Scripture warns us, therefore, against coveting prosperity in such a way that we destroy the God-given source of our wealth. God's people not only take from the earth, but also give back.

b) Care for the poor.

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(1) In the sabbatical years, debts were remitted and Hebrew slaves set free, unless they voluntarily agreed to accept lifetime servitude, Deuteronomy 15:1-6, 12-18.

(2) One reason for the rest of the land was so that "the poor of thy people may eat" (Exodus 23:11).

(3) Again, then, we are being warned against precisely the acquisitive spirit

so common in modern America. The Sabbath, in all its forms, means that we will not put our own wealth ahead of the needs of others. [Cf. C.3.c.].

(4) Hence, the condemnation of Amos against the Sabbatarians of his day, 8:4-10. They kept the Sabbath, so far as the letter of the law was concerned, but they eagerly awaited the end of the Sabbath so that they could resume their oppression of the poor. Thus, they had not begun to appreciate the meaning of the Sabbath ordinance. The Sabbath commandment requires a Sabbatarian attitude of heart—a willingness to serve.

V. The Fifth Commandment: “Honor thy father and thy mother (Deuteronomy: as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee), that thy days may be long (Deuteronomy: and that it

might go well with thee) in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

WLC, Q124: Who are meant by father and mother in the fifth commandment?

A124: By father and mother, in the fifth commandment, are meant, not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts; and especially such as, by God's ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family, church, or commonwealth.

Q125: Why are superiors styled Father and Mother?

A125: Superiors are styled Father and Mother, both to teach them in all duties toward their inferiors, like natural parents, to express love and tenderness to them, according to their several relations; and to work inferiors to a greater willingness and cheerfulness in performing their duties to their superiors, as to their parents.

Q126: What is the general scope of the fifth commandment?

A126: The general scope of the fifth commandment is, the performance of those duties which we mutually owe in our several relations, as inferiors, superiors, or equals.

Q127: What is the honor that inferiors owe to their superiors.?

A127: The honor which inferiors owe to their superiors is, all due reverence in heart, word, and behavior; prayer and thanksgiving for them; imitation of their virtues and graces; willing obedience to their lawful commands and counsels; due submission to their corrections; fidelity to, defense and maintenance of their persons and authority, according to their several ranks, and the nature of their places; bearing with their infirmities, and covering them in love, that so they may be an honor to them and to their government.

Q128: What are the sins of inferiors against their superiors?

A128: The sins of inferiors against their superiors are, all neglect of the duties required toward them; envying at, contempt of, and rebellion against, their persons and places, in their lawful counsels, commands, and corrections; cursing, mocking, and all such

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refractory and scandalous carriage, as proves a shame and dishonor to them and their government.

Q129: What is required of superiors towards their inferiors?

A129: It is required of superiors, according to that power they receive from God, and that relation wherein they stand, to love, pray for, and bless their inferiors; to instruct, counsel, and admonish them; countenancing, commending, and rewarding such as do well;

and discountenancing, reproofing, and chastising such as do ill; protecting, and providing for them all things necessary for soul and body: and by grave, wise, holy, and exemplary

carriage, to procure glory to God, honor to themselves, and so to preserve that authority which God hath put upon them.

Q130: What are the sins of superiors?

A130: The sins of superiors are, besides the neglect of the duties required of them, an inordinate seeking of themselves, their own glory, ease, profit, or pleasure; commanding things unlawful, or not in the power of inferiors to perform; counseling, encouraging, or favoring them in that which is evil; dissuading, discouraging, or discountenancing them in

that which is good; correcting them unduly; careless exposing, or leaving them to wrong, temptation, and danger; provoking them to wrath; or any way dishonoring themselves, or lessening their authority, by an unjust, indiscreet, rigorous, or remiss behavior.

Q131: What are the duties of equals?

A131: The duties of equals are, to regard the dignity and worth of each other, in giving honor to go one before another; and to rejoice in each other's gifts and advancement, as their own.

Q132: What are the sins of equals?

A132: The sins of equals are, besides the neglect of the duties required, the undervaluing of the worth, envying the gifts, grieving at the advancement of prosperity one of another; and usurping preeminence one over another.

Q133: What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment, the more to enforce it?

A133: The reason annexed to the fifth commandment, in these words, That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, is an express promise of long life and prosperity, as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good, to all such as keep this commandment.

A. Place in the Decalogue

1. Transition from duty to God, to our duty to man.

a) Note Kline's reservations: no division between two tables.

b) But a striking transition nonetheless:

(1) Worship, reverence to God in I-IV

(2) Parallel (!) reverence to human beings in V. (How reconcile??)

2. The second creation ordinance

a) Worship and Sabbath, I-IV

b) Family, V-VII (Can murder be construed as a family crime? Note Gen.

4:1-15, restriction of vengeance in family context. No corresponding restriction outside that context, Romans 13:4. In some ways the human race is a family; in other ways not.)

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c) Labor VIII-X

(Can "false witness" be construed as a crime against property, an attempt to gain economic advantage through legal authority?)

B. General Thrust

1. Honor, *Kabad*: Calvin' distinctions still helpful.

a) Reverence, respect (Existential perspective)

(1) "Fear" used in parallel texts: Leviticus 19:3, Romans 13:7, I Peter 2:18

(2) Parallels language used concerning our worship of God.

(a) Sometimes Scripture contrasts the honor due to God with that due to any human being, Acts 4:19, 5:29, even father and mother!

Matthew 10:35-37, Mark 10:29f, Luke 14:26f. (Strong testimony to the deity of Christ.) First commandment!

(b) But in the fifth commandment, reverence to father and mother is a consequence of our reverence to God.

(i) Deut. “as the Lord thy God commanded thee”

(ii) Leviticus 19:32, Ephesians 6:1ff, Colossians 3:20ff

(iii) Matthew 15:4-6, Mark 7:10ff, *Corban*

(a) Pledge of money to temple, or legal notice disclaiming responsibility for parents' debts?

(b) In either case, an attempt to divest self of obligation, by religious, legal oath. Cf. Exodus 21:17.

(c) Jesus condemns this competition between loyalty to God and to parents. It actually dishonors by making his word void.

(c) Need for balanced perception

(i) Roman Catholic reverence of men: *latreia*, *douleia*, *uperdouleia*, clergy titles

(ii) Protestants + exaggerated reverence for theologians, pastors, traditions.

(iii) Existential perspective: need to “see as.”

(d) Importance of deference, Gen. 31:35, 1 Kings 2:19, 1 Tim. 5:1.

(e) Seriousness of cursing, Ex. 21:17, Lev. 20:9, Prov. 20:20, 30:11.

b) Submission (Normative perspective)

(1) General: reverence or respect entails hearing with respect, expecting to learn, being willing to change, not assuming too quickly that we know more than the one we listen to.

(a) I Timothy 5:1 - not blind obedience: we can exhort. But age is a factor in determining how we exhort.

(b) I Peter 5:5. In both of these-passages, “elder” may mean simply “older man,” not necessarily a church officer.

(c) Proverbs: the elderly are assumed to be wise, worth hearing. When they are not, they are pathetic cases.

(d) Note the negative example of Rehoboam, 1 Kings 12.

(e) Scripture presents parents (and the elderly generally) as *teachers*: Deut. 6:6-7, Prov. 1:10, 2:1, 3:1. Accepting the wisdom of parentsteachers leads to long life (Prov. 3:1-2, 4:10). The concept of

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parents as wisdom teachers is the logical link between honoring parents and the promise of long life and prosperity (Douma).

(2) Obedience: This is a particular form of submission, not submission itself. Sometimes submission entails obedience, sometimes not.

(a) Children and parents: for a child, submission to parents involves obedience, Ephesians 6:1, Colossians 3:20. But when the child comes of age, little is said about obedience. “Honor” then takes primarily the form of respect (a) and financial support (c).

(b) Civil authorities, Titus 3:1, I Peter 2:13f.

(c) Church authorities, Hebrews 13:17, Phil. 2:12, II Thes. 3:14.

(d) Wives, I Peter 3:6

(e) Servants, Colossians 3:20, I Peter 2:18ff (even to the cruel!)

(f) Limit on obedience: we must disobey human authorities when they command us to disobey God. When we sin against God, we may not offer as an excuse that we were commanded to do so by lawful authority. Ex. 1:17, 19-21, I Samuel 22:17ff, I Kings 12:28-30, 2 Chron. 26:16-21, Daniel 6:22f, Matt. 10:37, Luke 3:13f, 14:26, Acts 4:18-20, 5:29.

(i) Hezekiah followed his ancestor David, rather than his father Ahaz, 2 Kings 18:3.

(ii) Jesus was not uncritical of his parents (Luke 2:49), but was subject to them (2:51).

c) Financial support (Situational perspective)

(1) Financial connotation of *kabad*, Proverbs 13:9, Gen. 13:2, Isaiah 43:23, Malachi 1:6, 3:8; time, I Timothy 5:17.

(2) NT Obligation: I Timothy 5:4ff (note especially verse 8), Mark 7:10ff.

2. Father and Mother: The Larger Catechism sees the Fifth Commandment as covering all interpersonal relations: between superiors, inferiors, equals. Can this rather broad understanding of “father and mother” be justified?

a) Structure of family metaphors in Scripture

(1) Elders, rulers, military chiefs: Ex. 12:21, Duet. 5:23, II Kings 5:13, Gen. 45:8, Isaiah 49:23, Judges 5:7

(2) Prophets, wisdom teachers, church leaders: Ps. 34:11f, Proverbs 1:8, 10, 15, II Kings 2:12, 13.14, I Cor. 4:15, Gal. 4:19, I Thes. 5:12f (“esteem”), 1 Tim. 1:2, Tit. 1:4.

(3) Older people: I Timothy 5:1

(4) God: Malachi 1:6, Matt. 6:9, Ephesians 3:15

b) Family is the fundamental sphere from which all other spheres are derived; therefore, family “honor” is the tie that binds all society.

(1) Historically

(a) Adam played all roles: prophet, priest, king

(b) Noah: human race born anew in a single family

(c) Israel: its institutions are elaborations of its original family structure

(d) New Covenant: a new family, Matthew 12:48ff, Mark 10:29f,

Ephesians 1:5, Romans 14: 10ff

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(2) Developmentally: For young children, the family still performs all the functions of society: teaching, discipline, employment, religious leadership.

(3) Logically: “rule” in all spheres is similar, I Timothy 3:4, David as shepherd and king.

c) Similar “honor” required in all authority spheres: reverence, submission, support, promise of prosperity, “unto the Lord.” Proverbs 3:1-2, Ephesians 5:22ff (note verse 22, 6:5, 7, 9), Colossians 3:23ff, I Peter 2:17 [cf. Exodus 22:28, Proverbs 24:21, Psalm. 82:6].

d) Universality of “honor” in Scripture

(1) Honor attaches to all persons

- (a) Romans 13:7 - probably an allusion to fifth commandment; note reference to other commandments in verse 9.
- (b) I Peter 2:13, 17.
- (2) Mutual submission in the church
 - (a) Romans 12:10 - in honor preferring one another
 - (b) Ephesians 5:21ff - note reciprocal responsibilities.
 - (c) I Peter 1ff - note "honor" due the wife in verse 7, promise of prosperity in verse 9.
 - (d) I Corinthians 7:2-4 - surprising mutual "ownership"
 - (e) I Corinthians 11:11 - lest readers draw wrong inferences from female submission
- (3) Pattern of office in the new covenant, John 13:12-17, Matthew 20:20-28, I Peter 3. Unusual: instead of the "inferior" being preoccupied with the needs of the superior, *vice versa*. There ought to be an atmosphere of love in the church entirely different from that found in any secular institution.
- (4) Still, there is a real authority structure. Christ is over the church, parents have authority over children, husbands over wives. (Ephesians 5:21 does not make husband and wife equal authorities.)
- (5) Vs. egalitarianism, authoritarianism.
 - (a) God places all of us under authority. In itself, this is not demeaning or oppressive, contra feminism.
 - (b) God has not made us all equal in gifts and abilities.
 - (c) But no human ruler should claim divine power over all aspects of human life.
 - (d) And rulers should rule for the good of their subjects.
- 3. Promise of Prosperity
 - a) For obedience to God, but also for obedience to his representatives, Colossians 3:25, I Timothy 5:8, I Peter 2:18, 3:8-12.
 - b) Functions in new covenant as well as old: Mark 10:30, Colossians 3:24, Ephesians 6:1, I Peter 3:10 (quotes Psalm 34:12, which alludes to fifth commandment). "Land" is the whole earth now.
 - c) Does distinguish the righteous from the wicked, I Kings 3:14, Malachi 4:6.
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 - d) Not automatic, however. Some faithful people die young. That can be a blessing, 1 Kings 14:13, 2 Kings 22:20. But the ultimate fulfillment of this promise is in the life to come.
 - e) Still, there is blessing in this life for honoring God and his representatives, Mark 10:29-31, 1 Tim. 4:8.
 - f) Why is this promise attached specifically to the fifth commandment?
 - (1) Similar sanctions attached to worship, honor of God, obeying him: second commandment, Deuteronomy 6:3, 18 (note parallel language).
 - (2) Point of fifth commandment: attaches same sanctions to God's representatives.
 - (3) Extends to sources of life generally: 12:25, 28 (blood not to be eaten); 22:6f (don't take mother bird and eggs). Ecological implications.
 - (4) Parents as wisdom teachers: following their wisdom brings long life

(Prov. 3:1-2, 4:10, Psm. 1). Compare the function of God's law "for your good" (Deut. 6:24, 10:13, 12:28).

B. Sphere-relations: Historical Survey

1. Sophists

- a) Ethical irrationalism: moral norms neither true nor false.
- b) Ethical rationalism: man is the measure of all things.
- c) Irrationalism leads to anarchy in society.
- d) Rationalism leads to totalitarianism ("Justice is the interest of the stronger.")

2. Plato

- a) Rationalism: philosopher knows the forms, so he ought to rule.
 - b) Hence, totalitarianism
 - (1) No private property
 - (2) Communal wives, children for upper classes
 - (3) Eugenic supervision of marriages, births
 - (4) Compulsory education
 - (5) Censorship of art, literature
 - c) Tyranny? But it is supposed to bring fulfillment to each individual.
3. Aristotle: State is more important than the individual, since the whole is more important than any part. It is the partnership that includes all partnerships.
4. Stoics: similar reasoning, leading to conclusion of world government.

5. Aquinas

- a) Doctrine of the state can be established by natural (Aristotelian) reason.
 - (1) State is highest social whole of which all are parts.
 - (2) "Subsidiarily:" Let the parts do what they can.
- b) If man hadn't fallen, the state would be enough; but because of sin, we need the church also.
- c) The two are distinct, each autonomous in its own realm (nature/grace).
- d) Since grace is the higher sphere, the church is superior to the state. It is the extension of the incarnation itself.
 - (1) It prevails where conflict.
 - (2) It instructs the state concerning natural law (since the fall, it has a superior understanding of nature).
 - (3) The state may enter the sphere of grace insofar as it helps the church.

