

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND SCRIPTURE

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CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND SCRIPTURE

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I. INTRODUCTION [Xerox handouts: Syllabus and Notes Outline]

A. OPENING PRAYER

1. From St. Jerome's Prologue of the Commentary on Isaiah (Breviary Reading for 30 September, St. Jerome's Memorial Celebration)
2. "I interpret as I should, following the command of Christ: *Search the Scriptures, and Seek and you shall find.* Christ will not say to me what he said to the Jews: *Your erred, not knowing the Scriptures and not knowing the power of God.* For if, as Paul says, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and if the *one* [man] who does not know Scripture does not know the power and wisdom of God, then ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ."

B. Personal (brief)

II. CONTEXT FOR THE USE OF SCRIPTURE IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS

A. Preliminary Considerations

1. What is Scripture and What is Ethics?
2. Difference of approach, etc. based on religious denomination
 - a. E.g. fundamentalist
 - b. liberal Protestant
 - c. Roman Catholic, etc.
3. This course will be more in dialogue with Roman Catholic tradition, though the readings, etc., manifest a clear debt to Protestant authors, and will have a strong concern for ecumenical input.
4. Scripture and the *proprium* of Christian ethics

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- a. In this section some of the interesting moral theological questions come to the fore, such as the nature of the *proprium* of Christian ethics, and the whole debate over moral autonomy and *Glauben sethik*.
 - b. We will have occasion to mention this issue of the *proprium* of Christian ethics again, but at this point it is sufficient to note the issue's existence and importance.
- B. Involve antecedent understanding of the definition/description of moral theology or Christian ethics: see handout on various “definitions of moral theology and/or Christian ethics.

III. INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR SECTOR MODEL OF MORAL METHODOLOGY

- A. Sources and "Languages" of moral theology (Roman Catholic) or Christian ethics (Protestant)
1. Traditional understanding of "fonts" or sources of Roman Catholic moral theology listed three:
 - a. Scripture
 - b. Tradition
 - c. Magisterium
 2. Protestant ethics of course had different “fonts,” perhaps best characterized by the *solas*
 - a. *Sola scriptura*
 - b. *Sola fide*
 - c. *Sola gratia*
 - d. *Solus Christus*

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3. We'll return to the tradition(s) of Protestant ethics a bit later, but for now I'd like to continue the discussion using the example of Roman Catholic moral theology
4. For Roman Catholicism these "fonts" were utilized and presented according to the mode or genre of the manualist tradition
 - a. Which started with the current teaching of the Magisterium at that particular time on a given issue,
 - b. And then worked back to Scripture and the Tradition
 - c. To demonstrate how this teaching was harmonious and constant through the ages.
5. Thus, need to pay attention to how these three were inter-related and prioritized at various times throughout history,
6. as well as to note how each is conceived of and interpreted itself.
7. In answering this last question first, the notion of various "languages" can be helpful.
 - a. Nod to Wittgenstein's understanding of language
 - b. "Wittgenstein was, in his later work, extremely sensitive to the different cultures and 'language games' in the world.
 - (1) "In the same way that each game has a different set of rules so has each culture.
 - (2) "One cannot be checkmate [*sic*] in a game of basketball for that is to confuse the rules of two different games.
 - (3) "So, argued Wittgenstein, it is equally inappropriate to use scientific language in a religious context or for that matter to judge a non-scientific culture by a scientific western rationality."
 - (4) Ian S. Markham, *Plurality and Christian Ethics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 137.

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- c. Wittgenstein spoke more in terms of different cultures, but I would argue that the same concept can be applied to the internal language of the individual source itself.
 8. Recognition of the diversity of "languages" employed by the different moral sources
 - a. Languages which will have different vocabularies, syntax and grammar,
 - b. Languages which can speak to one another, but which are NOT identical
 - c. Therefore, be careful not to use the language of normative moral philosophy when speaking of a biblical parable, and vice versa.
- B. Introductory note on dangers to avoid, or negative tendencies to work against
 1. Tendency to narrow the range of a particular sector, e.g., to identify all of Tradition with only the writings of a particular Church Father, theologian (such as Thomas Aquinas), or a particular member or segment of the Magisterium, or preferred author, school of thought, etc. (e.g. Christian Coalition, Jesus Seminar, AAR/SBL, etc.).
 2. Tendency to exaggerate the voice of one sector so that it drowns out the others,
 3. Or the tendency to ignore or shortchange the input from a particular sector or sub-sector.
 4. Also need to guard against retroactive anachronistic readings of the various sources, especially from Scripture and Tradition
 - a. Don't be reductionistic
 - b. Don't evaluate authors, texts, and/or past interpretations too harshly in light of contemporary concerns, insights, and sensibilities.
 - c. For example, it wouldn't be overly helpful to dismiss all of Thomas Aquinas as irrelevant because of his antiquated biology, or the problems in his theological anthropology in reference to women, etc.

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- C. Since this is a course on Scripture *and Ethics* it might good to look at some practical Considerations for selection and application the mode(s) of moral discourse: the "6 C's"
1. *Comprehensive* in relation to the issue and problem
 - a. Does it treat the problem and issue in its complexity and completeness?
 - b. Are there aspects, etc., which tend to be ignored, condemned as irrelevant, etc.?
 2. *Comprehensible*, i.e., "understandable"
 - a. Is the mode of discourse comprehensible by a variety of people, ecumenical, etc.?
 - b. Does the language employ philosophical and/or religious belief systems which people use and understand?
 - c. Be careful, especially in pastoral work, of using too much "jargon" (fundamental option, intrinsically evil acts, etc.)
 - d. Yet, make sure that key concepts are understood
 3. *Consistent* (Internally Coherent)
 - a. Are the modes of argumentation, usage of moral sources, positions taken, etc. internally *coherent*
 - b. And externally *consistent* with similar issues, cases, etc.?
 4. *Credible*
 - a. in the sense of being "believable" or "plausible"
 - b. thus, a person of sound reason could logically hold this position
 - c. In this regard, the "credibility" or "plausibility" of our positions will have to be tested against the experts of a particular field.

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- d. E.g., if we are to discuss or pronounce on ecological matter we have to get input from experts in the field, as well as test our responses with them.
- e. This whole area of "expert testimony" is a delicate area in matters such as marriage, sexual ethics, and the like, including business ethics, politics, etc.—areas in which the Church has been criticized for not developing a sufficiently credible and realistic moral discourse.
- f. Thus, dialogue, with its concomitant methodology is key here. No genuine dialogue reduces or eliminates credibility.
- g. However, a reluctance or refusal to dialogue will most likely have only the opposite effect of rendering one's argumentation and discourse less credible (and not more credible).
- h. As a "credibility" check I would suggest taking some guidance from both ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue—endeavors which have developed a certain methodology which strives to ground real credibility in oneself and the other.
- i. In this line, consider the following passage taken from *Complementary Norms to the Jesuit Constitutions* in the section dealing with Ecumenical Activity: (CN#268):
 - (1) "It [ecumenism] seeks, namely, what unites rather than what divides; it seeks understanding rather than confrontation, it seeks to know, understand, and love others *as they wish to be known and understood*, with full respect for their distinctiveness, through the dialogue of truth, justice, and love."(*The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms*. St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996, emphasis added).
- j. This is what I mean about a "credibility check"—to make sure that our articulation of the "other's" position reflects a knowledge and understanding which they would own: "Yes, you have stated my position fairly, completely, and respectfully."

5. *Convincing*

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- a. Modes of argumentation that move from being merely credible to one that convinces, in the light of counter-arguments
 - b. Does the argument convince me/others?
 - (1) Why?
 - (2) or why not?
 - c. If an argument or line of reasoning does not convince, then what is our further response?
 - (1) Recast the argument?
 - (2) Repeat it, more loudly?
 - (3) Try to invoke sanctions of authority?
 - d. Recognize that “convincing” is not a matter of majority acceptance, polls, and/or political correctness.
 - e. An otherwise convincing argument may fail to convince because of the sin, hard-heartedness, lack of intelligence, etc., on the part of those addressed, and therefore would not be easily corrected by those engaged in the formulation of moral discourse.
 - f. In this sense we can say that Jesus Christ failed to “convince” a good deal of his audience as well!
6. *Christian*
- a. Does the moral discourse, position, theory, response, application, etc. take into account the *Christian* nature of our moral life?
 - b. Does it take into account adequately the aspects of Christian theology, such as
 - (1) Creation
 - (2) Sin and forgiveness
 - (3) Grace

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- (4) Cross
- (5) Redemption
- (6) Resurrection
- (7) Eschatology
- (8) Christian moral community of discipleship

c. This sixth "C" does not replace or supersede the previous 5 "C"s, but is meant to be integrative as the organizing symbol.

IV. ELABORATION OF THE FOUR SECTOR GRID FOR ACCESSING THE SOURCES OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

A. Scripture

1. Important to recognize Scripture first of all as the pre-eminent "sacred text" for Christians, and therefore for Christian ethics.

a. I.e., it is a text, and therefore must be

(1) translated,

(a) Remember basic principle of translation that it is virtually impossible to translate completely and unambiguously the whole range of meaning from one language into another

(b) Example of Matthew 5:48 and the normal translation of *τελειοι* and *τελειος* as "perfect"

(2) read,

(3) and interpreted

(a) No such thing as a "self-interpreting text"

(b) Thus, the science of hermeneutics is fundamental to our doing Christian ethics

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- b. and it is a text of a community
 - (1) it arose out of that community
 - (2) is sacred to that community
 - (3) and therefore is formative of the community's self-understanding
 - (a) i.e., normative for the community's "story"
 - (b) and the story in turn is normative for the community and the individuals in the community
 - (c) this whole dimension is captured well in the theological ethics of Stanley Hauerwas
- 2. Further claims as to what this "sacred text" means, among others:
 - a. See handout on the various approaches to the "authority" of Scripture in theology
 - b. canonicity
 - (1) Principles of inclusion and exclusion of canonical material
 - (2) Tension and dynamic of creating a canon-within-the-canon
 - c. normativity
 - (1) *Norma normans non normata*
 - (2) I.e., as over and above every other *norma normata*
 - d. Religious culture (relation to Tradition)
- 3. Proper uses for Scripture as sacred text: note the range and modes of this usage
 - a. as Revelation
 - b. Liturgical

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- c. Prayer and spirituality
 - d. Guiding praxis
 - e. Moral insights (norms?), etc.
 - f. Cultural "classic" in the hermeneutical sense
4. Important to develop a *lectio continua* of Scripture
- a. Keep ourselves in contact with the whole of Scripture, since it speaks in a variety of voices
 - b. I.e., there is no one "Biblical" theology or view on most areas.
 - c. Correct the natural tendency to develop a canon-within-the-canon
 - d. Cooperate with the work of the Spirit which is
 - (1) to remind us of what has been taught by Jesus
 - (2) and to teach us those things we could not bear earlier
 - (a) John 14:16-17
 - (b) John 14:26
 - (c) John 16: 7-15
 - (3) Tie-in with the notion of "progressive revelation" of Scripture as expressed in *Dei verbum* #8
 - e. Therefore, meditation on Scripture is key for the moral life of both the individual and the community.
 - f. Plus the importance of moral dialogue, to see where the wind (the Spirit) is blowing in other communities.
- B. Tradition(s)
- 1. Traditional understanding, with a capital "T" as another virtual font of Revelation,

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- a. transmitted through the Apostolic and Patristic authors
- b. and the Magisterium
 - (1) however this is conceived in a particular faith community
 - (2) i.e., what functions as religious authority, and how this authority functions in a particular community
 - (3) Be wary here too of short-circuit responses, such as *Roma locuta, causa finita* (Rome has spoken, the case is closed)
 - (4) “Roma” here is meant symbolically: all roads tend to lead to “our Rome,” whether this place be bisected by the Tiber, the Mississippi, the Mason-Dixon Line, and Bay Bridge.
2. Therefore it is paramount to remember that Tradition is first and foremost grounded in the historical faith community
3. It is that faith community which not only is nourished by that Tradition,
4. but which nourishes the Tradition in turn, augmenting it, refining it, pruning it, etc.
5. Keep this in mind, lest the Tradition become the "dead faith of the living" (to borrow the well-known dictum from the church historian, Jaroslav Pelikan), rather than the ongoing, living faith of the communion of saints (whose members are both living and dead).
6. Thus, Tradition, like Scripture, has to be continually re-translated, re-read, and re-interpreted, within the context of a faith community that is a
 - a. Believing,
 - b. Worshiping,
 - c. and Acting
 - d. Community of Disciples
7. Sandra Schneiders summarizes and expresses this fuller notion of the concept of Tradition in the following way:

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8. "Tradition is the actualization in the present,
 - a. in and through language,
 - b. of the most valued and critically important aspects of the community's experience, or,
 - c. more precisely, of the community's experience itself
 - (1) as it has been selectively appropriated
 - (2) and deliberately transmitted.

9. "Tradition is the primary form and norm of effective historical consciousness,
 - a. which is the medium of ongoing community experience.
 - b. It includes deliberately formulated belief, that is, dogma, but is by no means limited to dogma.
 - c. It includes
 - (1) liturgy,
 - (2) spirituality,
 - (3) the lives and teachings of exemplary believers,
 - (4) historical experiences,
 - (5) legislation,
 - (6) artistic creations,
 - (7) customs and much more.
 - d. "One of the tasks of each generation of believers is to appropriate the tradition,
 - (1) to enrich and purify it by living interaction with it,

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- (2) and to transmit it to the next generation." [Sandra Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991): 71].
 - e. Schneiders describes 3 meanings to tradition:
 - (1) "Tradition, as the *foundational gift*
 - (a) out of which the Church's experience unfolds throughout history,
 - (b) is the Holy Spirit
 - (c) who is the presence of the risen Jesus
 - (d) making the Church the Body of Christ.
 - (2) "Tradition, as *content*,
 - (a) is the sum total of appropriated and transmitted Christian experience,
 - (b) out of which Christians throughout history select the material for renewed syntheses of the faith.
 - (3) "Tradition refers also to the *mode*
 - (a) by which that content is made available to successive generations of believers,
 - (b) the way in which the traditioning of the faith is carried on throughout history." [Schneiders, p. 72.]
10. Relationship between Scripture and Tradition:
- a. Return to the principle of *norma normans non normata* and *norma normata*.
 - b. "In short, the relationship between tradition and scripture is that of a hermeneutical dialectic.

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- c. "Scripture is produced as part of and witness to tradition;
- d. it // functions as the norm of that tradition;
- e. but it can only function as norm if it is interpreted from within and in terms of tradition." [Schneiders, pp. 82-83.]
- f. This is basically the same point I make on highlighting the notion of the "axis" which runs between Scripture and Tradition in the 4-Sector Quadrant.

C. Rational Reflection (Philosophies)

- 1. Remember that it is important to bear in mind that there is no "one" philosophical approach or system which is valid for all times, places, cultures, etc.
 - a. Problematic of dealing with the tradition of a so-called *philosophia perennis* or "perennial philosophy"
 - (1) Claim that a certain philosophical approach, such as an Aristotelian or Thomistic system,
 - (2) because of its abstract and "universal" rational basis and language would be virtually transcultural and transhistorical,
 - (3) and therefore valid for all peoples.
 - (4) This philosophical view is often tied to a classicist worldview, and a certain approach to the natural law.
 - b. Example of *Aeterni patris*, the Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII which mandated the study of the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas (1879).
- 2. Just in the same way there is no single philosophical system which can capture all of human reality in its complexity
- 3. While philosophy is key to theology (as it has often be called theology's "handmaiden"), we must bear in mind that in Christian ethics and moral theology the role and input of philosophy has to be done theologically, and not just as a sort of "philosophical excursus"

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4. Nevertheless, we should not undervalue the importance of the ongoing encounter between philosophy & moral theology, as expressed by John P. Langan, S.J.
5. "It is also an encounter between moral theology and a complex and increasingly autonomous culture,
6. for which philosophy serves as one highly generalized expression of its deeper ambitions and conflicts.
7. Law, history, the various social sciences, the professions, and assorted political and humanitarian movements all generate ethical questions and demands, many of which philosophy serves to articulate and concentrate.
8. Furthermore, those parts of philosophy that do not focus on ethics, especially metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophical psychology, set the framework for the ways in which we conceive human action
9. and the possible connections between action and ultimate meanings and realities." "Catholic Moral Rationalism and the Philosophical Bases of Moral Theology." *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 28.
10. Recognition of two basic philosophical approaches, deductive and inductive, which will have great importance for the understanding of moral norms and their concrete applications, as well as the "how" and "what" of Scripture is used:
11. Deductive
 - a. More easily linked with a classicist, static view of the world
 - b. In the area of methodology, the classicist deductive approach emphasizes norms
 - (1) as given
 - (2) often expressed in propositional language,
 - (3) eternal,
 - (4) universal,

(5) immutable and unchanging, etc.

12. Inductive

- a. More in line with a world-view of historical consciousness
- b. Emphasizes *discovery* of norms and values,
- c. an approach which stresses the concrete and particular,
- d. the individual and the personal,
- e. the contingent, as culturally and/or historically conditioned,
- f. and therefore, except in rather general abstract formulations, difficult to set out as detailed moral norms, binding for all times and in all cultures, situations, etc.

13. Import of the choice of one or the other of these basic approaches for how one will come to ethics.

D. Human Experience: Collection of Data and Modes of Interpretation

1. Collection of Data: i.e., whose experience and which experience will be used?
 - a. Which experiences are “privileged”;
 - b. which are neglected?
 - c. Examples from sexual ethics and “reports” of those “cured” of homosexuality
2. Mode of interpretation: i.e., how will these experiences be heard?
3. Explain here the interplay between the *lectio continua* and my “double-helix” model of hermeneutics.
4. Moral importance of data: [Gustafson on Rahner]:

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5. "The moralist is no longer self-sufficient in knowing the subject matter that is analyzed from a moral point of view, but must rely on knowledge that comes from relevant scientific specialists [e.g. bioethics].
 6. Rahner is not naive about reliance on specialists, but emphasizes the requirement for the moralist to take their conclusions into account.
 7. A moral conclusion might well be altered by the inclusion or omission of relevant data." [Gustafson, *Theocentric Ethics*, V. 2, p. 67].
 8. [Quoting Rahner]:

"It is at least possible that the very 'detail' of which the theologian is ignorant, or of which he has only a vague notion, might be the decisive factor in his case; it might be the very detail which would alter the whole conclusion." [Gustafson, p. 69; Rahner *TI* 9:225]
 - a. [Cf. *Theological Investigations* 9: 205-24; 225-52]
- E. Example of the medieval opinion about the sinfulness of sexual relations during a woman's menstrual period.

V. MEDIATION FACTORS OF ONE'S WORLD THEOLOGICAL VIEW

- A. Modes of Mediation of Data from Experience
1. Personal
 2. Collective
 3. Communal
 4. Cultural
 - a. Key aspect of humanity
 - b. Often overlooked
 - c. or misunderstood by moralists.