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(4) Boniface VIII: earthly power is delegated to the pope. He may remove a heretical ruler.

(5) Bellarmine - more moderate

- (a) Church and state are like soul and body.
- (b) Church's principal responsibility in state is to enlighten rulers, people on the extent and limits of their obligations.
- (c) The church has a right to intervene in temporal matters which affect the spiritual realm.

6. Maritain (modern, pre-1967 Roman Catholic)

- a) State is supreme embodiment of natural reason.
- b) Its work: promote the common welfare, maintain law, administer public affairs.
- c) Church is superior because man is spiritual.

(1) That supremacy, however, must be applied “analogously” - differently in different situations.

(2) In democracy, authoritarianism inappropriate. A more spiritual approach better befits the church's nature: moral enlightenment.

(3) Don't compromise with moral law, but don't enforce rules too heavy for the common good.

d) State may help church

(1) By creating conditions of order

(2) By acknowledging God

(3) Specific help (no more than it would give to any other group)

7. Vatican II - now room for all sorts of views in Roman church.

8. Machiavelli (1469-1527)

a) Christianity makes men passive, discourages political involvement; thus power of the church must be sharply curbed.

b) Law alone makes men virtuous, hunger alone makes him industrious.

c) Until population is purified, the state requires as absolute despot to maintain strength.

d) That despot may do anything (lie, trick, force) to achieve his ends. He is above the sphere of individual morality.

9. Bodin, Hobbes, Rousseau: “Social contract.” Once the people have transferred their authority to the state, the state becomes absolute in authority, irrevocably in power.

10. Locke: Social contract modified in direction of Rutherford.

11. Anabaptism (Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*)

a) Sword-bearing of state is radically incompatible with Jesus' teaching concerning non-resistance.

(1) Rev. 13: state is satanic.

(2) Romans 13

(a) State is one of the tribulations the church must endure until the last day (verses 11-14).

(b) Church must relate to state in attitude of suffering love (Chap. 12, 13:8-10), meek submission.

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(c) “Be subject” - not obedience, but subordination. Christians may often have to disobey, but must accept the penalty.

(d) “Ordained by God” - ordered by God; so no divine approval involved.

(e) “Good (4) and “evil” are not obedience or disobedience to the state, but living according to the standards of Rom. 12.

(f) “Minister of God” - the Christian, not the civil magistrate.

(g) Use of force is evil. True power only in suffering.

(h) Conclusion: state is an evil which God uses for his purpose.

b) So Christians ought not to participate in the state at all.

c) Reply:

(1) Does no justice O.T.

(2) Hard to eliminate element of divine sanction from Romans 13.

(3) *Hypotasso* does regularly mean to obey out of obligation, not just to

submit to superior force. See Luke 2:51, 10:17, 20, Rom. 8:7, 1 Cor. 14:34, 37, 16:16, Eph. 5:24, Col. 3:18, 1 Pet. 2:13, 18, 3:1, 5, 5:5, Tit. 2:9, 3:1, Jas. 4:7, Heb. 12:9.

(4) Anabaptist reading of “good,” “evil,” and “minister of God” not plausible.

(5) Is power as force always evil? 1 Tim. 6:15, Rev. 5:5, 12, 12:5, 21:24.

(6) Anabaptists accept authority of parents, husbands, teachers. Why not of state?

12. Lutheranism: “the doctrine of the two kingdoms”

a) God approves of state, but it is less than God's best.

b) It is an emergency measure to preserve life, order, family after fall.

c) Uses forces unleashed by the fall, but in interest of love.

d) “God's left hand.” Contradiction in God's nature? (Thielicke)

e) Powers of state, then, must be limited.

f) Kingdom of God: based on entirely different principles. Rule only through word, spirit.

g) Prince can be Christian, but in different order.

h) Cf. law/gospel distinction: threat may never be a means to a godly end.

i) Church and state

(1) State not arm of church, but ought to be Christian.

(2) Ought to protect church, help organize it.

(3) Cannot intervene in purely religious issues.

(4) Erastianism: church under state control.

13. Calvin

a) State is a gracious provision of God. (vs. RC, Anabaptist, Lutheran)

b) Scripture determines the state's prerogatives.

c) Church and state: difference is competence, jurisdiction.

d) Limits of state's jurisdiction: somewhat unclear.

e) Ground of revolution? Generally no, but:

(1) Sermon on Daniel 6:22 - When rulers rise against God, people should put them down.

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(2) Last page of *Institutes*: lesser magistrates must not simply agree to unjust policies.

14. S. Rutherford (*Lex, Rex*, 1644)

a) Government is from God, but ratified by people (Saul, David).

b) King is subject to God's law.

c) In accepting a ruler, the community does not surrender all its rights (as Rousseau thought), but only the right to do violence. They maintain the right of self-defense.

d) If the king breaks the contract, the people are free from their obligations.

e) Romans 13 includes “inferior magistrates.”

(1) So the king is not the sole interpreter of the law.

(2) Separation of powers is desirable.

(3) Inferior judges also have power of sword.

15. A. Kuyper (*Lectures on Calvinism*, 1898)

a) Authority of the state is from God, subject to the word.

b) Its responsibilities: Compel mutual respect, defend the weak, collect taxes or national purposes

c) Other spheres also sovereign - their rights from God, not state.

d) Thus state must respect their rights - basis of freedom. May not interfere in their "internal workings"

e) State is "unnatural" institution. (vs. Van Ruler)

(1) Post-fall

(2) Vs. man's natural impulses - replaces organic with mechanical motivation.

(3) But necessary in fallen world.

f) State under God's law, but not theocracy (Urim)

(1) Must protect church

(2) Cannot extirpate idolatry, since state not competent to decide which church is right.

(3) Ought to penalize blasphemy, not because of its impiety, but because God rules over the state.

g) Comments

(1) Not specific enough in reference to Scriptural law.

(2) Limits on state not precise.

(3) Reformed resistance, though, to anarch/totalitarian dialectic.

16. Dooyeweerd

a) More elaborate account of family, church, state as belonging to distinct spheres, freedom grounded in this diversity under God.

b) Problems: grounding for distinctions, precision on powers, limits of state power.

c) His disciples, therefore, differ greatly in their view of the power of the state: cf. the conservative Van Riessen, the socialistic Bob Goudswaard. No "limit in principle" to governmental interference, because no clearly exegetical approach.

17. Theonomy (see general discussion of normative perspective)

a) Scripture sets limits on state powers.

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b) O.T.: church/state distinguished by priesthood/kingship.

c) Emulate OT laws (with cultural and redemptive-historical adjustments).

18. Clowney ("The Politics of the Kingdom")

a) Kingdom of God: the coming of God himself in Christ.

b) Kingdom power - radically different from earthly power.

c) Christ fulfills creation mandate, Matthew 28, Ephesians 4:10, dominion promises to Israel.

d) Our work: not to seek dominion, but to endure the sufferings of Christ in bringing the gospel to the world. The glory comes later.

e) The church is the new theo-political form of the kingdom, but radically different from the O.T. theocracy. No sword.

(1) It is the form of the heavenly city, while the state is the form of the earthly city.

(2) Sword is for Christians, non-Christians alike (Genesis 9); cf. Kline.

f) Applications

- (1) Don't link Christianity to political hopes.
- (2) Cultural mandate no longer in force.
- (3) God does not promise us skill in world politics, etc.
- (4) Don't amass wealth, but give to the needy.

g) Comments

(1) Brings out more clearly than the Kuyperians the distinctive nature of the church.

(2) Cultural mandate and great commission: see previous discussion.

(3) Secularity of the state.

(a) Scripture does teach that the civil magistrate does not lose his authority because of unbelief.

(b) But why should we not strive to increase Christian influence in the state? Unbelieving magistrates may have lawful authority, but they are hardly ideal.

(4) God does give worldly wisdom to Christians: Proverbs

(5) Christians are promised prosperity; and prosperity is necessary if we are to help the needy in meaningful way.

19. Frame, "Toward a Theology of the State."

20. Some conclusions (tentative)

a) Scripture must govern our thinking in this area in detail as well as general drift.

b) The church is the fundamental form of the kingdom of God. As such it performs for God's people many functions otherwise performed by the state.

c) Authority of the state is limited:

(1) By God's commission which is limited.

(2) By other institutions, especially church.

(3) By Scriptural norms.

d) Insofar as state is obedient to Scripture, it may be and ought to be Christian.

e) Cautious imitation of Old Covenant Israel is desirable for avoiding subjectivism, maintaining liberty.

f) Should churches be politically active?

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(i) The church should proclaim the whole counsel of God, which often bears upon questions of political debate: freedom of religion, abortion, care for the poor, race, gender roles, homosexuality, political corruption, and many others.

(ii) This proclamation should not be limited to church services. It is appropriate for Christians to write letters to representatives, write to public media, picket, demonstrate, etc. to make their desires known.

(iii) Any genuine application of the Word is legitimate in preaching and teaching. In some situations, it might even seem necessary to oppose or endorse a particular candidate (Hitler as limiting concept!), though a church could forfeit its tax exemption if it makes a partisan endorsement.

(iv) But on many issues, political decisions require expertise not generally found among preachers:

(A) Federal budget allocations, military hardware, effects of government on the economy, etc. More humility is required on such matters.

(B) Making decisions on issues that are not black and white.

(C) Deciding what weight to put on each issue when making a political decision.

(v) Often, churches can provide better services than government to alleviate social problems: Christian schools, working with the homeless, etc.

(vi) Churches need to be alert to attacks on their liberty to proclaim Christ: anti-church zoning policies, restrictions on religious speech, draconian restrictions against anti-abortion demonstrations, etc.

C. Civil Disobedience, Revolution

1. Generally, Scripture is anti-revolutionary.

a) Suffering obedience, even to froward, cruel rulers: Romans 13, I Peter 2, Revelation 13, Matthew 22:15-22. (taxes were 40%)

b) Emigration is a possibility if matters are intolerable.

2. Nevertheless, we must refuse any command contrary to God's will [I, B, 1, b, ii].

3. Obedience to law is fundamentally obedience to the whole system.

a) We may break a lower law if we believe that a higher law transcends it.

(Often we must, to obtain justice.)

b) Calvin: Lower magistrates must resist tyranny from the higher, for the higher magistrate is accountable to the law.

c) Sometimes, therefore, a ruler must be replaced.

(i) Best if peaceful.

(ii) In an extreme situation, perhaps violence is justified. Police and military power should be used not only to quell lawlessness among the subjects, but also among the rulers.

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(iii) Vs. anarchy, however. The leadership must either be part of the governing body already, or must represent a viable alternative regime. The American Revolution?

4. A government may cease to be a government. (Hard to judge)

a) Losing all standards of justice, becoming like a crime organization (*contra* Romans 13)

b) Becoming too weak to maintain order.

c) Breaking contracts with the people.

5. If power is being contested, the Christian is under no obligation to support the previous status quo. Make the decision using biblical criteria of justice.

6. An alternative government must be available. Anarchy is not an acceptable result. The Christian is under authority (Romans 13).

D. Punishment

1. Theories

a) Deterrence (of offender or of others in society): Proverbs 22:15, Deuteronomy 13:11, Cleansings, offerings.

b) Reformation (Proverbs, I Corinthians 5:5)

- c) Restitution (most prominent in biblical theft-law)
 - d) Restraint (quarantine, exile, capital punishment)
 - e) Taxation (not in Scripture - a non-moral motive)
 - f) Retribution (*talion*; basic to all punishment)
2. Problems today
- a) Deterrence and reformation have contrary applications.
 - b) Little restitution in modern civil law.
 - c) Resistance to retribution (but what basis do we have for punishing anyone, or “curing” anyone, if that treatment is not deserved?)
3. Forms of civil punishment
- a) Imprisonment
 - (1) In Scripture, prison used only to hold people for trial. No prison terms as penalties.
 - (2) Prison terms as-punishments are a modern idea designed for humanitarian and reformatory purposes.
 - (3) Prison systems are dismal failures on both counts.
 - (4) Biblical alternative:
 - (a) Double restitution for theft (strict justice: the criminal loses precisely what he would have gained).
 - (b) Incurable criminals: execution.
 - (i) Contempt for society (“High hand”)
 - (ii) Vs. development of criminal class.
 - b) Restitution (above)
 - (1) Strict justice
 - (2) Benefit to victim
 - c) Slavery (“household apprenticeship”)
 - (1) Various forms: enslavement through war, voluntary slavery. We will consider the enslavement of believers for debt or theft.
 - (2) Live with family, learn a trade, learn responsible habits.
 - (3) Beating allowed, since lack of motivation.
 - (4) Set free in 7th year.
 - (5) Gifts for celebration, establish in trade, Deuteronomy 15:14, 18.
 - (6) Model of “second childhood”
 - (7) Slavery in American South
 - (a) Based on kidnapping, a capital crime in Scripture.
 - (b) Based on racism
 - (c) Believing slaves were not set free after six years, nor were they trained for post-slavery responsibilities.
- d) Capital Punishment: objections
 - (1) Sixth commandment
 - (a) But Sixth commandment is opposed to unlawful killing (*ratzach*). Lawfulness is relative to Scripture.
 - (b) Background of Sixth commandment is Genesis 9:6 which provides precisely for the shedding of blood by the state.
 - (c) The law as a whole provides for capital punishment.
 - (2) “N.T. prohibits revenge.”

- (a) O.T. also teaches love of enemies, limits personal vengeance, yet sees no conflict with capital punishment.
- (b) Note contrast between Romans 12 and 13.
- (3) “Capital punishment doesn't deter.”
- (a) Deterrence is not the final issue.
- (b) Statistics on swift execution policy not available. Swift and certainty are crucial to deterrence.
- (c) Clearly the one executed is sufficiently deterred and that is a gain for society.

E. Women's Roles (Foh, Hurley)

1. In the home

- a. Subjection to her husband (Eph. 5:22, Col. 3:18, Tit. 2:5, “headship” = authority).
- b. Joint authority with him (Ex. 20:12, Lev. 19:3, Prov. 23:22).
- c. Mutual “ownership” (1 Cor. 7:2-4).

2. In the church

- a. I Corinthians 14 context of judging the prophets.
- b. I Timothy 2: office of elder in view, not general teaching.
- c. General principle: a woman can do anything in the church that an unordained man can do.
- d. Diaconate? Yes, because it is a serving office (Phoebe).
- e. Older women as the primary teachers of younger women (Tit. 2:4).
- f. Women teaching men and women in non-official capacity, Acts 18:26.

3. In society

- a. Does Titus 2:5 require women to be homemakers?
 - i. The verse seems to presuppose that most women were homemakers, that being their usual cultural occupation.
 - ii. But anyone charged with home responsibilities should be busy with them, as they should be “self-controlled” and “pure.”
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- iii. Prov. 31 implies a wider social role for women, though still centered in the home.
- iv. The calling of Deborah, Ruth, the NT prophetesses, the NT order of widows, and others indicate that God sometimes calls women to work outside the home, or without a home-centered focus.
- v. It depends on age, gifts, marital status, etc.
- vi. Women seem to be uniquely equipped to be the primary nurturers of young children. See my paper on “The Biblical Doctrine of the Family.”
- b. Should female equality be mandated in society?
 - (i) Although I think women may legitimately work outside the home under some conditions, I certainly do not think that all occupations should contain equal populations of male and female workers. There are good reasons why there are and should be fewer women than men in many professions.
 - (ii) Equal pay for equal work? A proper policy must, of course, take into account the fact that women tend to attain less seniority than men, tend more often to work part-time, etc.

Better: equal pay for equal value.

(iii) These issues require consideration of individual cases and are best resolved in the marketplace rather than in government.

PASTORAL AND SOCIAL ETHICS

Lecture Outline, Part Five: Exposition of the Law of God: Sixth through Tenth Commandments

by John M. Frame

VI. The Sixth Commandment: “Thou shalt not kill.”

Q135: What are the duties required in the sixth commandment?

A135: The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any; by just defense thereof against violence, patient bearing of the hand of God, quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit; a sober use of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labor, and recreations; by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness; peaceable, mild and courteous speeches and behavior; forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiring good for evil; comforting and succoring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.

Q136: What are the sins forbidden in the sixth commandment?

A136: The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defense; the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life; sinful anger, hatred, envy, desire of revenge; all excessive passions, distracting cares; immoderate use of meat, drink, labor, and recreations; provoking words, oppression, quarreling, striking, wounding, and: Whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any.

A. Basic Thrust

1. God as Lord of life: Genesis 1:20ff, 28ff, 2:7, 17, 3:14-20, 4:8-16, 6:3, 11, Deuteronomy 30:20, 32:36f, Psalm 139:13-16, John 1:4, 3:15f, 4:14, 5:26, 6:35-48, 6:63-68, 10:10, 12:50, 14:6, 20:31. Physical, spiritual, eternal.

2. As creator and redeemer, then, life is in God's hands. We may take human life only with his authorization.

3. Meaning of *ratzach*: “slay”

a) Generally for unlawful, forbidden killing, except in Numbers 35:30, where the use may be ironic.

b) Not used for animal killings or for mass killings in war.

c) Applies to manslaughter and negligent homicide, even accidental killing Deuteronomy 4:41ff, 19:4ff, Numbers 35: 22ff Joshua 20:3. The “doctrine of carefulness.”

(1) Distinctions

(a) Voluntary manslaughter: intent to kill, but no premeditation. Fit of rage in Gen. 34:25, 49:6.

(b) Involuntary manslaughter: no intent to kill, but behaving in a way likely to destroy life, as in reckless driving.

(c) Negligent homicide: failure to take adequate precautions, Ex. 21:29, Deut. 22:8.

(d) Accidental killing, Deut. 19:5.

(2) These are crimes in Scripture, even (d), which modern law would entirely excuse. One who kills someone accidentally is a “slayer” (*rotzeach*).

(3) The penalty: if it is proved that the “slayer” is guilty of manslaughter, not murder, he must remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. If he ventures outside the city, the avenger of blood may kill him without penalty.

(4) The point:

(a) The slayer is impressed with the need to be careful with human life, to avoid even the possibility of its unjust destruction. The punishment fits the crime. Now he must be very, very careful with his own life.

(b) Even accidental killing may not be forgiven until blood is shed (that of the high priest).

(5) Similarly, Jesus in Matthew 5:21-26 places a high priority on the sanctity of life. Compare Lev. 19:16-18, 1 John 3:14-16.

(a) He tells us to guard against even the causes of murder (anger - only a potential cause). Matt. 5:22, Compare James 1:20.

(b) He tells us to avoid even verbal abuse, Matt. 5:22, compare 1 Sam. 25:10, 2 Sam. 16:7-8, Prov. 12:18.

(c) He places a higher priority on reconciliation than on worship.

(d) The only alternative to murder, then, is love. Any lack of love is a violation of this command (broad thrust).

(6) But some anger is legitimate.

(a) God’s own jealousy, Num. 5:11-31, Deut. 32:21.

(b) Imprecatory Psalms, 69, 109, 137, 139.

(c) Temporary anger with another, Eph. 4:26. Tit. 1:7 says we should be *slow* to anger, and God is. That implies there is a legitimate place for anger.

(d) Unfortunately, righteous and unrighteous anger are often mixed, or hard to distinguish.

4. The commandment restricts personal vengeance, leaving it in the hands of God and the civil authorities.

a) O.T. vs. private vengeance, Leviticus 19:18, Proverbs 20: 22, 24:29, Exodus 23:4.

b) N.T.: Matthew 5:21, 38-42, Romans 12:14-21.

c) Right of civil magistrate to avenge, Romans 13:4, O.T., Genesis 9:6.

B. Love of Neighbors and Enemies

1. The OT mandates kindness to enemies, but primarily within Israel, Lev. 19:18, Prov. 24:17, 25:21, and resident foreigners, Lev. 19:34.

2. In NT

(a) The Great Commission mandates outward-facing love—to all

nations.

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(b) Even harder: Love to those outside my community-- who cross my path, Luke 10:25-37.

C. Non-resistance: Matthew 5:38-41, Romans 12:14, 19-21

1. Literal interpretations

a) Invite someone to hit you back? That would be inducing the aggressor to greater sin.

b) Forego self-defense? But cf. Exodus 22:2-3, biblical teaching concerning war, punishment. [Note, however, the sacredness of life, in that if someone breaks into your house in the daytime, you should protect *his* life (Douma)!]

2. Contextual considerations

a) Verses 43ff deal with love of enemies, of which 38-41 describes an example. But love is opposed to hatred, not self-defense.

b) The issue in 38-41 seems to be a distortion of the law of *talion*. That law, intended as a principle of public justice, has been used to justify personal vengeance and vindictiveness. Self-defense is not vengeance.

3. Summary of the teaching

a) If someone hits you, do not hit him back out of vengeance or anger.

b) Be prepared to forgive.

4. Seen in this way, the passages do not oppose self-defense or the use of force by civil magistrates.

D. War

1. War in O.T.

a) Peace, not war, is glorified in Scripture as the consummation of redemption (Isaiah 2:4, 9:6f, 11:6-16), Psalm 46:9, 120:6f). David, the man of war (though a man after God's own heart!) is not permitted to build the temple, I Chron. 22:18f, 28:3. War is the result of sin, James 4:1f.

b) *Herem* warfare, Deuteronomy 20:16-18; cf. 7:1ff, Joshua 6-8.

(1) Total destruction of all people and animals.

(2) No booty

(3) Against all cities of the promised land.

c) Non-herem warfare (against cities "at a distance"), Deuteronomy 20:1-15, 19f, Numbers 21:14, Deuteronomy 7:1.

(1) Priestly address, verses 2-4: God will give victory.

(2) Ritual cleanness, 23:9-14, Joshua 3:5.

(3) Priests blow trumpets, Joshua 6:4, Numbers 31:6.

(4) Offer of peace (demands capitulation), Deuteronomy 20:10-12.

(5) If offer refused and Israel gains victory, put men to sword (20:13), take women and children prisoner, plunder for yourselves (14), cf. 21:10-14.

d) Exemptions from military service, Deuteronomy 20:5-9, 24:5, Numbers 1:49

(?) new vineyard, engagement, recent marriage, fear, Levites.

e) Do not destroy fruit trees during siege, Deuteronomy 20:19f.

f) Note that all Israel's wars are holy. In that regard, it would be unwise for us to import the principles of Deut. 20 into modern warfare.

2. War in N. T.:

a) War from sin, James 4:1f.

b) Non-resistance: above, B.

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c) Soldiers: exhorted to justice (Luke 3:14), but not told to leave the army.

d) Sword not given to the church, Matthew 26:52, John 18:1-11

e) Gospel will provoke violence, Matthew 10:34, Revelation 11:7, 12:7, 17, 13:7, 19:19.

f) War as metaphor for the Christian life, Ephesians 6, II Corinthians 10:3, I Timothy 1:18, II Timothy 2:4, I Pet. 2:11.

g) Sword given to civil magistrate, Romans 13, Acts 25: 11.

3. Pacifism

a) In early church? Evidence weak either way. Some opposition to military service based on the pagan oaths and celebrations. Some who opposed it (Justin, Origen) were willing to pray for military victory. Thus the objection does not seem to center on the illegitimacy of all force.

b) Tenets

(1) O.T. wars represent a divine condescension to Israel's hardness of heart, a primitive stage in progressive revelation.

(2) The state is outside the will of God, though God uses it for his purposes. (Cf. discussion of *Yoder* under Fifth Commandment) Pacifists differ among themselves as to the extent to which a believer may participate in the state.

(3) The Christian's first loyalty is international, to the world-wide body of Christ. We cannot kill our brothers and sisters in Christ, or indeed potential converts.

c) Reply

(1) Inadequate view of Old Testament.

(2) Wrong view of the state, especially Romans 13.

(3) The state has a right to kill even professing believers in the just exercise of its authority. If we say that no one has such a right, we are denying to God the right to do this in his chosen way.

(4) Just War Theory (Cicero, Augustine, Suarez, Grotius)

(a) Tenets (as summarized by Arthur Holmes in *War, Four Christian Views*)

(i) Just cause (only defense)

(ii) Just intention (to secure just peace, not revenge, conquest, economic gain, ideological supremacy)

(iii) Last resort (after all other methods have been tried and failed)

(iv) Formal declaration (to indicate that the war is an act of government, not individuals only. Only government may wage a just war.)

(v) Limited objectives (not total destruction, surrender)

(vi) Proportionate means (limited to what is necessary to repel, deter future attacks), probability of success.

(vii) Noncombatant immunity (POW's, wounded, civilian noncombatants immune from attack).

(b) Derived from natural law plus biblical elements.

(5) Some Conclusions

(a) Use of the O.T. Law

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(i) Israel, as God's holy nation, was given a divine promise of victory (contingent, of course, upon its faithfulness to the covenant), Deuteronomy 20:4 - not only for *herem* war, but for normal wars as well. I don't believe that any modern nation can claim that promise.

(ii) Notice also the role of the priesthood, ceremonial cleansings. Thus, not only the *herem* wars, but all wars in Israel are "holy" wars, "wars of the Lord" (Numbers 21:14).

(iii) Restrictions on Israel's military might (above; see also Deuteronomy 17:16).

(a) The anti-militarist strain in the O.T. is partly a means of enforcing, underscoring the special divine promise of victory. The war is won by God's promise, not by horses, Psalm 20:7, 33:12-22, 76:6, 147:10f, Isaiah 30:15-18, 31:1-3, 36:8-10, Exodus 15:1-5. Since our nation does not have such a promise, it is not evident that our defenses ought to be similarly restricted.

(b) Another reason for the restriction against chariots and horses seems to be that Egypt was the source of such weapons. Israel is not to trust in alliances with Egypt, but must remember what God did to Egypt and its chariots in delivering Israel, Exodus 15:1ff.

(c) On the other hand, these restrictions also seem to be aimed at discouraging the development of a war-centered culture, where defense takes priority over all other aspects of life (worship, family life, production). War is a necessary evil, not a suitable focus of community life (so I Chronicles 22:18f). This concern seems to be as valid now as in the O.T.

(d) The principle, then should be that a nation should acquire the minimum military might which will give it an adequate defense.

(iv) Clearly, *herem* warfare is no longer in effect. Thus no modern nation should seek the total annihilation of another culture.

(b) Just war tenets (Natural law basis is a weakness)

(i) Just cause

(a) Clearly Scripture warrants warfare only in a just cause. God is a God of justice.

(b) Since civil obedience is limited by God's law, (I), Christians should refuse to serve in an unjust war.

(c) A pluralistic society ought to allow the right of selective conscientious objection, to allow its citizens to object conscientiously to a particular war.

(d) Rights of soldiers to disobey unjust orders should be upheld (*contra* the Nuremberg defense).

(e) In general, the only just cause is defense. But this fact should not be taken to preclude a preemptive strike against a nation which clearly threatens our security. The “normal war” of Deuteronomy 20 (a siege war) seems to presuppose such a situation.

(f) Is it ever legitimate to conscript troops (or give other military assistance) to defend another nation? (Cf. the U.S. role in Vietnam.)

(i) A nation is obligated to keep the treaty commitments it makes, even when those turn out to have been unwise (Psalm 15:4, Joshua 9, 10:115).

(ii) There is, however, no clear Scriptural authorization for such treaties, unless they are necessary to the defense of the nation agreeing to supply such assistance.

(ii) Just intention: “securing a just peace” is the goal, but achieving that may involve conquest or drastic cultural reconstruction (Deuteronomy 20:11-15).

(iii) Last resort: Yes (Deuteronomy 20:10), unless of course, as defense against present attack.

(iv) Formal declaration

(a) Scripture does restrict war-making to governments.

(b) Cf. the “offer of peace” (Deuteronomy 20:10), the blowing of trumpets (Joshua 6:4, Numbers 31:6).

(c) But lack of a declaration should not slow defensive response when a nation is attacked.

(v) Limited objectives: Yes, but note reservation above under ii. No more *herem*.

(vi) Proportionate means: Yes. Note argument above under a, iii.

(vii) Noncombatant immunity

(a) In O.T. “normal war,” some noncombatants were killed, evidently: Deuteronomy 20:13, Numbers 31:15-17.

(b) Preservation of women, children and livestock in Deuteronomy 20:14 seems to be by permission rather than commandment. In Numbers 31:15-17 (which was not a *herem* war since there was not total destruction), there was a broader range of killing.

(c) The pattern, then, seems to be that a just war justifies sufficient killing to achieve its objective - which may sometimes involve, again, drastic social reconstruction.

(d) Scripture, then, is more realistic than much “just war” theory, and more applicable to modern problems:

(i) Problem of guerrilla wars where children and women carry rifles and where combatants and noncombatants are indistinguishable.

(ii) Problem of situations in which a government will intentionally plant its military forces and equipment in the midst of civilian populations.

(iii) Nuclear war (see below).

(e) Still, the sixth commandment and the “doctrine of carefulness” require most scrupulous attention to the question of whether a given attack is necessary to the objective.