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- B. Influence of Classical vs. Historical World-view on One's Theological Model and World-view
1. Notion developed by Bernard Lonergan
 2. Sets out two extremes in reference to acceptance/non-acceptance of change,
 3. and then in between these two extremes describes two other major positions in the contemporary world:
 4. "One may be named classicist, conservative, traditional;
 5. the other may be named modern, liberal, perhaps historicist (though that word unfortunately is very ambiguous).
 6. The differences between the two are enormous, for they differ
 - a. in their apprehension of man,
 - b. in their account of the good,
 - c. and in the role they ascribe to the Church in the world.
 7. But these differences are not immediately theological. They are differences in horizon, in total mentality.
 8. For either side really to understand the other is a major achievement and,
 9. when such understanding is lacking, the interpretation of Scripture or of other theological sources is most likely to be at cross-purposes." 127.
- C. Mediated also by one's understanding of the key elements of an adequate contemporary theological anthropology,
1. Which is grounded in a realistic human anthropology, which in turn will be informed by the social sciences, especially psychology, sociology, and cultural anthropology.
 - a. Moral need for integration of these disciplines into Christian ethics
 - b. As Robin Gill notes, "If Western philosophy has tended to foster individualism--

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- (1) encouraging individuals to believe that each can work out afresh his or her own moral framework--
 - (2) sociology tends to pull in the opposite direction.
 - (3) "In the process moral communities become an essential ingredient in understanding moral agents.
 - (4) "Selfless care, although practised by individuals, is generated and nurtured by certain types of moral community." Robin Gill, *Moral Communities*, The Prideaux Lectures for 1992, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1992): 55.
2. Key aspects seen in this light
- a. Individual
 - b. Communal
 - c. Cultural
 - d. Ecological
 - (1) A more recent "discovery"
 - (2) We are part of nature and therefore interdependent
 - (3) Need to redo our theological bias of domination,
 - (4) and consider instead one of stewardship.
 - e. We will address this whole area in greater depth when we consider Christian anthropology.
3. Human reason, etc.
4. Law, normativity, etc. and their function in human society
5. The world
- a. Basically good, positive, etc.

- b. Evil, sinful, dangerous, impure, etc.

VI. THE HERMENEUTIC DIMENSION OF MEDIATION OF EXPERIENCE AND WORLD-VIEW

- A. suffice to recall that basically "hermeneutics" involves a "practical interpretation"
 - 1. i.e., an interpretation which is *personal*: this text has this meaning for me/us, etc.
 - 2. and which at the same time is *practical*, it leads me/us to apply this interpretation to our lives.
 - 3. Thus, once again, my hermeneutical model of the double-helix
- B. Contribution here of James Gustafson
 - 1. American Protestant ethicist
 - 2. Student of H. Richard Niebuhr at Yale
 - a. Important teacher of many contemporary moralists, including
 - (1) Lisa Sowle Cahill
 - (2) William Costelloe Spohn
- C. Such an *interpretation* in turn, according to James Gustafson, is usually structured
 - 1. around some central "organizing concept, idea, principle, analogy, metaphor, or symbol
 - 2. around which the [4] base points are organized." [Gustafson, *Theocentric Ethics*, v. 2, p. 143]
- D. According to Gustafson, "The [4] base points are
 - 1. "(a) the interpretation of God and God's relations to the world and particularly to human beings, and the interpretation of God's purposes;

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2. "(b) the interpretation of the meaning or significance of human experience--of historical life of the human community, of events and circumstances in which persons and collectivities act, and of nature and man's participation in it;
 3. "(c) the interpretation of persons and collectivities as moral agents, and of their acts; and
 4. "(d) the interpretation of how persons and collectivities ought to make moral choices and ought to judge their own acts, those of others, and states of affairs in the world. [Gustafson, *Theocentric Ethics*, v. 2, p. 143]
 5. E.g. *sola scriptura*, "biblical warrants," natural law, teachings of the Magisterium, etc.
- E. This basic process of judgment will also be conditioned by one's basic worldview (in Lonergan's sense), either classicist or historicist
1. We mentioned this notion above, and will discuss this again in greater detail when we consider the "paradigm shift" in moral theology, but for now it is sufficient to recall that these different world-views basically concern
 - a. The notion of relative change and stability in the world,
 - b. and especially how this relates to the knowledge of human nature,
 - c. and the ability to predicate a universal natural law applicable to
 - (1) all men and women
 - (2) in every conceivable situation, irrespective of culture and/or circumstance
 - (3) and transhistorical, therefore valid for all times.
 2. The classicist or historicist world-view will manifest marked differences in apprehension over
 - a. the meaning of human person/community
 - b. understanding of the "good"

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- c. Role of the Christian community of the Church in the world
 3. These differences will seriously condition the use and interpretation of the theological sources,
 - a. such as Scripture
 - b. Tradition,
 - c. Magisterial teachings, etc.
- F. James Gustafson also highlights different basic types of judgment on the sources of theological ethics, and identifies four:
 1. "(a) which sources are relevant, and why;
 2. "(b) which sources are decisive when they conflict [or seem to conflict], and why;
 3. "(c) what specific `content' is to be used from these // sources, and what is to be ignored or rejected, and why; and
 4. "(d) how this content is to be interpreted, and why." [Gustafson, *Theocentric Ethics*, v. 2, pp. 143-144].
- G. Potential weakness of an overly strong "organizing" concept
 1. May be too restrictive or narrow
 2. May not adequately reflect the range of diversity of human moral experience
 3. Not allow each and every voice in the various languages to be raised and heard
 4. May skew some of the information
 5. Thus, the difference between an "organizing" concept and a "domineering" or "dominating" concept.

VII. FROM METHODOLOGY TO FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES ON SCRIPTURE & ETHICS

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- A. Recall Key Points from the Proposed 4-Sector Moral Methodology
 - 1. Recall that the 4-Sectors are held together theologically,
 - a. and that "moral theology" or "Christian ethics" have to inter-relate and integrate with the whole of theology
 - b. as well as the individual branches of theology.
 - 2. Use this 4-Sector methodology as a fluid and evaluative methodology
 - 3. Let each sector have its input, in its own "language"
 - 4. Be careful not to exaggerate the role of one sector, nor to neglect the input of a given sector
 - 5. Be alert to the questions and issues involved in the content selection from the various sectors, as well as to how content conflicts are resolved.
 - 6. Recall how the idea of the organizing concept works, and be aware of its potential limitations and defects
 - 7. Be aware of the dynamics and tensions involved in the interplay between models and paradigms
- B. From a Methodological Point of View Practice the *Lectio Continua*
 - 1. Put yourself in contact with the whole of Scripture
 - 2. Minimize the problematic of creating the canon-within-the canon
 - 3. Respond to the double promise of the Spirit
 - a. To remind us of what has been taught
 - b. To teach us what we earlier could not bear
 - 4. Root ourselves more completely within the faith communities which hold the Bible to have a particular "sacred claim"
- C. Repeat the Two Foundational Questions which will run throughout the course:

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1. What is meant by "Scripture"?
 2. What is meant by "Ethics"?
 3. Note how the answers and the modes of discourse utilized in formulating the answers to these two questions
 - a. interact and condition one another,
 - b. conflict with one another
 - c. predispose or predict certain positions, answers to moral or biblical questions, etc.
- D. Address these Two Questions on the Meaning of Scripture and Ethics from a variety of perspectives, including
1. Ecumenical (within the Christian tradition, but inter-denominational)
 2. Intra-denominational (i.e., within the same Confession)
 3. Inter-Religious (i.e., with others of different faith traditions, but who have different "sacred texts")
 4. With those who profess no faith
 - a. Agnostic,
 - b. Atheist
 - c. "Undecided"
- E. With all these constituencies we need to walk a path of discernment
1. Avoiding capitulation to one or another's agenda
 2. Yet, avoiding on our part a narrow dogmatism that cuts off communication and debate
 3. Example of the Fundamentalism Bumper-sticker
 - a. "Fundamentalism **Stops** a Thinking Mind"

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- b. Beneath this bumper-sticker was affixed the "Footed Fish" with Darwin in the center
 - c. Need to decode this debate a bit
 - (1) The counter-sign to the footed fish is the ancient Christian fish symbol
 - (2) Remember that originally this was an intra-religious secret sign
 - (3) Acronym, in Greek, of fish (ιχθυς)
 - (a) Ιησους (Jesus)
 - (b) Χριστος (Christ)
 - (c) Θεου (God's)
 - (d) Υιος (Son)
 - (e) Σοτηρ (Savior)
 - d. Question of what will occupy the center of the fish,
 - e. Not whether it has fins or feet!
- 4. Thus, need to assert the claim that Scripture and the Faith Community who holds the Sacred Claim of Scripture are legitimate dialogue partners in the ethical discussion
 - 5. Involves attendant issues of the place of faith and religion in ethics.

VIII. SCRIPTURE AND ETHICS: INTER AND INTRA-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

- A. Return now to the principal discussion group at hand, namely the believers in the Christian faith community
- B. Parenthetical remark on Scripture, moral theology, Christian ethics and ecumenism

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1. Scripture is our common book, which has what I call a "Sacred Claim" on Christians of all stripes.
2. Often, moral matters can be a common ground for both dialogue and collaboration.
3. Therefore, the use of Scripture in moral theology is also a point common to all Christians, and
4. ecumenical dialogue has been a theme stressed in Vatican II,
5. in the work of the World Council of Churches, plus most Christian denominations,
6. as well as in the papacies of both Paul VI and John Paul II.
7. Therefore, the demands of ecumenical collaboration would seem to give added stress to the elaboration of our efforts on the use of Scripture in Christian ethics.