(6) Nuclear War and Deterrence: The following discussion is an attempt to apply the above principles. It owes much to Michael Novak’s “Moral Clarity in the Nuclear Age,” *National Review* (April 1, 1983).

(a) Nature of the Soviet Threat

(i) Communism by its own statements and by its internal logic requires world conquest.

(ii) Soviet military might

(a) Far superior to west in conventional arms.

(b) Geared to offensive war (while west is geared to defense) in Europe.

(c) The arms race: “When we built, they (USSR) built; when we stopped building, they built” (Harold Brown, Defense Secretary under President Carter.)

(iii) Marxism justifies, and the USSR has always practiced, the breaking of agreements when in their interest. They express contempt for “bourgeois formalism.”

(iv) On-site inspection to verify an arms-control agreement would require an openness drastically foreign to Soviet custom.

Satellite and other long-distance verification can be foiled.

(b) Our Obligation to Defend the Innocent

(i) Defense is a fundamental responsibility of government, Romans 13:3f, Genesis 9:6.

(ii) U.S. is committed to the defense of Europe and Japan, as well as its own territory.

(c) Problems in Nuclear Deterrence

(i) Possibility of failure, even provocation of attack by USSR

(a) So far it has been successful (35 years!)

(b) Soviets do not fear conventional war, but they appear to be genuinely afraid of nuclear exchange.

(c) Deterrence, like any strategy, is imperfect; but what alternative is more likely to work? [see d, below]

(ii) Expensive: a “war on the poor”

(a) It is difficult to justify from Scripture the attempt to make government responsible for welfare programs.

(b) Nuclear deterrence is far cheaper than an equivalent conventional deterrent would be.

(c) From 1960-1980, military spending as percentage of GNP and federal budget declined by nearly ½.

(d) Nuclear weapons in 1983 constitute only 9% of the military budget, 2.9% of the federal budget, 0.6% of GNP.

(iii) “Psychological Damage” of Deterrence Policy (Provoking sense of terror, despair in society): What if we reinstated the draft, sought to raise taxes to produce a comparable conventional deterrent? What if we simply surrendered?

(iv) Lack of Proportionality: Use of nuclear weapons seems unthinkable. Would a nuclear war not be a *herem* war in the biblical sense - the total destruction of one nation (and likely of many)? In the “normal wars” of Israel, God commanded them to preserve even the enemy's fruit trees (Deuteronomy 20:19-20)!

(a) The decision facing us is indeed a terrible one. We must earnestly seek, and pray for, an alternative [below, d].

(b) The intent of a nuclear deterrence policy, however, is that it is the best way to prevent a nuclear exchange. If this is correct, then it is the abandonment of deterrence which will place the world in the greatest danger.

(c) But doesn't a deterrence policy require a “secondary intention to use nuclear weapons” (i.e., if our first intention, to prevent nuclear war, fails, must we not be prepared to do the unthinkable? Yes, as a policeman carrying a gun hopes to thereby deter any exchange of gunfire, but if that hope fails must be prepared to shoot.

(d) It has not been established that one nuclear exchange (say, the use of tactical nuclear weapons in a European conflict) will immediately lead to the destruction of all life on earth.

Those who claim this is certain and that we should not prepare for life after such an exchange are irresponsible.

(e) Destruction of non-combatants: see 5, b, vii, above.

(f) Destruction of fruit trees: would nuclear war be a “war on the earth?” The commandment to preserve the trees in Deuteronomy 20 is in context of a siege war. In such a situation, the enemy (locked in the city) has no access to the fruit trees. Destroying them would give Israel no strategic advantage, nor would it help in Israel's defense. The only motivation for destroying them would be to ruin the enemy's economy after the war, perhaps to destroy even the possibility of using the land again. But such wanton destruction is forbidden in “normal” war. The situation in a nuclear exchange, however, is very different. If nuclear weapons are used (as a last resort, of course!) then they must be necessary for defense. Destroying fruit trees in this case is not *herem* desolation) it is defense.

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(v) Summary. The problems involved in nuclear deterrence are formidable. But if there is no alternative, nuclear deterrence,

even the use of nuclear weapons, can be justified.

(d) Possible Alternatives

(i) Simple abandonment of nuclear deterrence without any strategy to replace it. This would increase the risk, as I see it, of war and lead eventually to our enslavement.

(ii) Pledge of no first use: could encourage Soviets to undertake conventional war. Since our conventional deterrent is inadequate, we would be forced to surrender or to break our pledge, in which case nuclear war would be made more likely.

(iii) Nuclear freeze:

(a) Would, most likely, allow Soviets to keep their present advantage.

(b) This could motivate them to use that advantage, contrary to the wishes of freeze advocates.

(c) They would not be sufficiently motivated to enter arms reduction negotiations or to make significant concessions in such negotiations.

(iv) Arms reduction agreement: desirable, but

(a) An adequate one may be many years off.

(b) Adequate inspection may not be acceptable to USSR in any case.

(c) Granted the history and principle behind Soviet deceitfulness, we dare not adopt an agreement without more-than-adequate verification.

(v) Anti-ballistic system: Defensive weapons against nuclear attack.

(a) In general, this is morally far superior to the present system. What we have now is not a true defense, but a policy of retaliation. We cannot stop an attack, only retaliate after the fact. "Mutual assured destruction" - MAD. This system is a deterrent and a successful one. But biblical ethics demands a search for a more strictly defensive system - one which would prevent loss of life in a nuclear attack, not double it.

(b) However, ABM systems were halted by SALT I. Although SALT I has expired, both US and USSR have promised to continue observing its terms. Thus there may be complications involved in reviving the ABM idea.

(c) ABM development would certainly proceed on both sides, suggesting an increased arms race, each side seeking ways to foil the other's ABM

(d) Technological problems may be too great; but we should not assume that at this early date.

(vi) Increased commitment to conventional deterrence

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(a) This may be necessary to reduce the "nuclear threshold":
If we can counter Soviet conventional attack with

conventional weapons, this will reduce the number of possible occasions (and temptations) to push the nuclear button.

(b) But costs of such a commitment are enormous, and such an increase could take many years. And it would not even then erase the need for nuclear deterrence.

(e) Conclusion: horrible as is the thought of a nuclear war, the policy of nuclear deterrence seems, for now, the best hope for avoiding it. That policy ought to be maintained until/unless an adequate arms control agreement is reached or a reliable ABM system is developed.

E. Abortion

1. Exodus 21:22-25

a) Three Interpretations

(1) “Live birth” interpretation (OPC Report, Frame in Thou Shalt not Kill)

(a) Case A (vs. 22)

(i) “fruit depart” - *yeled, yatza'*

(a) Not a technical expression for abortion

(b) Can naturally describe a premature birth

(c) Other terms (e.g. *nefel, shakol*) would more naturally describe abortion or miscarriage.

(ii) “no harm” – indefinite (no *lah*), so applies to both mother and child.

(b) Case B (verses 23-25)

(i) “If any harm follow” - to either mother or child

(a) Since referent not specified

(b) Since it applies to either in verse 22.

(ii) Law of *talion*. implies that destruction of fetus or mother is capital crime; no difference between them.

(c) Thus on this interpretation the text is strongly anti-abortion.

(i) The situation described is not even abortion *per se*; there is an element of accident in it (most likely).

(ii) A fully intentional destruction of the child would, if anything, be even more heinous.

(2) “Miscarriage” interpretation (Early Kline)

(a) Case A

(i) Language is parallel to extra-biblical miscarriage texts, so it suggests that a miscarriage has taken place as a result of the blow.

(ii) Therefore, the “no harm” can pertain only to the mother.

(b) Case B

(i) Apparently, then, this case differs from Case A in that here harm is done to the mother.

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(ii) It seems as if the penalty for harming the mother, then, (*talion*) is far more severe than the penalty for harming the child (a fine).

(c) Implications

(i) Some would argue that the difference in penalty indicates a difference in nature: the mother is a person, the child something less. Supporting this conclusion is the fact that monetary penalties are generally not considered sufficient to avenge the loss of human life.

(a) However, there are exceptions to the last-mentioned principle. In verse 32 of this chapter we find (in effect) monetary atonement for the killing of slaves. It would be precarious to argue from this that the slave is not considered to be a person.

(b) Thus the difference in penalty does not entail a difference in personhood.

(c) It can be argued that there is not even a difference in penalty here. See “Later Kline” interpretation, discussed below.

(ii) More significantly: Even on this interpretation, the passage contains a protection for unborn life. The woman is given a specific protection by the law because she is pregnant. Loss of the child is a crime. Wanton, intentional destruction of it, we may presume, would be worse. Thus, even on this interpretation (dear to “pro-choice” advocates), the text has a pro-life thrust.

(3) “Later Kline” interpretation (“A Study of Exodus 21:22-25,” *Journal of the E.T.S.*, 1977.)

(a) Case A

(i) *Beplym* (translated “as the judges determine”) actually indicates “liability to death.”

(ii) Thus the husband has the right to demand any penalty up to the death penalty.

(iii) The “fine” mentioned would be, in effect, a ransom for the life of the man who struck the woman see 21:30, Numbers 35:21, Leviticus 24:18.

(iv) Most likely, the “harm” in this case is done to the woman not the child. (Opposite of the “live birth” interpretation)

(a) *Nagaf* suggests a sharp, even fatal blow.

(b) Injury to the woman explains the husband's involvement in setting the penalty.

(b) Case B

(i) The law of *talion* here is equivalent to the penalty of Case A.

(a) *Talion* is not a precise, literal principle. It is consistent with ransom procedures: Numbers 35:31, Leviticus 24:18, Deuteronomy 19:15-21.

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(b) Thus there is no difference in penalty between the two cases.

(ii) Most likely, harm to the child is in view here

- (a) Since the mother is in view in Case A
- (b) Since the “harm” is likely not indefinite.
- (c) Since parallel middle-Assyrian texts put the woman first, then the fetus
- (iii) No qualification as to the age of the fetus; any unborn child is in view.

- (iv) The language suggests that the fetus is human
- (a) “Life for life” in Leviticus 24:18 does apply to animals.
- (b) But “eye for eye” and “tooth for tooth” not used for animals.

(c) Implications

- (i) No difference in penalty between death of the mother and death of the child
- (ii) Positive evidence of the child's humanity.
- (iii) Legal protection of the child in effect a death penalty for his destruction.
- (d) Significant postscript: Kline notes that this text does not deal with voluntary abortion. That crime, he says, “was so abhorrent to the Israelite mind that it was not necessary to have a specific prohibition dealing with it in the Mosaic law. The Middle Assyrian Laws attest to the abhorrence that was felt for this crime even among the heathen nations around Israel, lacking the illumination of special revelation though they were. For in those laws a woman guilty of abortion was condemned to be crucified (Tablet A, law 53). Even if she managed to lose her own life in producing the abortion, she was still to be impaled and hung up in shame as an expression of the community's repudiation of such an abomination. It is hard to imagine a more damning commentary on what is taking place in enlightened America today than that provided by this legal witness out of the conscience of benighted ancient paganism.”

b) Conclusions

- (1) On all three interpretations (even the seemingly more liberal “miscarriage” interpretation) the passage protects unborn life.
- (2) Nothing in this discussion warrants the conclusion that the child is of less value than the mother; certainly there is no implication that he is less than a person.
- (3) Since there is no mention of the age of the fetus on any interpretation, we must assume that all unborn life of whatever age is protected, i.e from conception.

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- (4) Which interpretation is right? The “Later Kline” view is the most ingenious, but the “live birth” view still seems more natural. I defended the latter some years ago, but the former attracts me.

2. Psalm 139:13-16

- a) Use of personal pronouns: David sees himself (“me,” “my,”) in the womb.

b) He exists as a person in the womb from conception (v. 15).
c) Might this usage be anachronistic? (We say “The Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock,” realizing that it wasn't called “Plymouth Rock” at the time. Maybe David uses “me” and “my” because he doesn't have any other language to designate the fetus.)

(1) This is possible; thus the present argument is not watertight.

(2) It is significant, however.

(a) This passage reflects a constant pattern of Scriptural usage. See Jeremiah 1:4, Genesis 25:23ff, 38:27, Job 31:15, 18, Psalm 22:9, Hosea 12:3.

(b) Scripture never suggests that the unborn child is anything less than a human person.

3. Psalm 51:5

a) The passage is a confession of David's sin. David traces that sin back to conception.

b) To suppose that verse 5 speaks of his mother's sin would be entirely out of keeping with the context and the overall purpose of the Psalm.

c) But sin is a quality which pertains only to persons. It is not a quality of mere cells or protoplasm or of a part of a woman's body.

d) Thus the text assumes that David was a person from conception.

e) Might this text be a non-literal, poetic description? Yes; but see 2, c above.

4. Judges 13:3-5

(a) Samson is to be a Nazarite from birth, even before birth.

(b) Thus his mother, during her pregnancy, must keep the Nazarite abstinence (from wine, strong drink, unclean food).

(c) This abstinence begins immediately, before the child is conceived, v.

3. Thus the supposition is that Samson is a Nazarite from conception.

(d) But being a Nazarite (like being a sinner') seems to presuppose personhood.

5. Luke 1:35: Jesus becomes incarnate through an act of the Holy Spirit. This act causes Mary to conceive. Thus from his conception, Jesus is “God made flesh.” Could he have been, from conception, any less than a person?

6. Obligation to defend the weak and helpless: Psm. 41:1, 72:12, 82:3-4, Amos 4:1, Isa. 58:5-7, 9-10.

7. Conclusion from Scriptural Evidence

(a) Scripture does not say explicitly that unborn children are persons from conception.

(b) Passages which suggest this conclusion do contain exegetical difficulties, so the case is not water-tight.

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(c) Still, there are passages which, on their most reasonable interpretations, imply (“good and necessary consequence”) the personhood of the unborn.

(d) These passages form a regular Scriptural Pattern.

(e) No passages contradict this pattern.

(f) Thus, we have a “highly probable” case for the personhood of the

unborn.

8. Scientific Evidence

(a) This is not a matter than can be resolved by scientific evidence alone (i.e. without value-presuppositions derived from Scripture).

(i) Recall “naturalistic fallacy” argument.

(ii) “Personhood” is an ethical concept. A person is (among other things) someone with a right to life. The presence of a right (or the basis of one) cannot be deduced from statements about chromosomes, implantation, etc.

(iii) Thus the Scriptural evidence must carry the primary weight.

(b) Still, the scientific evidence is consistent with what we have said already.

(i) Each fertilized egg contains a full compliment of chromosomes which differ from those of its mother and those of its father.

Thus in the most obvious sense, it is a distinct individual, not merely part of its mother's body.

(ii) To be sure, the unborn child is dependent upon his mother's body for sustenance. But this does not make him less than a person.