C. What is Scripture? An Initial Response

1. Theological, Epistemological, and Ethical dimensions of this question.
2. Notion of Revelation:
 - a. cf. Avery Dulles' *Models of Revelation*
 - b. This is not the place to engage in a theology of revelation, but will highlight only a couple of key points.
 - c. Revelation of God expressed paradigmatically in Jesus Christ, God-who-became-human.
 - d. Thus, our Christology is essential for our moral theology.
3. Further theological questions related to Revelation:
 - a. How *has* God revealed God's self?
 - (1) Various modes

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- (2) E.g., in other religions, in the physical world, etc.
- b. How does God *continue* to reveal God's self today?
- c. What is the normative claim of Revelation?
- d. What are the proper or legitimate modes of response to this normativity?
- 4. Notion of Scripture:
 - a. the word does NOT mean exactly the same thing as Revelation.
 - b. Scripture is a *written* genre (and many religions have "scriptures" [and interpret them in various ways: e.g. Koran, Book of Mormon, Buddhist sutras, etc.]).
 - c. Scripture has a "sacred claim" on its believers.
 - d. The Catholic Church and most Protestant Churches recognize that the Scriptures must be *interpreted*.
 - e. Problematic of a narrow biblicist fundamentalism will be taken up later in the course.
- D. "What Is Ethics from the Perspective of Moral Theology?"
 - 1. Recall the handout on various definitions, pre and post-conciliar, of moral theology.
 - 2. I've already proposed a model for moral theology, and will try to make this model coherent
 - 3. Evaluate continually our models.
 - 4. However, points to underline here:
 - 5. Via negativa: what moral theology is NOT:
 - a. Body of abstract principles
 - b. A penal code

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6. Two poles of moral theology, our Christian anthropology, BOTH grounded in relation to God:
 - a. The individual,
 - (1) Unique
 - (2) Graced (i.e., how God calls and relates to this unique person)
 - (3) Communal (even as a hermit) the individual is a member of
 - b. The community
 - (1) Which is NOT just an aggregate of individuals
 - (2) But a moral community
 - c. Difficulty with Kantian moral philosophy, and with certain *interpretations* of St. Thomas is the eclipse of the role of the moral community.
 - d. Difficulty of a certain type of meta-ethics to deal with the "particular," the unique,
 - (1) because it is difficult to conceive of this Christian anthropological aspect in terms of "universalizability"
 - (2) And therefore, Scripture, which does deal well with this area, is seen as leading us to some sort of ethical fideism.

IX. VARIOUS MODELS FOR THE USE OF SCRIPTURE IN ETHICS

- A. Introductory Remarks on Models and Paradigms in theology as related to methodology
 1. Need to approach method with both eyes open!
 2. As Schneiders notes about Gadamer:
 - a. "The point of H.-G. Gadamer's masterwork, *Truth and Method*, is that when method controls thought and investigation

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- b. the latter may lead to accurate data but it does not lead to truth.
 - c. Method, understood as
 - (1) a preestablished set of procedures
 - (2) for investigating some phenomenon,
 - (3) in fact not only *attains* its object
 - (4) but *creates* its object.
 - d. In other words, it determines a priori
 - (1) what kind of data can be obtained
 - (2) and will be considered relevant." [Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*, p. 23.]
- B. Use of "models" approach
- 1. Presume that all are familiar with the use of the term in theology.
 - 2. If not, read the first chapter of Avery Dulles' *Models of the Church*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1974; Image Books, 1978. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1976.
 - a. See especially the Introduction, Chapters 1 and 12 (first and last chapters)
- C. Notion of model: an approach towards understanding a complex reality, such as the mystery of the Church.
- 1. Dulles' definition: "When an image is employed reflectively and critically to deepen one's theoretical understanding of a reality it becomes what today is called a 'model'." [*Models of the Church*, p. 27].
 - 2. Two types of models:
 - a. Explanatory: synthesize what we already know

- b. Exploratory: heuristic, lead to new insights, get beyond limitations of a particular outlook.
- D. Basic distinction between models and a paradigm
- 1. Models: allows for a plurality
 - 2. Paradigm: only one at a time
 - 3. Models can complement one another, but
 - 4. Paradigms must shift: revolution
- E. Paradigm: a dominant model
- 1. Dulles' definition: "A model rises to the status of a paradigm when it has proved successful in solving a great variety of problems and is expected to be an appropriate tool for unraveling anomalies as yet unsolved." [*Models of the Church*, p. 33].
 - 2. Thomas Kuhn's definition of a paradigm as "an entire constellation of
 - a. beliefs,
 - b. values,
 - c. techniques
 - d. shared by members of a given community."
 - e. Kuhn's work is widely influential not just in science and theology, but also in business and even new computer software on models.
 - 3. Another important theological term, e.g. Jesus is the paradigmatic human.
 - 4. For further reference on paradigm see:
 - a. in terms of science: Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.

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- b. in terms of theology: Hans Küng and David Tracy, eds., *Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future*. New York: Crossroad, 1989.
 5. Brian Johnstone's article, "From Physicalism to Personalism." *Studia Moralia* 30 (1992): 71-96.
 - a. Analyzes the "paradigm-shift" in Roman Catholic moral theology from a physicalist understanding of human nature and moral reasoning
 - b. to a personalist version and then discusses the origins of physicalism, its problematic features, and solutions proposed by personalism.
 6. I will consider the difficulties involved in the "paradigm shift" when we look at the work of Bruno Schüller.
- F. Plurality of models approach: balance, like the facets on a diamond.
- G. Alternative approach to models and paradigms:
 1. classical definition, categories and dichotomies:
 2. "The classical way to define a thing is to put it into a category of familiar objects and then to list the distinguishing characteristics that differentiate it from other members of the same category." [Dulles, *Models of the Church*, p. 19].
 3. Some Problems with the classical, definition approach
 - a. A certain skewing of information, forcing it into one or another category, even if it did not fit.
 - b. Tendency to labels, especially opposing views, with clear (if not correct) tags in terms of absolutes (especially what we did to Protestants, and vice versa).
 - c. Tendency to excommunicate that which could not be forced into one or another aspect of the definition.
 - d. E.g. on the culinary level with the non-Kosher foods.

- H. Brief overview of all six of Spohn's models
1. Perhaps "typology" would be a more appropriate term here (less "complete" than model)
 2. I will also be suggesting a couple of additional "models" or "typologies"
 3. Make sure you are continuing to read this book, because all I will do will be to
 - a. present an overview,
 - b. while drawing attention to some areas of greater relevance for our course,
 - c. but I want you to be aware of the whole book by the end of the course.
 4. Spohn's own overview is treated in his *What Are They Saying About Scripture and Ethics?*, pp. 12-17.
 5. Note, though Spohn's implicit premises on what constitutes Scripture and what questions frame "ethics" and ethical discourse
 6. Scripture as Command of God
 - a. Neo-orthodox Protestantism:
 - b. Bonhoeffer, Barth and Bultmann
 - c. "...<What ought I to do?> Its distinctive approach states: <Listen to the personal command of God directed to you and respond in obedient faith.>" p. 12.
 - d. Note here the deontological framing of the ethical question: "What ought I to do"
 - e. A different, e.g. a more teleological or relationally-grounded question would frame the issue in different ways, and lead presumably to different nuances, if not different answers altogether.
 7. Scripture as Moral Reminder

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- a. Biblical Natural Law:
 - b. Fuchs, Rahner, Schüller
 - c. "What ought I to do? I must be human because the Lord has embraced that humanity in the incarnation." p. 13.
8. Scripture as Call to Liberation
- a. Liberation theology and feminism:
 - b. Gutiérrez; Letty Russell and Phyllis Trible
 - c. "Christians must join the oppressed in their struggle for liberation because only there can God be found." p. 14.
 - d. Perhaps Feminist Theology and Liberation Theology should be separated, for a better treatment of both.
9. Scripture as Response to Revelation
- a. H. Richard Niebuhr
 - b. Bruce Birch and Larry Rasmussen
 - c. "The Christian should ask <What is *God* doing in my life?> before asking the question <What ought I to do?> The basic imperative, therefore, is <Respond to the one God who is acting in everything that is happening to you.>" p. 14.
10. Scripture as Call to Discipleship
- a. Really a strong Niebuhrian typology
 - b. Stanley Hauerwas
 - c. Sallie McFague
 - d. John Howard Yoder
 - e. "To be disciples, Christians ought to embody their Master's distinctive way of life." p. 15. [story and parable]

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11. Scripture as Basis for Responding Love

- a. Spohn's own proposal, but which has been substantially revised in the forthcoming edition of his book.
- b. Strongly indebted to the theology of Jonathan Edwards, and the latter's notion of "religious affections"
- c. Jn 15:12, "Love one another as I have loved you."
- d. The "Go and do likewise" of Spohn's talk to us.
- e. "This is an ethics of imitation, but not of the externals of Jesus' ministry. Rather, the locus of transformation is the heart of the Christian." p. 16.
- f. I.e., it's not about feet! but rather,
- g. (Joseph Sittler) the shape of the engendering deed

I. Some Additional Models

1. Evangelical Model
2. Inculturation Model
 - a. E.g., C.S. Song
 - b. Kowk Pui-lan, etc.
3. Use these and other models in the illustrative sense, not in the "exhaustive" sense.

X. INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE IN ETHICS

A. Review of basic principles of Exegesis:

1. *Formgeschichte*
2. *Redaktionsgeschichte*

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3. *Sitz im Leben*
 - a. *Sitz im Leben Evangelii*
 - b. *Sitz im Leben Kirche*
 4. Get handbook as a vademecum if need be.
- B. Pluralism in both Scripture and Theology
1. E.g. 4 Gospels instead of one; various "theologies" evident in even one book of Scripture, such as the Book of Genesis (Priestly, Yahwist, etc.)
 2. Different theological methods, approaches, stresses, etc.
 3. Therefore, logical and acceptable to have different "models" in use of Scripture in moral theology.
 4. Cf. Paul D. Hanson's *The Diversity of Scripture: A Theological Interpretation*. Overtures to Biblical Theology, 11. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.
 - a. Hanson's thesis is that diversity in the Bible should be seen *positively* as a witness to the richness of divine revelation,
 - b. as well as an essential safeguard to the mystery and majesty of God.
 - c. Hanson analyzes two tensions within the Bible:
 - (1) that between kings and prophets, which leads to a form/reform polarity, and
 - (2) that between apocalyptic seers and priests, which leads to a visionary/pragmatic polarity.
 - d. According to Hanson, these polarities provide a firm biblical basis for a dynamic theology which goes beyond the primitive biblical communities to address the contemporary community of faith as well.
 - e. Hanson is (was?) Busey Professor of Divinity at the Harvard Divinity School.

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C. Two "Non-Methods"

1. Narrow biblicism of a certain type of so-called "Fundamentalism" (literalism)
 - a. Fundamentalists claim they are not "interpreting" Scripture, but this claim is false--no such thing as "non-interpreted" Scripture.
 - b. We will have more to say about Fundamentalism as a "non-method" when we take the section on "Problematic Approaches to the Use of Scripture in Moral Theology."
2. Secularism: Scripture is irrelevant to the modern age and therefore has no authority.
 - a. I.e. cannot overcome the hermeneutical problem
 - b. Or denies that the Bible is a classical text, with excess of meaning which allows for a fusion of horizon, etc.

XI. SCRIPTURE AS A KEY SOURCE FOR MORAL THEOLOGY (Roman Catholic Excursus)

- A. It should seem obvious that Scripture would have a privileged place in Christian moral theology (though this historically has not always been the case);
- B. Note on the historical background of traditional manualistic moral theology: Pre-Stage 1 (or perhaps we might call it the Backstage!)
- C. Historical Note on a problem in traditional Catholic use of Scripture:
 1. Reformation Battle:
 - a. Protestant reluctance to integrate the role of moral theology (or ethical philosophy) in salvation (faith alone);
 - b. Roman Catholic over-dependence on natural law which left Scripture as "either an afterthought or merely an ornament to a philosophical treatise." [proof-texting], [Spohn, p. 8]
 - c. Influence too of the manualistic approach (regressive)

2. Divergence of Methods between Protestant and Roman Catholic moral theologians:
 - a. "While Protestant moral reflection has stressed the realities of Christian conversion to the possible detriment of normative material,
 - b. Roman Catholic moral theology has shown great confidence in applying moral rules to situations but neglected the transformation of heart that is central to New Testament moral teaching." [Spohn, p. 11.]

XII. STAGE 1: SCRIPTURE IN THE RENEWAL OF MORAL THEOLOGY

- A. Background of manualistic methodology
- B. Do not forget the audience and purpose of the moral manuals:
 1. Lest we judge the moral manuals too harshly, it would be good to keep in mind both the texts' purpose and their "audience."
 2. The proximate "audience" was composed virtually entirely of seminarians, and
 3. the remote "audience" would be confessional penitents, counselees, etc.
 4. Nowadays our audience has been broadened as we find a wider spectrum of people doing theology, women, lay people, etc., and
 5. the concerns of moral theology have been extended as well.
 6. The greater concern, for example, for the moral formation of Christian character is one such instance in which Scripture might be employed more easily than some other area of traditional moral theology, such as the use of the principle of the double effect in complicated bioethical issues.
- C. Jared Wicks notes that the methodology of the manuals was essentially "regressive,"
 1. in the sense that its argumentation began from the magisterial teaching then in place,

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2. and worked backward to illustrate how that particular doctrine was originally expressed in Scripture
 3. and then how it was subsequently developed in the patristic and medieval expressions of Catholic faith.
 4. In the manualist methodology, according to Wicks, the theological "sources are read in the light of what is taught and believed in the theologian's own day.
 5. The intended result is an account of the harmonious development by stages down to what is explicit in present-day teaching.
- D. Movement from the Moral Manuals to the Biblical Renewal of Moral Theology
1. Movement in the 1940's and 1950's
 - a. Bernard Häring's watershed work: *Das Gesetz Christi. Moraltheologie für Priester und Laien*. Freiburg: Erich Wewel Verlag, 1954.

In English: The Law of Christ: Volume 1, General Moral Theology. Westminster: Newman Press, 1963.
 - (1) See especially pp. 3-33 for Häring's overview of the development of moral theology prior to Vatican II.
 - (2) However, as a manual of moral theology this work has been superseded by Häring's *Free and Faithful in Christ*.
 - b. Gérard Gillemann, S.J. *Le primat de la charité en théologie morale*. Brussels: Editions Desclée, 1954.
 - (1) *In English: The Primacy of Charity in Moral Theology*. Translated by William F. Ryan, S.J. and André Vachon, S.J. from the second French edition. Westminster (MD): The Newman Press, 1959.
 - (2) Gillemann taught in India.
 2. Attempt to find some central biblical theme, such as Law, Charity, etc., as the organizing concept for the moral manual.

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- E. Vatican II and the renewal of moral theology
 - 1. Here again, much of this material is summarized in my Second Stage article.
 - 2. Metaphor of Scripture as the "Soul" of theology.
 - 3. *Locus classicus* is found in Vatican II's Decree on the Training of Priests, *Optatam totius*, at #16:
 - a. "...Students should receive a most careful training in holy Scripture, which should be the soul, as it were, of all theology.
 - b. ...They [seminarians] should learn to seek the solution of human problems in the light of revelation, to apply its eternal truths to the changing conditions of human affairs, and to express them in language which people of the modern world will understand.
 - c. "In like manner the other theological subjects should be renewed through a more vivid contact with the Mystery of Christ and the history of salvation.
 - d. Special care should be given to the perfecting of moral theology.
 - (1) Its scientific presentation should draw more fully on the teaching of holy Scripture and
 - (2) should throw light upon the exalted vocation of the faithful in Christ and their obligation to bring forth fruit in charity for the life of the world."
- F. Import of the relation between Revelation and Scripture for moral theology and/or Christian ethics

XIII. ANALYSIS OF *DEI VERBUM*

- A. *Dei verbum*, Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.
- B. Theological Background to *Dei Verbum*
 - 1. Reformation Polemic: Scripture vs. Tradition

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2. Theological Debate within the Roman Catholic Church on Scripture and Tradition as mutual fonts of Revelation
 - a. Interdependent
 - b. or Separate, but Equal
 - c. or Separate, but unequal
 3. Answer of that Debate within the document
- C. Exegesis of *Dei verbum*'s content on biblical interpretation, ongoing Revelation, and proper exegesis
1. To begin to answer these questions let us return for a moment to the Catholic understanding of Scripture and Revelation as it is set forth in Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation, *Dei verbum*,
 2. Important to read the whole document, but especially #'s: 5,8,12,25, and 26.
 3. Be attentive to the twin themes of
 - a. "progression of understanding" and
 - b. "demand for interpretation."

- D. Progressive in our understanding of Revelation, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, cf. #5:

Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and "makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth." **The same Holy Spirit constantly perfects faith by his gifts, so that Revelation may be more and more profoundly understood.**

- E. Progression in the *transmission* of Revelation, cf. #8:

The Tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit. **There is a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on.** This comes about in various ways. It comes through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts. It comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience. And it

comes from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth. **Thus, as the centuries go by, the Church is always advancing towards the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her.**

F. Demand for interpretation, cf. #12:

Seeing that, in sacred Scripture, God speaks through men in human fashion, it follows that the interpreter of sacred Scriptures, if he is to ascertain what God has wished to communicate to us, should carefully search out the meaning which the sacred writers really had in mind, that meaning which God had thought well to manifest through the medium of their words.

G. Dynamic role of Scripture then in our lives: DV #26 (final paragraph of *Dei verbum*):

So may it come that by the reading and study of the sacred books "the Word of God may speed on and triumph" (2 Th 3:1) and the treasure of Revelation entrusted to the Church may more and more fill the hearts of men. Just as from constant attendance at the eucharistic mystery the life of the Church draws increase, so a new impulse of spiritual life may be expected from increased veneration of the Word of God, which "stands forever" (Is. 40:8; cf. 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

H. Bibliographical Footnote: For a good overview on Biblical Interpretation in the light of Vatican II see

1. John R. Donahue, S.J. "Things Old and Things New in Biblical Interpretation." *The Way Supplement*. 72 (Autumn 1991): 20-31.
2. In the light of Vatican II's Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), Donahue presents an overview of patristic and medieval biblical interpretation,
3. the significance of the shift to the historical-critical method, as well as the significance of several 'post-critical' approaches to interpretation.
4. Donahue concludes that both historical-critical and the post-critical approaches are necessary for sound biblical interpretation.
5. Consider also Sandra Schneiders' critique of over-reliance on the historico-critical method.

XIV. HERMENEUTICAL THEORY FOR USE OF SCRIPTURE IN ETHICS

A. What is Hermeneutics?

1. According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, in his monumental *Truth and Method*, (New York: Crossroad, 1985) [German original, 1960].
2. "Hermeneutics is an art and not a mechanical process.
3. Thus it brings its work, understanding, to completion like a work of art." p. 168.
4. "But the discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished;
5. it is in fact an infinite process.
6. Not only are fresh sources of error constantly excluded, so that the true meaning has filtered out of it all kinds of things that obscure it,
7. but there // emerge continually new sources of understanding, which reveal unsuspected elements of meaning." p. 265-266.

B. Some Basic Premises for Interpretation:

1. No written text, scriptural or otherwise, is *self-interpreting*.
2. Therefore, the fundamentalists' claim of a "literal" interpretation is denied from the outset.
3. Thus, every text demands interpretation.
4. Such interpretation is done by an individual, or group of individuals, but always
5. within the context of both a tradition and
6. a community.
7. Important not to overlook any the elements of these basic premises.