(a) It is conceivable that one day a fertilized egg might be raised entirely outside the womb. Only technological limitations prevent this. Thus the connection between the unborn child and the mother for life support is not inevitable.

(b) Even after birth, a child is dependent on others for life-support. In one sense, that dependence never ends.

Thus such dependence may not be taken to refute the personal nature of the child.

(iii) Science cannot draw a line between a period during pregnancy when the child is not a person and another period when he is.

(This is related to point a, above.) Some have tried to draw such a line at various points (implantation, beginning of brain-wave activity, quickening, viability, birth, after birth), but without success.

9. The “Doctrine of Carefulness” (VI, A, 3 above)

(a) Is the case for the personhood of the child, then, only probable? Yes, though highly probable.

(b) Yet it is possible to say with certainty that abortion, in most all cases, is a sin.

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(i) The “doctrine of carefulness” warns us against acts which may even possibly result in the loss of innocent life.

(ii) Since the unborn child is very probably a human being, we dare not strike it down. We cannot kill it “out of faith” (Romans 14:23).

(iii) Some: “If you can't prove it from Scripture, we are free to act as we like.” Reply: Imagine a hunting trip. I see a shape in the

woods, but I'm unsure as to whether it is a man or a deer. I can't prove it is a man (let alone prove from Scripture that it is a man). Do I then have the right to shoot? Of course not. I must apply principles of Scripture to my situation according to my best judgment. If I don't, I am guilty of negligence at best.

10. Can Abortion Ever Be Justified?

(a) Rape, incest, population control, economic need, psychological health, physical health of mother, possibility (or certainty) of deformity.

(i) We ought not to brush aside these situations. They can be terribly traumatic. We must reply to these concerns with love, gentleness, understanding.

(ii) However, they do not, in the end, provide substantial arguments for abortion [cf. OPC Report for extensive discussion).

(iii) The crucial point: none of these situations justifies the killing of a person. Most people would hesitate to kill an infant already born for any of these reasons. No one can show that an unborn infant is in any different ethical category.

(b) To save the life of the mother.

(i) This situation rarely occurs. An ectopic pregnancy would be one example.

(ii) When it does, however, I would say that abortion is legitimate.

(A) As a means of self-defense, with the child in the role of unjust aggressor.

(B) Since both persons will otherwise die, it is not wrong, I think, to put one to death to save the other. But that is a difficult point.

(c) General rule: abortion can be justified only in situations where, in an analogous case, one would be justified in killing a person already born.

F. Death and Dying

1. Definitions of Death

a) Theologically

(1) Separation of soul and body.

(2) Consequence of sin: thus physical death is a symptom and image of spiritual death and eternal death.

b) Empirically

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(1) Scripture contains no explicit criteria for determining when death has occurred.

(2) It does, however, warrant the recognition of death. There is a point after which the proper treatment of a body is to dispose of it, not to seek its healing. After that point, contact with the corpse in the Old Covenant rendered one "unclean."

(3) The general idea seems to be that someone is dead when signs of life (generally breathing in Scripture: Genesis 2:7, 6:17, 17:15, 22, I Kings

17:17-22, Job 27:3, 12:10, etc., Mark 15:37) are absent and there is no possibility of restoring them through current technology.

(4) The “doctrine of carefulness”

(a) A problem arises here. If God's people are to avoid even the possible destruction of a human life, how can we ever cease treatment? How can we ever recognize the occurrence of death?

(b) Reply:

(i) The problem here is not, as in the case of abortion, the problem of whether the cells in view constitute a human person. Here the cells do constitute a person, whether that person is dead or alive. Even the corpse is a person (“the person as respects his body-“ J. Murray).

(ii) A distinction must be drawn between “killing” and “allowing to die” (see below). The former is always ruled out by the “doctrine of carefulness.” The latter is only sometimes ruled out. And a third category, “recognizing death,” is never ruled out.

(5) Modern criteria

(a) “Brain death”: irrevocable brain damage causing irreversible cessation of respiration (even if heart is still beating). Generally indicated by flat EEG, though not always. A flat EEG can sometimes be restored. But when it is irreversible, then there is brain death. This is the usual modern medical criterion.

(b) I see this as a refinement of the more phenomenological biblical criterion (breathing). Brain death is the cause of irreversible cessation of breathing. With this refinement, we can make better judgments as to when breathing is irreversibly stopped - when brain damage of a certain kind is present.

(c) The fact that heartbeat and other organs may be “kept alive” by artificial means despite brain death should not lead us to question in these cases whether the patient is truly dead. Clearly, a corpse does not become alive when we move its heart back and forth. A distinction must be drawn between natural and artificial sources of function.

(d) Thus Christians ought to accept the modern concept of brain death, recognizing, of course, that the concept of irreversibility is technology dependent, and that it is the responsibility of medical science to seek ways of reversing presently irreversible cases. We

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should also recognize that “cessation of all functions of the entire brain” (*Uniform Determination of Death Act*) is difficult to determine unless we are also able to ascertain that heart and lungs have irreversibly ceased to function.

2. “Mercy Killing”

a. = Killing somebody “for his own good.”

b. Motives

i. To relieve pain. But medications can handle most all pain today.

ii. To prevent a “life not worth living:” severe handicaps, illnesses, injuries.

(A) In Jesus’ kingdom: lepers, the blind, deaf, and lame.

(B) We have no right to decide when life is worth living.

3. Killing and Letting Die

a) This distinction is sometimes described as “active/ passive euthanasia,” when referring to a case of great suffering or terminal illness. The term “euthanasia,” however, is very controversial and probably generates more heat than light in this discussion. It is not very appropriate for cases in general where “letting die” occurs.

b) Is there a moral distinction between “killing” and “letting die?”

(1) In some cases, yes.

(a) People die every moment without our exerting any effort to save their lives. Sometimes (e.g., starving children in India) this fact may be a sin on our part, though I think not always. In any case we surely cannot be accused of “killing” these people.

(b) In choosing to save one drowning swimmer, we may let another die. If we are doing all we can, surely no blame occurs.

(c) If in case B we do not do all we can to help, we have sinned, but we are not guilty of murder.

(2) In other cases, no.

(a) Refusing heart pills to a person suffering a heart attack. Morally, in this case, “letting die” is a form of killing.

(b) Unplugging respirator of a rich uncle to inherit his money.

(c) Unplugging respirator too abruptly, without

(d) Withholding “ordinary means” of support for dying person - e.g. refusing to feed a deformed newborn, so that he dies of starvation rather than of his affliction. (Note: Distinction between “ordinary” and “extraordinary” means is not sharp. “Extraordinary,” in general, means either (1) expensive or difficult or (2) promising no reasonable hope of benefit.)

c) Terminal illness

(1) When a patient is brain dead (above), both “ordinary” and “extraordinary” (above) treatment may cease. Organs may be preserved for transplants.

(2) In patients which are not brain dead, ordinary means of care ought not to be withheld.

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(3) Is it ever legitimate to withhold extraordinary care (in the sense of care which is very expensive, difficult)?

(a) According to Scripture, prolonging one's physical life, though desirable, is not an absolute priority. John 10:11, 15:13, I John 3:16, II Corinthians 4-5 (note 5:6ff), 11:21-27, Philippians 1:20-26. Other principles, then, must be considered:

(b) Relieving suffering.

(i) “Mercy killing” as such is contrary to Scripture.

(ii) Still, medical treatment has the function, not only of prolonging life, but also for relieving suffering. These two goals aren't

always consistent.

(iii) Might it be better to give a treatment that would maximize freedom from suffering at the expense of reducing life-span?

The apostle Paul (Philippians 1:20ff) would probably have considered such treatment.

(c) Burdens of others.

(i) Expense of treatment must also be considered in comparison with the benefit likely to result.

(ii) Would the apostle Paul have wished to bankrupt the diaconate in order to prolong his physical life in a useless state?

(d) Availability of Resources: It would be wrong to use a respirator indefinitely for a dying patient when it might be used for another patient who under such care would recover fully. Benevolence must always be “selective” because of our finitude and the finitude of our resources.

4. Suicide

a. Five instances in Scripture: Saul (1 Sam. 31:3-51), Ahitophel (2 Sam. 17:23), Zimri (1 Kings 16:18-19), Judas (Matt. 27:3-5).

(i) Scripture says nothing good or bad about these acts themselves.

(ii) 1 Chron. 10:4, 14 tell us that the *Lord* killed Saul.

(iii) But the larger context of their lives, that led to their suicides, receives the critique of Scripture.

(iv) But if murder is sinful due to the destruction of God’s image, then suicide is sinful for the same reason. (Douma)

b. We should try to understand the often tragic situations of those who commit suicide, without condoning the act. Remind people that in Christ there is hope for the desperate.

c. Suicide is not the unforgivable sin.

d. Giving up one’s life for one’s friends is actually commendable: Judg. 16:23-31 (Heb. 11:32, 39), John 15:13.

5. The Dead Body: Cremation, burial

a) Early church resisted cremation

(1) Burial was the biblical custom.

(2) Burial gives more honor to the body as God's image.

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(3) Burial is a testimony of faith in the resurrection.

b) Modern argument against burial: lack of space, need of space for other things.

c) In general, it seems to me that the argument for burial still carries weight.

We should avoid superstitions in this area, however. God is as able, e.g., to resurrect a cremated body as to resurrect a buried one.

G. Obligation to Help

1. Leviticus 19:16 in Jewish translation: “...neither shalt thou stand idly by the blood of thy neighbor.”

2. Psalm 50:16-22. “When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him.”

3. Prov. 24:11, “Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering

toward slaughter.”

4. Luke 10:30-37.

H. Health and Safety

1. O.T. laws concerning public health: Leviticus 13-15, Numbers 5:1-4, Deuteronomy 24:8ff.

2. Laws concerning drunkenness.

3. But, again, physical health is not the highest priority (cf. earlier discussion of terminal illness).

a) Risking health in pursuit of one's calling often necessary: persecution; breathing smog.

b) All travel entails risk; but without it, normal life is impossible.

c) Alcoholic beverages are considered legitimate in Scripture (Psalm 104:15, Ecclesiastes 10:19, Isaiah 55:1, John 2:3ff, I Timothy 5:23) even though a little - alcohol destroys brain cells.

d) The benefit of wine is “merriment.” Sometimes even recreation may take precedence over physical perfection.

e) Illegal drugs are obviously in a different category.

(i) Usually more dangerous, more addictive.

(ii) A major social problem.

(iii) Christians should abstain in deference to government.

(iv) But in my mind, legalization is an open question.

I. Biological Research (genetic engineering, attempts to increase intelligence, cloning, test-tube babies, stem cell research, etc.) In general these are valuable developments of science. Still, there are dangers:

1. Using fertilized eggs for experimentation or therapy, freely destroying them.

2. Danger of elite or government dictating genetic matters, limiting reproductive freedom.

3. Manipulating people through drugs, behavior therapy, etc. (Slavery).

4. Genetic engineering

a. I have no general objection to the use of genetic engineering to improve the food supply or to produce new therapies. Obviously much care should be taken.

b. Genetic selection of human traits:

(i) Should not proceed in such a way that human embryos are destroyed.

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(ii) Not wrong to manipulate genes to minimize genetic disease.

(iii) Selecting for desirable physical and mental traits? That too can be defended.

(iv) Manipulating genes to grow “spare parts” for transplants, etc., illegitimate in my view. Each child must be respected and helped to realize his full personal potential.

J. Ecology

1. Does the Sixth commandment pertain only to human life?

a) *Ratzach* is used only of humans.

b) Yet Scripture teaches that even animal life has the breath of God.

c) God cares for all life, Job 39-40, Psm. 104:11-30, Prov. 6:6-8, Jonah 4:11,

Matt. 6:26-30.

- d) Animals and plants in the coming kingdom, Isa. 11:6-8, Rev. 22:2.
- e) Scripture mandates kindness to animals, Ex. 20:10, 23:5, 12, 25:4, Prov. 12:10, care for trees, Deut. 20:19.
- f) Kline argues (Images of the Spirit) that the animals and plants reflect God's theophany in various ways.
- g) Scripture protects the lower creation (below). Man is lord of creation, but he is a steward, responsible to keep, not exploit, the earth.
- h) Since human life is dependent on the created environment, respect for human life entails respect for creation.
- i) Therefore, the sixth commandment, though directed specifically to human life, involves other creatures by patterns of analogy and logic in Scripture.

2. Cultural mandate

- a) "Replenish" - the earth is to be maintained so as to give life to many generations.
 - b) "Work" (Genesis 2:15) - service of land (*abad*). Man not only rules the earth; he serves (Matthew 20:26).
 - c) Thus the cultural mandate does not justify exploitation of the environment.
- ## 3. O.T. Laws (for pollution, see "Health and Safety," above).
- a) Animals may eat freely of land during seventh year (Exodus 23:10f, Leviticus 25:3-8).
 - b) Do not muzzle the ox, Deuteronomy 25:4, I Timothy 5:18.
 - c) Animals receive Sabbath rest, Deuteronomy 5:12ff, Exodus 20:8-10.
 - d) Kindness to animals, Proverbs 12:10, Exodus 23:5, Deuteronomy 22:4ff, Hab. 2:17, Jonah 4:11.
 - e) Good shepherd, John 10:11.
 - f) Do not destroy fruit trees during siege, Deuteronomy 20:19f.
 - g) Give rest to the land, Exodus 23:10ff., II Chronicles 36:21.

4. Comments

a. There is a strong biblical basis for ecological responsibility, contrary to Lynn White, et al. Still, the earth is to be developed, not left in a "pristine state." Resources are to be used. God has given men sufficient creativity that we are able to find ways of using without depleting. Human technology can enrich the environment.

b. No biblical basis for vegetarianism or trans-species egalitarianism.

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K. Racial Justice

1. Imperative of reconciliation is part of the Sixth commandment (Matthew 5:21-26, Murray, *Principles*, 162-167).

2. Question of racial justice is essentially a question of reconciliation.

a) No serious biblical argument for establishing dominance for one race or another. The curse on Canaan is fulfilled in the Israelite conquest of the promised land.

b) Similarly, there can be no justification for the view that God established permanent barriers between the races. Racial intermarriage is not contrary to Scripture, however many practical problems it may create.

c) The issue:

- (1) Africans were kidnapped and sold into slavery in America.
- (2) Both kidnapping and the form of slavery found in the American south are evil, sinful.
- (3) Thus, African Americans have a justified grievance that has not been adequately resolved.
- (4) The history of segregation has brought further hardship.
- (5) Matthew 5 puts a high priority on resolving this grievance.

d) Problems

- (1) Hard to assess blame at this temporal distance.
- (2) Hard to find anyone who can speak credibly for blacks or for whites in general.
- (3) But in specific relationships, we can try harder to make up for historical injustice.
 - (a) Voluntary affirmative action.
 - (b) Pressing our own comfort zone in our churches and social circles.
 - (c) Showing hospitality.
 - (d) Giving generously.
- (4) The goal:
 - (a) purging of enmities. “Integration” of the races in and of itself is not imperative.
 - (b) Godly empowerment (Ellis, *Free at Last*).