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8. e.g. the thesis of Stephen Fowl and L. Gregory Jones in their *Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991.
 - a. The authors, an Anglican and a United Methodist, maintain that recent writing on the relevance of the Bible to contemporary ethical issues has placed too much emphasis on an agenda set by professional exegetes and ethicists.
 - b. They "contend that the development of such judgment requires the formation and transformation of the character appropriate to disciples of Jesus.
 - c. This requires the // acquisition of a very different set of skills, habits and dispositions from those required of the professional biblical scholar.
 - d. Further, Christians develop such character in and through the friendships and practices of Christian communities.
 - e. Hence the importance of 'reading in communion'." pp. 1-2.
- C. Gadamer's point on on-going interpretation and its relation to understanding.
 1. "Interpretation is not an occasional additional act subsequent to understanding,
 2. but rather understanding is always an interpretation, and
 3. hence interpretation is the explicit form of understanding." *Truth and Method*, p. 274.
- D. Hermeneutical interpretation will always imply a method, even if this "method" is not explicitly acknowledged by the interpreters.
 1. As J. Severino Croatto notes in the preface to his *Biblical Hermeneutics: Toward a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning*, trans. Robert R. Barr, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987): x.
 2. [In biblical interpretation] "One or another method has always been practiced, of course, but often without explicit awareness of it. The reader

will come to see that there is no such thing as a nonhermeneutic reading of the Bible." p. x.

E. Some important concepts from hermeneutical theory:

1. Distinction between the "art object" and the "work of art"
 - a. E.g., here the "text" is the "art object"
 - b. which becomes a "work of art" only intermittently,
 - c. i.e., only through its interaction with an interpreter/reader.
2. Notion of a "classic text"
 - a. Presupposition of the evocative power of any literary text:
 - (1) i.e., to create a "world"
 - (2) and invite the reader to enter into that "alternative" reality
 - (3) a classic which achieve more of a "total world" into which the reader is drawn.
 - (4) "This different world is the world before the text,
 - (a) the world that the text generates and invites the reader to enter.
 - (b) The New Testament as a whole, and each of its parts individually, projects such an alternative world."[Schneiders, p. 168.]
 - b. According to Gadamer, "... a classic is a classic because it is an outstanding exemplification and manifestation of truth about human existence.
 - c. Therefore, it has endured throughout the history as a classic, whereas period pieces have not.

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- d. The validity of a classic is manifested in its functional endurance, for generations have recognized in the classic the truth of their own identity." [Gadamer, p. 360.]
 - e. Spohn's distinction between a "classic" and a "period piece"
 - (1) (i.e., that which seems to work well enough in one era,
 - (2) but doesn't stand either the test of time or transfer of cultures.
 - (3) "Best-sellers" are often good examples of "period pieces"
3. Layers of interpretation process with a classic
- a. Translating it
 - b. Decoding it
 - (1) i.e., deciphering the language of the ancient text
 - (2) exegesis comes in here, especially form criticism
 - c. criticized (e.g., redaction criticism, reader-response criticism, etc.)
 - d. recontextualized in the present situation
 - e. in which its meaning is reappropriated by the contemporary readers
 - f. this is possible due to the "excess of meaning" of a classic text.
4. "excess of meaning"
- a. Sometimes referred to as "surplus of meaning"
 - b. Related to work of both Gadamer and Ricoeur
 - c. Ricoeur speaks of "semantic autonomy"
 - (1) "to designate this liberation of the text from control by its author's intention,

- (2) [and] has shown that, far from being an obstacle to interpretation,
 - (3) the distancing of the text from the situation of composition actually endows it with a surplus of meaning
 - (4) that grounds its endless capacity to give rise to new valid interpretations." [Schneiders, p. 123.]
5. Expansion of the text's audience
- a. Original audience related to the author's intention for the text
 - b. Expanding the audience expands the context of "hearing"
 - c. and "In the case of significant texts the expansion of the audience,
 - (1) indeed its potential universality,
 - (2) will exploit reserves of meaning in the text
 - (3) of which the author could not possibly have been aware." [Schneiders, p. 143.]
6. "fusion of horizons"
- a. Sandra Schneiders, following Gadamer, describes process as an even when
 - (1) "The world of the text (its referent as significant)
 - (2) and the world of the reader intersect,
 - (a) expanding or
 - (b) contracting the horizons of the latter in the event of meaning.
 - (3) To // engage the meaning of the text at this level is to court conversion.

- (a) Once one has seen and heard, one is no longer the same.
- (b) Even to resist change is to be affected."
- (4) From *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991): 16-17.
 - b. Croatto explains this Gadamerian term in this fashion:
 - c. "Gadamer emphasizes that a human being is within a tradition, and that the act of understanding is a finite occurrence of that tradition, as a way of belonging to history.
 - d. The historical distance between the text and the interpreter calls for a 'fusion of horizons',
 - e. which is possible because we are dealing with the intrahistorical." *Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 3.
- 7. "effective history"
 - a. Premise of historical consciousness, the uniquely human way of being, of understanding in our world.
 - b. Encounter between our historical consciousness and the events of the past:
 - (1) "... our historical consciousness does not encounter a free-standing 'objective' knowable,
 - (a) for example, the past 'as it was',
 - (b) because the past is not a detached stationary object.
 - (2) Whatever of the past is known is known only in the present,
 - (a) therefore as shaped by its passage through history
 - (b) from its initiating occurrence to the present.

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- c. "By 'effective history' is meant historical reality
 - (1) not // only as initiating event
 - (2) but also as modified and amplified by all that the initiating event has produced." [Schneiders, p. 160.]
- d. Thus, in summary, Gadamer's notion of "effective history" which goes forward in time from the event itself,
- e. but backward in time in terms of interpretation of that event's significance.
- f. This backward movement of interpretation alters according to an ever-expanding horizon which also changes.
- g. "The past is not ontologically or epistemologically stationary;
- h. it is constantly being reconstituted within its own effective history." [Schneiders, p. 160.]
- i. "In other words, we only really understand that which has been integrated into reality within the horizon of effective historical consciousness because that is the only consciousness we have." [Schneiders, p. 161.]
- j. Schneiders used the example of a woman with a young child who was deserted by an abusive husband.
 - (1) Initially the woman's situation might seem even more tragic as she is left penniless with a young child to support.
 - (2) Later on she meets and marries a caring man.
 - (3) In this instance the original event's "effective history" changes, and
 - (4) instead of being seen as tragic is now seen as liberative and even graced.
 - (5) As discussed by Sandra Schneiders in her "Living Word or Deadly Letter? The Encounter Between the New Testament

and Contemporary Experience." *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 47 (1992): 45-60.

- F. Relationship between text, interpreter and interpretation.
1. Starting premise: distinction between a "correct" and a "valid" interpretation.
 - a. "Correct" implies *one* "objectively true" interpretation,
 - b. but as Sandra Schneiders astutely observes, "there is no single meaning that alone corresponds to and constitutes the meaning of the text.
 - c. "Multiple interpretations are not only possible but demanded by the very nature of the text as text.
 - d. "The question then concerns *validity*." [Schneiders, p. 164.]
 - e. The validity question is important, but for now we will not address it specifically.
 2. Ultimate aim of valid interpretation is *transformative understanding*
 - a. This involves a "fusion of horizons" through "effective history"
 - b. which "involves a radical personal engagement with what Gadamer calls the truth claims of the text.
 - (1) "Truth claims are not merely dogmatic propositions, assertions of fact, or deliverances of information
 - (2) but the presentation of reality that offers itself to us as a way of being, as a possible increase or decrease of personal subjective reality." [Schneiders, p. 174.]
 3. Contribution of Claude Geffré, O.P.
 4. [contemporary hermeneutics underscore] "the plurality and the divergence of meanings,
 5. the historical succession of interpretations and the difficulty which exists in surmounting the conflict among interpretations.

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6. Everyone reads a text with his own prior understanding, from his own cultural background."
 7. From Geffré's *A New Age in Theology*, trans. Robert Shillenn with Francis McDonagh and Theodore L. Westow, (New York, Paramus and Toronto: Paulist Press, 1974): 44. [Originally published as *Un Nouvel Age de la Théologie*. Paris: Les Editions de Cerf, 1972.]
 8. Thus, the importance of *cross-cultural* input, readings, dialogue, correction, etc. of the biblical texts, in order to gain a wider range of valid interpretations, and correction of invalid ones.
 9. Thus, important to read authors like Kwok Pui-lan, etc.
- G. Saying essentially the same thing in a slightly different way,
1. God's revelation contained in the Scriptures only becomes fulfilled in a significant way by
 2. being received and accepted in the faith of the believing individual and community.
- H. Reading the Scriptures in the individual and community's own context is what opens up the possibility of a new existence.
- I. According to Geffré, one actually realizes a "new understanding of oneself before the text.
1. That understanding of oneself before the text is, however, not a question of handing oneself over to a purely intellectual understanding of the text.
 2. It is rather realizing a new possibility of existence and making a new world exist.
 3. Hermeneutical understanding therefore results in social and political praxis."
 4. From Geffré's *The Risk of Interpretation: On Being Faithful to the Christian Tradition in a Non-Christian Age*, trans. David Smith, (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987): 44?.
 5. Originals in French, and most chapters appeared first as essays elsewhere.

6. Several appeared in *Concilium*, and since this is translated into virtually every major Indo-European language, I would recommend that people use it to get translations in a language with which they are more comfortable.

J. Tension between historico-critical method and hermeneutical interpretation

1. Problem of treating biblical texts (or any other text) as fixed semantic containers,
 - a. each of which contains a specific meaning,
 - b. which must be "deciphered" by historico-critical exegesis
 - c. in order to discover the original author's "intention."
2. This is an inadequate theory according to Schneiders, and what is needed is a "post-critical theory of textual interpretation."
3. Schneiders here largely follows Paul Ricoeur.
4. For some additional background on this issue, from a different angle, see Jared Wicks, S.J. "Biblical Criticism Criticized." *Gregorianum* 72 (1991): 117-128.
 - a. An extended analytic review of the ecumenical conference sponsored by the Rockford Institute Center on Religion and Society held in New York on 27 January 1988
 - b. at which the Erasmus Lecture was delivered by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.
 - c. "Cardinal Ratzinger decries two corrosive effects of modern exegesis.
 - (1) First it has destroyed the inner homogeneity and unity of the Bible, long assumed to rest on the continuity between the varied outlooks of our New Testament authors.
 - (2) Second, critical study wrongly reduces the notion of 'understanding the text' to gaining a knowledge of the genesis of the formulation through stages of prior oral transmission and redactional editing." p. 118.

- d. Ratzinger claims that the interpretive guidelines in DV 12 oppose the "reigning assumptions of present-day biblical studies,"
 - (1) (1) where one simply presupposes a total hiatus between meanings attained as exegetical results and those proposed as the doctrine of the faith, and
 - (2) (2) where many pursue a free-wheeling quest of religious relevance by selecting from the smorgasbord of scholarly offerings only what serves an agenda,
 - (a) e.g. of feminism or psychotherapy,
 - (b) already formed without benefit of biblical input." p. 118.

K. Models of the Hermeneutical Process: 4 geometrical models

1. Hermeneutical Circle

- a. Traditional term: "Hermeneutical Circle" between reader and text and back to reader
- b. Problematic: "'discovering' in Scripture interests that were established prior to interpreting the Word of God. Every use of Scripture begins from some interest, but does that use allow Scripture to challenge that original position?" [Spohn, *What Are They Saying?*, p. 54]
- c. Bringing a prior "agenda" to exegesis
- d. Charge leveled especially against:
 - (1) Liberation theologians
 - (2) Feminist theologians
 - (3) Some efforts at inculturation of moral theology; especially in Africa
- e. Historical evidences of the practice of this "hermeneutical circle": e.g. White American slave-owners' use of Paul.

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- f. This problematic is a critical one for Biblical ethics, and therefore must be faced.
2. Corrective/avoidance of the problematic of the hermeneutical circle: [My own addition]
 - a. Necessity for ongoing discernment
 - b. Judgment of the Christian communities, including cross-cultural interpretations
 - c. Ethos critique
3. Hermeneutical Triangle: Jacques Dupuis
 - a. Text (and context of the text),
 - b. Community (Tradition), and
 - c. Reader
4. Hermeneutical Arch (between text and readers)
 - a. expression of Claude Geffré.
 - b. From his two books:
5. Hermeneutical Double-Helix
 - a. James Bretzke
 - b. Dynamic and avoids some of the geometric problems engendered by the other models.
 - c. Fusion of horizons and effective history
 - d. Allows for more than one text to be "intertwined"
 - (1) The bible is not our only text, it interprets others, and others help interpret the bible.

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- (2) E.g., Our "reading" of the farewell scene between Achilles and Priam, after the death of Hector, in the *Iliad*--
 - (3) Presumably our "understanding" of the power of Christian reconciliation has something to do with our interpretation of this text.
 - (4) Whole point of the "inculturation" of Christianity in non-Christian cultures: i.e., how will the text "sound" in this or that con-"texts" setting.
 - (5) Allows, even calls for, the notion of the progressive revelation of the Holy Spirit, and the necessity for an ongoing discernment of spirits.
- L. Much more to be said on hermeneutical theory, and
1. we will seek to make some more comments in the treatment of the various themes and models of the use of Scripture in ethics throughout the remainder of the course.
 2. Especially in the models of
 - a. Liberation
 - b. Response to Revelation
 - c. and Call to Discipleship.
 3. However, I would recommend once again Croatto's or Schneiders' books.
- M. Core readings:
1. James M. Gustafson, "The Place of Scripture in Christian Ethics: A Methodological Study." Chapter 6 in *Theology and Christian Ethics*, 121-145. Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1974.

Also found in Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, S.J., eds., *Readings in Moral Theology No. 4: The Use of Scripture in Moral Theology*, 151-177. New York: Paulist Press, 1984.
 2. Start reading Spohn, especially the Introduction and the first two chapters.

XV. SCRIPTURE AS THE COMMAND OF GOD

- A. Brief Overview of the Model:
- B. Neo-orthodox Protestantism: Bonhoeffer, Barth and Bultmann
- C. Paradigm of divine summons, similar to that of Abraham or Moses, used in this approach.
- D. Spohn's formulation: Answer to the moral question "What ought I to do?" Its distinctive approach states: "Listen to the personal command of God directed to you and respond in obedient faith." p. 12.
- E. Yet, here again we must ask our two guiding questions:
 - 1. What is the understanding of Scripture?
 - 2. What is the understanding of ethics?
 - 3. And how do the answers to these two questions interact and affect one another?

XVI. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMATIC WITH DIVINE COMMAND ETHICS

- A. *Sola Scriptura* vs. Tradition/Magisterium Polemic
- B. Protestant distrust of natural law moral reasoning
- C. Roman Catholic uneasiness with lack of normative morality
- D. Roman Catholic concern with the danger of Voluntarism
 - 1. Understood in general as placing the emphasis on morality as the fulfilling of God's will and/or commandments which God "legislates" for God's creatures.
 - 2. Issue arises of relation of God's will to moral goodness,
 - a. i.e., is something "good" only *because* God so wills it

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- b. and God could will otherwise,
 - c. or is something good in itself
 - d. which even God could not change without destroying God's own nature?
3. Problematic aspect of voluntarism is understanding morality and moral goodness in this first sense, i.e., something is good only because God so wills it,
 4. and the moral response is to obey this divine "law"
 5. moral goodness then being predicated on simple obedience.
 6. Thus, law becomes the ultimate and supreme norm of the moral rightness of human action.
 7. Contrast this approach with the use of *Recta Ratio* and Thomas Aquinas' First Principle of the natural law

XVII. RELATIONSHIP AMONG CHRISTOLOGY, SCRIPTURE, AND ETHICS

- A. Role of Jesus Christ as savior and redeemer in the understanding of Christian ethics
- B. Tri-partite Understanding of Revelation
 1. *in* Jesus Christ
 2. *by* Jesus Christ
 3. and *through* the Scriptures
- C. Interpretation of Jesus's ethical teaching, and the never-ending question of what kind of ethics he meant to teach:
 1. "Normative"
 2. "Interim"
 3. "Eschatological"

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4. "Eschatological as Normative for *Christians*"
 - a. E.g., the position of Willi Marxsen:
 - b. interpretation based on the exegesis of the concept expressed in the Son of Man tradition:
 - c. "... we can give the following definition. The *Christian* Christology is that Christology in which eschatological existence is experienced and lived. *Christian ethics* is the actualization of this risky activity." [Willi Marxsen, *New Testament Foundations for Christian Ethics*, trans. O.C. Dean, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993): 86.

XVIII. BACKGROUND TO NEO-ORTHODOXY MOVEMENT

- A. Disillusionment with Liberal Protestantism
- B. Shock of World War I
- C. Great Depression in Europe and America
- D. Rise of Fascism
 1. "Less than two months after Hitler came to power, Barth claimed that the key danger facing the church is the temptation of having other gods.
 2. This temptation arises when revelation is joined with foreign authorities, such as human existence or the state.
 3. "He therefore called Christians to abandon `every kind of natural theology, and dare to trust only in the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ'." Douglas F. Ottati, "Between Foundationalism and Nonfoundationalism." *Affirmation* 4 (Fall, 1991): 31.]

XIX. KARL BARTH: THE COMMAND OF GOD

- A. Brief Biography: (1886--1968).
 1. German-speaking Swiss,

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2. Never took a doctorate!
 3. Influence on Dietrich Bonhoeffer
 4. Neo-orthodoxy leader
 5. Early work which established his reputation was his theological commentary on the Epistle to the Romans published as *Der Römerbrief* (1918).
 - a. Not just a commentary.
 - b. Barth's governing thesis is that the problems confronting Paul were essentially the same as those confronting the contemporary preacher and theologian.
 6. Key Life Work: *Church Dogmatics*,
 - a. written from 1925 to 1955,
 - b. 4 volumes
 - c. wide influence (though not always agreement!) on Protestant theologians, including Bonhoeffer.
 - d. See *Dogmatik im Grundriß*. Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag A.G. Zollikon, 1949.
 - e. In English as: *Dogmatics in Outline*. With a new Foreword by the author. Translated by G.T. Thomson. New York: Harper and Row, 1959.
- B. Barth's definition of "dogmatics":
1. "*Dogmatics is the science in which the Church,*
 2. *in accordance with the state of its knowledge at different times,*
 3. *takes account of the content of its proclamation critically, that is,*
 4. *by the standard of Holy Scripture*
 5. *and under the guidance of its Confessions."* *Dogmatics in Outline*, p. 9.

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- C. Barth's elaboration of the project of "dogmatics":
1. "In dogmatics we do not ask whence Church proclamation comes and what its form is.
 2. In dogmatics our question is: *What* are we to think and say?
 3. Of course, that comes after we have learned from Scripture where we have to draw this `what' from,
 4. and keeping in view the fact that we have to say something not just theoretically,
 5. but have to call something out to the world." p. 12, *Dogmatics in Outline*.
- D. Barth's understanding of faith, divided into four categories
1. "...faith involves *in spite of*,
 2. once for all,
 3. exclusively and
 4. entirely,..." p. 19.
- E. Elaboration of Barth's four categories of faith:
1. "When we believe, we must believe in spite of God's hiddenness." p. 20.
 2. "And faith is concerned with a decision *once for all*.
 - a. Faith is not an opinion replaceable by another opinion.
 - b. A temporary believer does not know what faith is.
 - c. Faith means a final relationship." p. 20.
 3. "And, thirdly, faith is concerned with our holding to God *exclusively*, because God is the One who is faithful." p. 21.
 4. "And, in conclusion, we may hold *entirely* to God's Word.