L. Denominational Reconciliation. (*Evangelical Reunion*)

1. Christ wants the church to be one, John 17.
 - a) “One in spirit, but not in organization?” No hint of any such distinction in the text. The church is the body of Christ and is also an organization with divinely appointed leadership.
 - b) Vs. the idea of “pluriformity” (B. B. Warfield, R. B. Kuiper) that divisions in the church are desirable expressions of diversity.
 - c) Denominations are always due to sin: When some leave one denomination to start another, either they are guilty of sin, or those in their previous denomination are, or, more likely, both.
2. Without organizational unity, Presbyterianism is impossible.
 - a) Scripture gives no authority to “denominations.” “Churches” exist on the house-level, the city-level, the universal level. A denomination is not a church.

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- b) Without a unified church, it is impossible to appeal a case to the Christians in a particular area.
3. Refusal to merge with another body is equivalent to our placing of that body under discipline. Thus, refusal should never be entertained without judicial procedure (safeguards). And union should never be refused for reasons of a less serious character.

VII. The Seventh Commandment: “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

Q138: What are the duties required in the seventh commandment?

A138: The duties required in the seventh commandment are, chastity in body, mind, affections, words, and behavior; and the preservation of it in ourselves and others; watchfulness over the eyes and all the senses; temperance, keeping of chaste company,

modesty in apparel; marriage by those that have not the gift of continency, conjugal love, and cohabitation; diligent labor in our callings; shunning all occasions of uncleanness, and

resisting temptations thereunto.

Q139: What are the sins forbidden in the seventh commandment?

A139: The sins forbidden in the seventh commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are, adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts; all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections; all corrupt or filthy communications, or listening thereunto; wanton looks, impudent or light behavior, immodest apparel; prohibiting of lawful, and dispensing with unlawful marriages; allowing,

tolerating, keeping of stews, and resorting to them; entangling vows of single life, undue delay of marriage; having more wives or husbands than one at the same time; unjust divorce, or desertion; idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, unchaste company; lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancings, stage plays; and all other provocations to, or acts of uncleanness, either in ourselves or others.

A. Marriage

1. Sexual differentiation is an aspect of the image of God, since the body as well as spirit belong to the image, Genesis 1:27ff, 5:1f, 9:6, 2:7, Psalm. 94:9.

a. God as unity and diversity.

b. Vs. feminist concept of the interchangeability of roles. See discussion under fifth commandment.

2. Marriage is a creation ordinance, Gen. 2:21-25.

a. Leaving: the beginning of a new household, authority structure.

b. Cleaving: sexual, and more:

(i) Non-sexual cleaving: loyal service, Ruth 1:4, 2 Sam. 20:2.

(ii) "One flesh:" compare flesh as whole person in Eph. 5:22-23, 29, 31.

3. Purpose of marriage

a. Help for a common task, Gen. 1:28-30.

b. Bringing forth children, same passage.

c. After the Fall, protection against immorality, 1 Cor. 7:2.

d. Sexual pleasure (below, 7).

4. Marriage a good thing.

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a. Don't forbid, 1 Cor. 7, 1 Tim. 4:3, 5:14.

b. In some situations ("the present crisis," 1 Cor. 7:26) it may be inadvisable. But even then it is better to marry than to be overcome with lust (verse 9).

5. Marriage is a covenant, Ezek. 16:8, Mal. 2:14.

a. Human (Ruth 4:7-13) and divine (Mal. 2:14-16) witnesses.

b. Implies the necessity of a public ceremony.

6. Marriage reflects the covenant between God and his people.

a) Fall, Genesis 2:22-25, 3:7, Jer. 3:8-9, 5:7, Ezekiel 16, 23:37, Hosea 2-3, Romans 1:23-27. The attitude of rebellion against God defiles also the marriage covenant. [Cf. discussion on Fifth Commandment] and vice versa.

b) Redemption, Genesis 3:21, Isa. 62:5, Hosea 2, II Corinthians 11:2,

Ephesians 5:22ff, I Corinthians 6:15-20, I Timothy 3:2, 5:9.

7. So a believer should not marry an unbeliever, Deut. 7:3-4, Ezra 9-10, 1 Cor. 7:39, 9:5, 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

8. Polygamy

a) Not explicitly forbidden in the OT.

b) But polygamy creates problems: Gen. 16:4-6, 29:16-24, Deut. 21:15-17, 1 Sam. 1:6-8, regulated.

c) NT forbids church office to polygamists, 1 Tim. 3:6, Tit. 1:6, but evidently not church membership or the sacraments.

d) But the kind of exclusive, lifelong love characteristic of marriage excludes polygamy.

(i) God ordained marriage between one man and one woman.

(ii) He forbade adultery; but polygamy necessitates a similar sort of disloyalty.

9. Sex in marriage

a) A delight, not a necessary evil, Gen. 26:8, Prov. 5:18-19, Song of Songs, Isa. 62:5.

b) Though parents often choose mates for their children in Scripture, love is also a prominent motif in creating and maintaining marriages: Gen. 24:67, 29:18-30, 1 Sam. 18:20, 28.

c) Priests, Levites, and Apostles had the right to marry. Not contrary to exemplary holiness.

d) Wrong to abstain, except for a short time for prayer and fasting, 1 Cor. 7:5-7.

B. Adultery

1. In Israel, this term is limited to cases in which “a man who is either married or unmarried has sexual intercourse with a married [or engaged] woman” (Douma, 243). See Deut. 22:24.

a. A married man who has intercourse with a woman who is neither married nor engaged, he is not considered an adulterer. Bigamy, polygamy, and extramarital sex of this kind were tolerated in men. In Gen. 38, Tamar is charged with adultery, but Judah is not.

b. Like a crime of property (compare Lev. 19:20-21), then; but the death penalty indicates something much more serious.

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2. In view of the covenant nature of marriage, we may compare adultery to treason. So the death penalty is appropriate, understandable in the context of Israel's special relation to God as his holy people.

C. Prostitution

1. Not treated as seriously as adultery in OT. Seems to be condoned in Gen. 38:15, Josh. 2 (Rahab) Judg. 16:1, 1 Kings 3.

2. But going to a married prostitute is folly and a road to disaster in Prov. 6:26, 34-35, 7:19-27.

3. Adultery and prostitution in the same category, Isa. 57:3, Ezek. 16:15-19, 23:1-49.

4. Prostitution and God's presence (cultic prostitution):

a) The daughter of a priest should never be a prostitute, Lev. 21:9

b) Do not bring a prostitute into the presence of God, Deut. 23:17-18. Even

marital sex is inappropriate when God draws near, Ex. 19:15.

5. Certainly, then, prostitution is in the category of *ervath dabar* (Deut. 24:1) or *porneia* (Acts 15:20, 29, 1 Cor. 6:18.). Explicitly forbidden in 1 Cor. 6:13-14.

D. Pre-marital Sex

1. Rape of married or betrothed woman: death penalty for rapist, Deuteronomy 22:25-27. Her only responsibility is to cry for help.

2. Rape (seduction) of virgin, Deuteronomy 22:28f, Exodus 22:16f: He must marry her without possibility of divorce or pay a dowry, as the girl's father requires.

3. Otherwise, a woman found not to be a virgin before marriage is considered in the same category as the adulteress, Deuteronomy 22:13-21. If she did not raise the issue [as 1, 2 above], she is assumed to have consented.

4. According to I Corinthians 7, marriage is the only solution to pre-marital sexual urges.

5. Thus all premarital intercourse is included in the *porneia* prohibited in I Corinthians 6:18.

E. Lust, Matthew 5:27f, I Corinthians 7:9.

1. The above discussion, for the most part, pertains to sexual intercourse as such. Many, however, who would not be guilty of extra-marital intercourse are involved in sexual activity in a broader sense: necking, petting, kissing, masturbation, use of pornography, etc. outside of marriage.

a) Scripture says little about these activities as such. Women were chaperoned in biblical times before marriage, and they did not have the mobility of young people today. Thus it is unlikely that there was much opportunity for sexual activity short of intercourse.

b) Are there, then, any biblical principles which apply to these matters? It seems the best we can do is to analyze the biblical teaching concerning lust.

2. Negatively:

a) Lust is not sexual desire as such. That is something good, a God-given incentive toward marriage.

b) Nor is it sexual desire for a particular person other than a spouse.

(1) I Corinthians 7:9 does not condemn the desire as such, only a desire which cannot be controlled.

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(2) There is no condemnation of either (A) sexual desire which leads to marriage or (B) sexual desire which remains controllable and controlled.

c) Nor is it lustful merely to imagine sexual relationships. If such imaginings are forbidden, it is difficult to conceive of how sex education could proceed.

d) Similarly, lust should not be confused with temptation. One may be tempted without sinning (cf. Jesus in Hebrews 4:15). We ought to avoid temptation and to seek release from temptation in prayer. But if temptation comes, we are not guilty on that account. (Note: if "homosexual orientation" is used to refer only to persons who frequently experience homosexual temptations, then in that sense "homosexual orientation" is not sinful.)

3. Positively, Lust is the desire to break God's law.

(1) Cf. Tenth Commandment, Jesus' condemnation of anger.

(2) One may see a certain sexual relationship as desirable without wanting to break God's law for it. Eve was not wrong in thinking the fruit

desirable, but in thinking that breaking God's law was desirable.

(3) In the spirit of the WLC, we should surely also avoid *occasions* of lust, situations in which we are likely to be tempted.

4. Sexual activity short of intercourse.

a) Some forms of sexual activity (kissing, etc.) might take place without any desire to break God's law. Thus such activities do not necessarily involve lust.

b) People differ as to the situations in which they are exposed to temptation.

c) However, we need to guard ourselves in such activities.

d) Where draw the line? Discernment needed, honesty, maturity. Remember that lust is a matter of the heart, not merely of "crossing a line."

e) Masturbation, even orgasms in sleep, almost always involve lust in this sense. These are very common and are not as serious as adultery, but they do illustrate the depth of sin in the human heart.

F. Birth Control

1. The Roman Catholic Argument

a) Based on natural law, primarily.

b) Procreation is the essential purpose of sexual activity; frustration of this purpose is "unnatural."

2. Scriptural considerations

a) The cultural mandate ("replenish the earth") militates against birth control.

(1) Conception is gift from God.

(2) Blessing on large families: Abraham, Psalm 127:3-5.

(3) The family as channel of God's grace.

b) But one's calling may not allow for marriage, in which case he is excused from literal compliance with the cultural mandate, I Corinthians 7.

c) If this is the case, then surely the calling of a married couple might be inconsistent with their having a maximum number of children.

d) Procreation in Scripture is not the only function of sexual activity, nor is it clearly a necessary function (else we would expect prohibitions against sexual activity for women following menopause, etc.)

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e) It is not clear that condoms, etc., are any more "artificial" or "unnatural" than the "rhythm method" sanctioned by the Roman Church. Indeed, abstinence itself, within marriage, is quite unnatural.

3. "Overpopulation argument" invalid

a) We will always need a new generation.

b) It is best that there be a large percentage of young people in the population.

c) The "population problem" is essentially a problem of economic organization. New Jersey is more densely populated than India.

d) Each child will either be part of the problem or part of the solution. We have good reason to believe that children from Christian homes, in general, will be part of the solution. They will not exploit, but multiply, the earth's resources.

4. Conclusion: birth control permissible, but probably overused among Christians.

VIII. The Eighth Commandment: "Thou shalt not steal."

Q141: What are the duties required in the eighth commandment?

A141: The duties required in the eighth commandment are, truth, faithfulness, and

justice in contracts and commerce between man and man; rendering to everyone his due; restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof; giving and lending freely, according to our abilities, and the necessities of others; moderation of our judgments, wills, and affections concerning worldly goods; a provident care and study to get, keep, use, and dispose these things which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature, and suitable to our condition; a lawful calling, and diligence in it; frugality; avoiding unnecessary lawsuits and suretyship, or other like engagements; and an endeavor, by all just and lawful means, to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own.

Q142: What are the sins forbidden in the eighth commandment?

A142: The sins forbidden in the eighth commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are, theft, robbery, man-stealing, and receiving anything that is stolen; fraudulent dealing, false weights and measures, removing land marks, injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts between man and man, or in matters of trust; oppression, extortion, usury, bribery, vexatious lawsuits, unjust enclosures and depopulations; engrossing commodities to enhance the price; unlawful callings, and all other unjust or sinful ways of taking or withholding from our neighbor what belongs to him, or of enriching ourselves; covetousness; inordinate prizing and affecting worldly goods; distrustful and distracting cares and studies in getting, keeping, and using them; envying at the prosperity of others; as likewise idleness, prodigality, wasteful gaming; and all other ways whereby we do unduly prejudice our own outward estate, and defrauding ourselves of the due use and comfort of that estate which God hath given us.

A. Place in the Decalogue

1. The creation ordinance of labor-property, following those of worship-Sabbath and marriage-family.

2. Relations among these:

a) Normative, existential, situational

b) Faith, love hope

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c) Pattern of responsibility

(1) Worship is comprehensive.

(2) Family is to be respected “unto the Lord.”

(3) Property is a stewardship given to the family. It represents the blessing sanction of the Fifth Commandment. Obligation and enjoyment.

B. Property

1. Stewardship

a. God is the ultimate owner of all things (Ex. 19:5, Psm. 24:1, 50:10, Hos. 9:3).

b. But he gives property to human beings, to administer in his name (Gen. 1:28-30, 1 Sam. 2:7, Job 1:21, Psm. 8:6, 115:16).

c. So we are pilgrims on the earth, Lev. 25:23.

d. So land in Israel cannot be sold in perpetuity, Lev. 25:10-55.

2. Private Property

a. We own property, not in relation to God, but in relation to other people (Gen. 23:3-8, 1 Kings 21:3-6, Acts 4:4, 12:12, 16:14-15, 21:8). The land is Israel’s (Ex. 32:13), but ultimately God’s (Hos. 9:3).

b. Not sinful to be wealthy: Luke 8:3, 1 Cor. 1:26, 1 Tim. 6:17, Jas. 2:2.

- (i) Wealth is a blessing from the Lord, Prov. 10:4, 32.
- (ii) Great saints were sometimes wealthy: Abraham, David. None is rebuked for his wealth as such; rather, their wealth is a good gift of God.
- (iii) Not wrong to desire material things (Mark 10:29-30), but we shouldn't be preoccupied with that desire (Matt. 6:19-20, 1 Tim. 6:7).
- (iv) Israel commanded to feast before the Lord, Deut. 12:6-7, 17-19, 14:22-23, Job 1 (though Job is generous, 31:16-17).
- (v) Jesus
 - (a) attended a wedding feast, supplied additional wine (John 2),
 - (b) ate with the wealthy, Luke 7:36-50, 11:37, 14:1, 12, Mark 14:7.
 - (c) Praised Mary's extravagant homage, John 12:7-8, against Judas's rhetoric of compassion.
- (vi) God has given us all things richly to enjoy, 1 Tim. 6:17.
- c. But there are spiritual dangers in both wealth and poverty. The best state is contentment with whatever the Lord supplies. Prov. 30:8, 1 Tim. 6:8-10.
- d. We should be willing to lose our material goods for God's purposes (Matt. 19:16-29, 1 Cor. 7:29-31).
- e. We are accountable to God for our use of wealth, Matt. 25:14-31.
- f. God expects us to use our resources compassionately, Acts 2:44-45, 32-37, Eph. 4:28.

C. Work

- 1. Work ethic necessitated by cultural mandate, Gen. 1:28-30.
- 2. After the fall, toilsome, Gen. 3:17-19, Psm. 90:10.
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- 3. Work, nevertheless, continues to be necessary and beneficial, Deut. 16:15, 1 Thess. 4:11-12.
 - a) Vs. laziness, Prov. 6:6-11, 12:24.
 - b) Work as alternative to theft, Eph. 4:28.
 - c) No work, no food, 2 Thess. 3:10.
- 4. Obligation to increase resources committed to us, Matt. 25:24-30.

D. Stealing

- 1. "Property rights" are human rights. To take one's possessions is to take his inheritance, to attack his dignity, his freedom.
- 2. In biblical law, the penalty for theft is restitution. Where restitution cannot be made, slavery. See Fifth Commandment under "punishment."
- 3. Range of application
 - a) Kidnapping, 1 Tim. 1:10. A capital crime, Ex. 21:16, Deut. 24:7.
 - b) Swindling, Jer. 22:13-17, Amos 8:4-6, Hab. 2:9-12.
 - c) Stealing from widows, orphans especially heinous, Matt. 23:14.
 - d) Defrauding employees, James 5:4.
 - e) Land theft, Isa. 5:8.
 - f) Unjust weights, Lev. 19:35, Deut. 25:15.
 - g) Misleading someone for economic gain, Prov. 20:14.

h) General oppression of the poor, James 2:6.

4. "Broader" applications:

a) Robbing God of tithes and offerings, Malachi 3:8-12, Joshua 7:11.

b) Stealing affection, II Samuel 15:6

c) False shepherds as thieves and robbers, John 10:1ff

d) Lack of punctuality (stealing time)

e) Stealing honor (plagiarism, gossip)

f) Failure to meet any obligation (stealing as a "perspective" on all sin)

5. May we steal to keep from starving? Prov. 6:30-31: not as serious a sin as others, but restitution should be made.

E. Economic Systems

1. Socialism no biblical warrant (f earlier discussion of Marx, Part I).

a) O.T.

(1) Government in Israel was limited, supported only by the half-shekel head-tax and the tribute of foreign nations (including spoils of war. No income tax, property tax, sales tax. Thus government simply did not have the resources to "manage" the nation's economy.

(2) Government's assigned functions are limited to defense and the carrying out of the judicial penalties.

(3) Private property is affirmed and protected by the law [above].

(4) Care of the poor is done by family, church and individuals [below].

(5) Education is the responsibility of the family, primarily. Education in specialized fields is carried on by the institutions that function in those fields. Hence the Levites are involved in teaching religion, farmers in teaching farming, the state in teaching statecraft, etc. "Apprenticeship 230

model." Surely there is no place for a state monopoly on education as we see developing today.

(6) Government-induced inflation, economic controls, eminent domain, inheritance tax, other unjust taxation, fit the biblical definition of theft.

b) N.T.

(1) N.T. repeats the O.T. prohibition of stealing, work-ethic: Ephesians 4:28, I Thessalonians 4:11f., II Thessalonians 3:8-15.

(2) The "massive sharing" of Acts 4:32-5:11.

(a) Strictly voluntary, therefore non-socialistic: 5:4.

(b) It had nothing to do with government.

(c) Most likely, an emergency situation in view.

(i) Large numbers of new believers, immature.

(ii) Persecution.

(iii) Displacement from homes.

(iv) Famine?

(d) This pattern not repeated elsewhere in the N.T.

(e) A model for us? Yes, in the sense that we ought to be willing to respond as readily as they in the situation of need.

c) More general considerations

(1) Move toward socialism in modern times represents a turning away from God, regarding the state as Lord and Savior. (Rushdoony).

(2) Socialism has never been economically successful. "Planning" is best done by all the people, not an elite.

(3) Socialism always tends toward totalitarianism. You cannot have a truly "planned" economy unless everything is controlled.

(4) Socialism tends toward war and world conquest: A state cannot have full control of its own economy. Thus socialism presupposes a divine state: omnipotent, omniscient, benevolent.

(5) Is socialism "compassionate?" Many compassionate people misguidedly become socialists. However:

(a) Socialist states are not compassionate with their own resources; rather they seek to maximize their own possessions and power.

They are "compassionate" only with other people's money, which they take away by force.

(b) Some short-term gains in equity may result from socialism.

(i) Often at an enormous price: mass murders in Russia and China.

(ii) Claims to advances in the condition of the poor must be taken with a grain of salt. Cuba is now highly literate; but it was the most literate Latin-American nation before Castro, and there is no proof that his policies created the gains.

(iii) In the long run, socialist nations survive only through the generosity of the free world.

(c) In fact, socialism's appeal is entirely selfish: people wanting more for themselves. Its philosophical background is economic determinism.

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(d) Capitalism, though often criticized (and praised!) for its appeal to self-interest, also has altruistic elements (George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty*). An entrepreneur is one who seeks to meet a need in society, and/or to satisfy desires of other people.

2. Scriptural limits on free enterprise: Biblical economics is not socialist, nor is it *laissez-faire* in the sense of granting us autonomy in the use of wealth.

a) Stewardship: God is the primary owner of all wealth.

b) Laws governing economics, treatment of the poor (below). Probably these would have tended to lessen the gap between rich and poor.

c) Biblical teachings about the proper attitude toward wealth.

d) "Just price," or "what the market will bear?"

(1) Usually we determine the latter by the former. What other measure is there?

(2) But is it just to take windfall profits in market distortions, e.g. from disaster victims?

F. Tithing, Taxation

1. For description of the several kinds of biblical tithes, see Rushdoony-, *Institutes of Biblical Law*.

2. Tithes are on income, not wealth.

3. Tithes are on agricultural production, not general income

a) This fact suggests the need for some adjustment in a non-agricultural society.

b) It also suggests a connection between the tithe principle and Israel's unique stewardship over the land of promise.

4. Still, it is helpful to have a general idea of what God wants us to give for the needs of the church-organization.

5. The N.T. principle: free-will offering, from the heart. But can we claim to be giving freely, without covetousness, if we give even less than the O.T. people of God?

6. Purposes of the tithe:

a. To the Levites, who have no material inheritance, but have responsibilities in teaching, leading worship, Num. 18:21.

b. They also tithe to the Lord, Num. 18:28, particularly to the priesthood.

c. Also, the stranger, fatherless, and widows are to benefit, Deut. 26:12-13.

7. Very little money authorized in taxes for government purposes. The "poll tax" (Exodus 30:11-16) was a half-shekel of silver, the same for all. No land tax, income tax, sales tax, inheritance tax. Limited government. But of course government always takes what it wants.

G. Usury, Exodus 22:25-27, Leviticus 25:35-38, Deuteronomy 23:19f, Luke 6:34f.

1. Interest on commercial loans is legitimate, Luke 19:23, Matthew 25:27.

2. Interest-free loans are mandated for charitable purposes.

3. In my view, this legislation presupposes an inflation free society. Thus the "general equity" of these laws would permit the taking of sufficient interest to keep pace with inflation.

4. Compassionate lending:

a) The borrower gets his cloak back so he can keep warm, Ex. 22:26-27.
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b) Don't take a person's means of livelihood as collateral, Deut. 24:6.

H. Wealth and Poverty; World Hunger (Sider vs. Chilton)

1. The Current Problem (situational perspective)

a) Statistics

(1) Inequalities

(a) 6% of the people use 33% of the resources

(b) 1/3 of the world's population has annual income of under \$100 (vs. \$5600 in the US - 1976).

(c) Problems with these statistics.

(i) Population estimates difficult

(ii) May not take some things into account.

(a) Barter

(b) Communal labor (help from neighbors, etc.)

(c) Underground economy

(d) Psychic income (How rich do you feel?)

(e) Relative self-sufficiency (through hunting, fishing, gathering, gardening)

(f) Different need levels in different locations (heat, clothing, taxes, etc.)

(g) Government social services

(h) Different kinds of "consumption" (industrial vs. private, defense spending, etc.)

(iii) Scripture does not mandate absolute equality (see below).

(2) Hunger

(a) 460 million not getting enough calories to live ('76)

(b) ½ billion not getting enough protein.

(c) Problems

(i) Margins for error

(ii) Some may have a poor diet simply because of ignorance, or because of a free decision to spend their resources on something else.

(d) Still, these statistics are alarming. Scripture doesn't mandate "equality," but does call us to feed the hungry, to have compassion on real need.

b) Possible Causes

(1) Lack of natural resources

(a) Natural resources are unevenly distributed.

(b) But some nations, relatively poor in natural resources, have flourishing economies: Japan, Taiwan, Germany. (These import nearly all their oil.)

(c) Sider himself says that the nations of the third world have much to offer the rest of us, but are held down by unjust economic structures.

(2) Population growth

(a) Striking statistics here; previously thought to be a crucial "cause."

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(b) Lately, though, calls for population control have been attacked as racist.

(c) Actually, richer countries are often most densely populated (Sider, 53).

(d) Poor countries can cut population growth quickly as education, health services improve (Sider).

(e) Chilton: population is an advantage when the people are productive; hence biblical encouragement to large covenant families.

(3) Consumption by the Rich

(a) Argument: US use of beef pushes up price of grain, harms the poor.

(b) Response

(i) In general, it is not the case that wealth causes poverty. If it were, then why doesn't US wealth cause poverty in Japan?

(ii) Sider admits (204f) that even if America abstained from beef, this would make little difference. It would simply result in less production of grain or larger surpluses.

(iii) Certainly if many people ate more simply, that would help some - if they gave the money saved to relief programs. But this raises the question of how much one ought to give away. (See "Tithing" above, also discussion below.)

(See "Tithing" above, also discussion below.)

(iv) Profit-Seeking

(a) Argument: American companies make enormous profits

from cheap third-world products and labor

(b) Mavrodes: what are the alternatives?

(i) Paying higher wages would result in higher prices which the third world, among others, would have to pay.

(ii) Providing goods at lower costs to the third world would discourage local production, create a situation of permanent dependence.

(iii) If American business stayed out of the third world, the result would be greater unemployment.

(iv) Sider's suggestion: food for work.

If the work is useful work, they can earn their food.

If it is not, then we ought not to encourage it.

(v) Government Actions: tariff policies, commodity agreements which often have bad effects on the poor.

(a) Chilton: This is socialism; eliminate

(b) Frame: Yes, but as long as we have these things, we ought to try to make them more just. (Theonomy is weak in providing interim solutions - suggestions on improving society short of total reconstruction.) "Negative income tax."

(vi) Fraud, bribery

(a) Should seek to avoid this.

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(b) But is probably has little impact on the total picture

(c) Vs. limited liability corporations in which no one is answerable (Hebden-Taylor)

(vii) Religion

(a) India's sacred cows eat enough grain to feed 1,200,000 people.

(b) Work-ethic, faith in the future. Galbraith: The main problem in poor nations is the accommodation to poverty, the perception of the people that nothing can be done.

Adjustment to welfare-states

2. Biblical Principles

a) God and the Poor: Is God "on their side?"

(1) Some rich favored by God (Abraham, David)

(2) Wealth is a covenant blessing.

(3) God forbids favoritism, either to poor or to rich, Exodus 23:3, Leviticus 19:15.

(4) Still, the poor are often oppressed in this sinful world.

(5) God will vindicate the believing poor who are oppressed.

b) Private property

(1) Scripture affirms this.

(a) Inheritance, possession

(b) Implicit in eighth commandment

(2) Sider also affirms this (113f, 100, 209), but Chilton doesn't seem to

believe him

(3) But Scripture does not endorse *laissez faire*. We do not have the right to do anything we like with our property.

(a) Stewardship

(b) Laws governing economics, treatment of the poor.

(c) Chilton, too, opposes “anarchic,” “antinomian” or “autonomous” capitalism (6, 181).

c) Attitude toward wealth

(1) Possessions not inherently evil (Sider, 125ff; Chilton thinks he doesn't really mean it, 895.)

(2) Wealth is a blessing [above, a]

(3) We ought not to set our heart on riches.

(4) Be prudent, plan; but don't be “anxious.”

(5) Be generous. [See d, below].

d) Individual use of wealth

(1) O. T. Poor Laws

(a) Principle of family inheritance not compromised by taxations, eminent domain.

(b) Interest-free loans [D, above], Deut. 15:8, 11.

(c) Gleaning, Ex. 23:11, Lev. 19:10, 23:22.

(d) Loans remitted in Sabbatical year

(e) Sale of land remitted in Jubilee

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(f) Household apprenticeship [See “slavery” under V. Biblical slavery was a way of (among other things) helping financial incompetents to develop the ability to support themselves as free persons.]

(g) Tithes: Levites provided educational, diaconal services.

Deuteronomy 14:27-29.

(h) Instruction about wisdom in spending.

(i) Prohibition of any favoritism on economic grounds, bribery in administration of justice [above, a]

(j) “There should be no poor among you” (Deut. 15:4-5) but there will be (Deut. 15:11, John 12:8).

(k) Present relevance:

(i) Jubilee probably cannot be reinstated, since it was dependent upon God's original parceling out of the promised land. The church today does not have the responsibility to parcel out land.

(ii) For interest-free loans, see “Usury,” above.

(iii) Much remains that ought to be imitated today.

(iv) As with O.T. Israel, the church can provide a “model” of responsibility to love. Inner-city communities of Christians.

(2) N.T. “Massive Sharing,” Acts 2:44f, 4:32-5:11.

(a) Not forced (5:4), but spontaneous.

(b) No support here for government-imposed economic control.

(c) Perhaps related to special economic problems.

(i) New believers being fired from jobs, persecuted.

(ii) Preparation for the disaster of A.D. 70.

(d) Still, their openness, willingness to share at great sacrifice, is a model for us today.

(3) Inheritance: Still, Scripture says that supporting one's family and leaving them an inheritance is a worthy use of one's resources, Proverbs 22.

(4) Dominion: We ought not to feel guilty about enjoying the fruits of our labors, a blessing of God.

(a) If no one were rich, there would be no money available for investment, which would harm everybody.

(b) Consumer spending does contribute to the economy.

(c) Consumer spending (a nice house, car, etc.) is a way to invest, to protect one's resources so as to pass along a larger inheritance.

(5) "Where do I draw the line?" Spiritual discernment needed. Do not pass by some one who is dying by the road!

e) Principle of Selective Benevolence (cf. II)

(1) "Lifeboat ethics" of Garrett Hardin, "triage": Help only those who will benefit from help, abandon the rest.

(2) No one has past the point where all help is useless.

(3) Still, we ought not to feel guilty when we find that we can't help everyone. Our resources are limited.

f) The Goal

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(1) "Equality" in II Corinthians 8:13-15. Not absolute equality, but meeting of needs. No Christian ought to go without food, shelter.

(2) Serious implementation of the diaconate could certainly wipe out hunger among Christians, Cf. Mormons.

(3) The love shown in the Christian community and the success of that love in relieving basic needs could serve as a powerful witness to the world.

I. Mercy Ministry

1. Do good to all, especially of the household of faith, Gal. 6:10.

2. That is, our first responsibility is to our own families, 1 Tim. 5:4-10, then to the poor of the church, 5:3, then to any needy person who comes across our path, Luke 10:30-37.

3. Emperor Julian the Apostate: The Christians fed their own poor, and then they fed ours.

4. When we have time only for a handout, give food, bus tickets, etc., rather than cash.

5. If a longer term relationship is possible, offer to a poor person an opportunity to change his life.

a) Through the gospel.

b) Discipleship, including work experience.

c) Counseling, including employment and financial.

J. Gambling

1. Arguments against

a) Can be linked to worship of fate, chance.

b) Can be psychologically addictive.

c) Can involve covetousness.

- d) Can be a waste of time and money, a cause of poverty.
- e) Can be thought of as a substitute for useful work.
- f) Even where legal, often controlled by organized crime, etc.

2. Reply: Although all of these things can be linked with gambling, I don't think that gambling necessarily involves any of them. One might regard it simply as a game, spending no more on it than upon any other amusement. One can avoid organized crime by restricting oneself to private football pools or Church Bingo games. But promoting gambling in the public square does more harm than good.

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IX. The Ninth Commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." (Exodus: *sheqer*, falsehood; Deuteronomy: *shaw* vanity [cf. III])

Q144: What are the duties required in the ninth commandment?

A144: The duties required in the ninth commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own; appearing and standing for the truth; and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocency; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them; discouraging talebearers, flatterers, and slanderers; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requireth; keeping of lawful promises; studying and practicing of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report.

Q145: What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment?

A145: The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment are, all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbors, as well as our own, especially in public judicature; giving false evidence, suborning false witnesses, wittingly appearing and pleading for an evil cause, outfacing and overbearing the truth; passing unjust sentence, calling evil good, and good evil; rewarding the wicked according to the work of the righteous, and the righteous according to the work of the wicked; forgery, concealing the truth, undue silence in a just cause, and holding our peace when iniquity calleth for either a reproof from ourselves, or complaint to others; speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, or perverting it to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful and equivocal expressions, to the prejudice of truth or justice; speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, tale bearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling, rash, harsh, and partial censuring; misconstruing intentions, words, and actions; flattering, vainglorious boasting, thinking or speaking too highly or too meanly of ourselves or others; denying the gifts and graces of God; aggravating smaller faults; hiding, excusing, or extenuating of sins, when called to a free confession; unnecessary discovering of infirmities; raising false rumors, receiving and countenancing evil reports, and stopping our ears against just defense; evil suspicion; envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any, endeavoring or desiring to impair it, rejoicing in their disgrace and infamy; scornful contempt, fond admiration; breach of lawful promises; neglecting such things as are of good report, and practicing, or not avoiding ourselves, or not hindering: What we can in others, such things as procure an ill name.

A. Theological Background

1. Legal witness is the focal meaning. Note connection with property, Leviticus 6:1-7.

a. Legal witnesses held sway over life and death, 1 Kings 21:13, Matt. 26:60-61, Acts 7:13-14. Witness must cast first stone, Deut. 17:7.

b. One witness insufficient for death penalty, Deut. 17:6, 19:15.

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c. A witness found to be false receives the punishment the accused would have received, Deut. 19:16-19.

2. Similarly, vs partial judges, Lev. 19:15, Ex. 23:1-3. Vs. bribes, Ex. 18:21, Deut. 16:18-20.

3. The commandment also deals with lying more generally.

a) Note relation to other commandments in Hosea 4:2, Proverbs 6:19.

b) General biblical polemic against lies, Psalm. 31:18, 63:11, 101:7, 119:29, 163, Proverbs 6:17, 12:22, 13:5, 19:5, 9, Ephesians 4:25, I John 2:21, Revelation 21:27, 22:15.

c) Satan as father of lies, John 8:44.

d) Sinners dominated by lies, Rom. 1:25, 3:8-18, 2 Cor. 4:2-4, 2 Thess. 2:9-12.

e) False prophecy, Deut. 13:1-18.

4. Other verbal ways of harming one's neighbor

a) Gossip, slander, Psm. 15:3, Prov. 11:13, 16:28, 20:19, 25:23, 26:20, Rom. 1:29, 30, 2 Cor. 12:20, Gal. 5:19-20, 1 Tim. 5:13, 3 John 10, Jude 9 (!)

How we love it: Prov. 18:8, 26:22!

b) Judging rashly, 2 Sam. 16:4, 19:24-28, John 9:2, Matt. 7:1-3.

c) Twisting someone's words, Matt. 26:61, John 2:19.

d) Failing to mind your own business, 1 Thess. 4:11.

e) Putting the worst construction on someone's words or actions. We have the responsibility to give one another the benefit of the doubt; "innocent until proved guilty." No accusation unless witnesses.

5. The power of the tongue for evil, Jas. 3:2-10, Rom. 3:10ff. Neighbor

a) Fellow Israelite, even when enemy, Ex. 23:4-5, Prov. 24:1, 7, 25:21.

b) NT

(1) In church, first of all: Rom. 15:2, James 4:12, Eph. 4:25.

(2) But also those outside, Luke 10:25-37, Rom. 13:8-9, Tit. 3:4.

6. Broader perspectives: Witness is not only something we do (with the lips); it is something we are, Isaiah 43, Acts 1:8, Rev. 3:14, John 18:37. Any sin, therefore, is a "false witness."

B. Are Lies Ever Justifiable?

1. "Jocular" lies: jokes and fictitious stories not wrong. There are some in Scripture. But we should avoid those that really hurt somebody, Prov. 26:12-13.

2. "Polite" lies: petty flatteries required by etiquette.

a) "Sincerely yours" "I've had enough, thanks."

b) Such expressions are not normally understood literally, but are conventional means of maintaining civility in place of brutal honesty.

c) These expressions can be abused; some flattery is destructive.

d) Some forms of language misunderstood: creedal subscription often taken as merely formal.

3. "Necessary" lies: for my neighbor's *benefit*. Hiding Jews from Nazis.

a) Scripture examples:

- (1) Ex. 1:15-21, the Israelite midwives in Egypt.
- (2) Joshua 2:4-6, Heb. 11:31, James 2:25, Rahab.
- (3) Josh 8:3-8, ambush at Ai, at God's direction.
- (4) Judg. 4:18-21, 5:24-27, Jael and Sisera.
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- (5) 1 Sam. 16:1-5: Samuel misleads Saul as to the reason for his mission.
- (6) 1 Sam. 19:12-17: Michal deceives her father's troops.
- (7) 1 Sam. 20:6: David's counsel to Jonathan.
- (8) 1 Sam. 21:13: David feigns madness.
- (9) 2 Sam. 5:22-25: another military deceit.
- (10) 2 Sam. 15:34, Hushai counseled to lie to Absalom.
- (11) 2 Sam. 17:19-20, women deceive Absalom's men.
- (12) 2 Kings 16:14-20, Elisha misleads the Syrian troops.
- (13) Jer. 38:24-28, Jeremiah lies to the princes.
- (14) Luke 24:28, Jesus acts as if he intends to go further.

b) Augustine, John Murray

- (1) Augustine: no lie is of the truth (1 John 2:21, Psm. 5:6), so never lie.
- (2) Murray: Deceit is never justified. The midwives were commended, not for deceiving, but for preserving life. God authorized Samuel to withhold the truth, not to deceive.

c) Hodge: Truth is required only where there is a "virtual promise."

- (1) Difficult to define "virtual promise" or to identify one.
- (2) This approach puts the burden of proof on those who would show, in some situation, that truth is required. In my view, Scripture teaches the opposite: the burden of proof is on those who would show that lying is permitted.

d) Douma, Frame

- (1) Rahab wouldn't be praised for her faith in total abstraction from the methods she used to accomplish the result. How else could the spies have been "sent out another way" (James 2:25)?
- (2) Murray's distinction between deceiving and withholding truth is legitimate. But when we withhold truth (or even state it) in such a way as knowingly to create a false impression in the mind of another, that is surely a form of deceit. To press Murray's distinction in such a case is merely to play with words.
- (a) "Athanasius is nor far away."
- (b) Hans Busscher: "Is Hans Busscher *sitting* among you?"
- (3) Remaining silent is usually not a remedy.
- (4) One must simply admit that Scripture admits exceptions to the general meaning of the commandment.
- (a) like the eating of consecrated bread (Lev. 24:9, 1 Sam. 21:3-6, Matt. 12:5),
- (b) disobeying authorities when they require sin.
- (c) Capital punishment and war as exceptions to VI.
- (5) In such situations, there is such a breakdown in language that it is difficult, even if you try, to speak truth to your enemy.

(a) Would the Nazis believe you if you said you were hiding Jews in the basement? Most likely they would suspect a trick.

(b) There are certain specific conventions which are needed in wartime to communicate truth. E.g., the raising of a white flag: in “wartime ethics” it is considered dastardly for one to carry a white flag to the

240 enemy and then open fire with a concealed weapon. Yet even those conventions are not always observed.

(c) Thus the scriptural justification of deceit in wartime is both a divine norm and a recognition of a de facto breakdown in communication.

(6) We should be conservative with this principle. It does not justify, for example, lying to a patient about terminal disease.

(7) God sometimes announces actions that he does not ultimately intend to carry out, in order to motivate his people to prayer and repentance. Cf. Jesus in Luke 24:28. These are not deceptions, for it is understood in Scripture that God’s announcements are often conditional (Jer. 18:6-10).

X. The Tenth Commandment: “Thou shalt not covet.” (Exodus: *chamad*; Deut.: *avah*)

Q147: What are the duties required in the tenth commandment?

A147: The duties required in the tenth commandment are, such a full contentment with our own condition, and such a charitable frame of the whole soul toward our neighbor, as that all our inward motions and affections touching him, tend unto, and further all that good which is his.

Q148: What are the sins forbidden in the tenth commandment?

A148: The sins forbidden in the tenth commandment are, discontentment with our own estate; envying and grieving at the good of our neighbor, together with all inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his.

A. Inward origin of all sin: Here the Decalogue emphasizes the point often made elsewhere in Scripture that God is concerned not only with outward acts, but with inward attitudes as well (“the existential perspective.”) All sin begins with evil desire. Thus God calls us to guard the thought-life.

B. Traditional distinctions

1. Spontaneous desire (catches you off guard)

2. Nursing that desire (*tittilatio*)

3. Making a plan to achieve it (involvement of the will)

4. Accomplishing your desire (the deed).

5. Roman Catholic ethics: 1 is not sinful, 2-4 are.

6. Calvin:

a) Other commandments deal with 3-4; this deals with 1-2.

b) 1-2 as sinful as 3-4, in God’s sight. The depth of depravity.

7. Heidelberg Catechism: vs. “least inclination or thought.”

C. Douma:

1. Literal thrust of the commandment is between the disposition (B, 2) and the deed (B, 4).

2. To covet is to “set your desire on” something, so that you “can’t keep your hands off it.”

a) Eve in the garden, Gen. 3:6.

- b) Israel wanted to go back to Egypt, Ex. 16:3.
 - c) Achan in Josh. 7:21.
 - d) The rich man in Nathan's parable, 2 Sam. 12:1-2.
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- e) Ex. 34:24, Deut. 7:25, Mic. 2:2.
3. So not *merely* private. Cf. disruption in society caused by conspiracies, even those that don't accomplish their goals.
4. NT on covetousness, Luke 12:15, Gal. 5:16-26, 1 John 2:16-17.
- a) Col. 3:5, greed is idolatry.
 - b) Eph. 4:19, 5:3, connected with sexual license.
 - c) 2 Pet. 2:3, 14, motivates false prophets.
5. Still, there is sin even at level B, 1. Were we free from sin, we would not have the slightest desire for anything evil.
- a) Imaginations, Gen. 6:5, 8:21.
 - b) Secret sins, Psm. 19:12, 90:8, 139:23-24, Jer. 17:9.
 - c) Covetous disposition- with no specific object mentioned, Rom. 7:8.
6. JF: That depends on what you mean by desire.
- a) Not wrong to merely contemplate something as good or desirable.
 - b) Wrong to see disobedience to God as a desirable way of achieving it.
- D. Related biblical concepts
1. Envy: Gen. 4:7, Mark 4:19, 1 Tim. 6:9-10.
- a) A major force in contemporary culture, especially politics. See Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction on resentment*, Rushdoony, *Politics of Guilt and Pity*, Schroeck, *Envy*.
 - b) *Ressentiment* (Nietzsche): not only wanting something that belongs to someone else, but hating him, wanting to bring him down.
2. Contentment: Psm. 78:18-19, Luke 3:14, 2 Cor. 9:8, Phil. 4:11, 1 Tim. 6:6-8, Heb. 13:5.
- a) Based on trust in God's providence.
 - b) In both poverty and wealth. People of all social conditions violate this command.
- E. Good desires (contra Buddhism)
1. Not wrong to desire food (Matt. 4:2), drink (John 19:28-29), sleep (Luke 8:23), sex (Gen. 2:22-23, Song of Songs), children (Gen. 30:22-23, 1 Sam. 1:17, Psm. 127:3-5), improved position (Prov. 24:27).
2. The blessings of God include material provision, and we should desire those (Mark 10:29-31). The covenant promises of land, seed, long life, prosperity.
3. Thirst for God himself, Psm. 42:1-2, 73:25, Phil. 2:23.
4. Think on these things, Phil. 4:8.