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- a. Faith is not concerned with a special realm, that of religion, say,
 - b. but with real life in its totality,
 - (1) the outward as well as the inward questions,
 - (2) that which is bodily as well as that which is spiritual,
 - (3) the brightness as well as the gloom in our life." p. 21.
- F. According to Spohn, Barth adopts a sort of modern *Sola Scriptura* theological method:
1. "...Barth adopted the theological method he found in Luther and Calvin.
 2. He returned to the plain sense of Scripture and articulated dogma in service of preaching the Gospel.
 3. Like the reformers, he eschewed any dependence on philosophy to back up his theology.
 4. Any such alliance would only make the Gospel the lesser partner and reduce it to the wisdom of the current culture." [Spohn, p. 27.]
- G. Law: The Claim of the Gospel
1. For Barth no distinction between Law and Gospel
 2. The Law neither precedes the Gospel, nor is it an added obligation, but
 3. rather is completely enclosed in the Gospel. cf. p. 28.
 4. The claim of the Gospel can be heard only by obeying it.
 5. God's grace is experienced through His Lordship over our conduct.
 6. "Either we acknowledge this Lordship or we do not know the grace of Christ.
 7. Law is the form of the Gospel, whose content is Christ.
 8. This claim is intrinsic to the saving events: morality is our joyful correspondence to the action of God in history.

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9. Our conduct must conform to, witness and imitate the victory of Christ." p. 28.
10. "The moral demand is unconditional because it comes from an unconditional source." p. 29.

H. Need and Place for Ongoing Moral Discernment

1. "Obligations bombard us daily, and
2. we must discern which of these are actually from God by attending to the type of claim they make upon us." p. 29.
3. Two Principal Signs in this Discernment:
 - a. "Divine commands will be experienced as positive gifts rather than obligations." p. 29.
 - b. "The divine command always directs us toward imitation of Jesus Christ because he is the pre-eminent and definitive manifestation of God's grace." p. 30.

I. Witnessing in Action the Attitude of Christ

1. "Barth turns the content question, 'What are we to do?' back into a formal question that is a religious matter first and a moral one second.
2. What seems to be a question of content is actually one of religious assent in faith." p. 30.
3. "Scripture, therefore, provides *summaries* of God's commands, *attitudes* that should inform our obedience, and *directions* of freedom inherent in the gift itself." p. 32.

J. Respect and Protect Life

1. Life is God's gift, taught through the blessing of creation. God's command creates respect for it:
2. "Respect is man's astonishment, humility and awe at a fact in which he meets something superior--

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- a. "majesty, dignity, holiness, a mystery
 - b. "which compels him to withdraw and keep his distance,
 - c. "to handle it modestly, circumspectly and carefully." [quote from Barth's *Church Dogmatics* III/4, p. 339].
- K. Moral Norms in God's Command?
- 1. "The Bible tells us what God commands as well as how he commands.
 - 2. The Spirit of Jesus can be expected to lead the Christian in definite directions." [Spohn, p. 35.]
- L. Evaluation of Barth's Approach
- 1. Positive Points
 - a. Like many Protestants, Barth takes Scripture very seriously for informing our ethical life.
 - b. Faith involving the totality of one's life, and not just a "religious" sphere.
 - c. Positive role of discernment in Christian life.
 - d. Restoration of possibility of norms in Christian ethics.
 - e. Corrective to excessive existentialism.
 - 2. Negative Points
 - a. The "missing element" according to Spohn:
 - b. "Finally, one must admit that something is missing from this theological ethics.
 - c. All the characteristics of the moral agent are derived from the event of being addressed by the Word of God.
 - d. Moral agents have character, a unique history and moral responsibility only because they are constantly addressed by God.

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- e. The self cannot be considered apart from God's action.
 - f. This leads to an impoverished view of moral experience
 - g. because there seems to be no self between moments when God is commanding.
 - h. Moral life is more than simply discrete moments of decision;
 - i. it refers to the continuous aspects of the self: virtues and vices, character, identity, memory, commitments and roles.
 - j. Even if one grants the priority of the faith assent over moral reflection on theological grounds,
 - k. Barth seems to have maximized the role of obedient faith at the expense of a coherent sense of the moral self." p. 35.
 - l. Barth seems to over-absolutize "faith", at least in his affirmation that faith "is concerned with a decision *once for all*.
 - (1) Faith is not an opinion replaceable by another opinion.
 - (2) A temporary believer does not know what faith is.
 - (3) Faith means a final relationship." p. 20.:
- 3. Relation of the whole moral autonomy school vs. this sort of exaggerated theonomy.
 - 4. Problems with Barth's very low "ecclesiology"
 - a. which would impinge especially on social ethics,
 - b. and the possibility of Church Tradition and the Magisterium.

XX. DIETRICH BONHOEFFER'S APPROACH

A. Brief Biography of Bonhoeffer

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1. Bonhoeffer was born 4 February 1906 in Breslau into a Lutheran, upper-class family. His father was a noted psychiatrist.
 2. Bonhoeffer was imprisoned in April 1943 and hanged at the age of 39 by the Gestapo in the Nazi concentration camp at Flossenbürg in April 1945.
 3. Most major works were published posthumously by his long-time friend Eberhard Bethge.
 4. The testimony of Bonhoeffer's own life could furnish an important interpretive key for reading his theology; e.g.,
 5. notion of conversion and growth in discipleship is found more in Bonhoeffer's biography than in Bonhoeffer's writings.
- B. Importance of Bonhoeffer's Notion of "Reading Against" in the use of Scripture:
1. "Bonhoeffer's point was that previously he had read the Bible *for* himself, but now he discovered the importance of reading Scripture *over-against* himself." [Fowl and Jones, p. 140].
 2. "Bonhoeffer began to see more clearly that seeing the Bible as a 'source' meant that we could simply read the Bible for ourselves. Reading it pneumatologically, however, and seeing Scripture as 'testimony', meant that we would need to read Scripture over-against ourselves." [Fowl and Jones, p. 141].
 3. Thus, reading the Bible "against" the dominant culture or *Zeitgeist*.
 4. Necessity of doing this "in communion" i.e., in a faith community
 5. See this aspect in Bonhoeffer's own life
 - a. In the Confessing Church
 - b. In Finkenwalde
 6. See Stephen E. Fowls and L. Gregory Jones, *Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991).

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- a. "Christian communities must be aware of the possibilities of interpreting Scripture in such a way that it supports rather // subverts corrupt and sinful practices.
- b. "This means that we Christians will need to learn to read the Scriptures `over-against ourselves' rather than simply `for ourselves'.
- c. "This is the sense in which our `readings of the texts' involve allowing the texts to provide readings of us." [Fowl and Jones, pp. 41-42].
- d. Thus, we need to be "interrogated *by* Scripture in addition to interrogating Scripture." [Fowl and Jones, p. 42].

7. This "Reading over against" notion fits in with my use of a *lectio continua*.

C. Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *The Cost of Discipleship*

1. *Nachfolge*. München: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1937.
 - a. Written in the Nazi era, after Bonhoeffer had already begun to experience difficulty
 - b. Translations appeared mostly after the War, and had a great effect in post-War theology.
2. Bonhoeffer answers the two questions of What is Scripture and What is Ethics in relationship first and foremost to another question, "What is the Church?"
 - a. Note his first sentence: "Revival of church life always brings in its train a richer understanding of the Scriptures." [Cost of Discipleship, p. 37]
 - b. Bonhoeffer's quest: "the sole object of it all [revival of church life], Jesus Christ himself." [Cost, p. 37.]

D. Bonhoeffer's Ethical Ecclesiology

1. The Church must be subservient to these questions:

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- a. "In the last resort*, what we want to know is not, what would this or that man, or this or that Church, have of us, but what Jesus Christ himself wants of us." p. 37
 - b. *[zuletzt wichtig {I'd say "in the final analysis" would be a better translation}]
2. Bonhoeffer's Model of the Church: Herald:
- a. "When we go to church and listen to the sermon, what we want to hear is his Word--and that not merely for selfish reasons,
 - b. but for the sake of many for whom the Church and her message are foreign." p. 37.
 - c. "The real trouble is that the pure Word of Jesus has been overlaid with so much human ballast--burdensome rules and regulations, false hopes and consolations--that it has become extremely difficult to make a genuine decision for Christ." p. 38.
- E. Law and Gospel: Key problem for the Church:
1. Spohn raises the question in these words: "How can we recapture the legitimate urgency of Gospel obedience without falling into the trap of legalism, which tries to purchase God's favor with good works?"
 2. We must discover a more integral connection between Law and Gospel." [Spohn, p. 21.]
- F. Bonhoeffer's Hermeneutical Principle of Obedience:
1. "The only response to such an absolute Word can be absolute// obedience. Obedience is not the product of a faith which could have been present already: it is faith's immediate expression.
 2. "And such obedience cannot try to drift off into the illusory sphere of some purely interior life. It must be at once <simple> and direct." [Marlé, pp. 80-81].
 3. From *The Cost of Discipleship*: "The call goes forth, and is at once followed by the response of obedience. The response of the disciples is an act of

obedience, not a confession of faith in Jesus. How could the call immediately evoke obedience?" p. 61

4. Bonhoeffer's answer:

"And why? For the simple reason that the cause behind the immediate following of call by response is Jesus Christ himself." [*Cost*, p. 61].

G. Christology of Call & Obedience:

1. "This encounter [between Levi and Jesus] is a testimony to the absolute, direct, and unaccountable authority of Jesus.
2. "There is no need of any preliminaries, and no other consequence but obedience to the call.
3. "Because Jesus is the Christ, he has the authority to call and to demand obedience to his word.
4. "Jesus summons men to follow him not as a teacher or a pattern of the good life, but as the Christ, the Son of God." [*Cost*, p. 62].

H. Radical Discipleship: Summons (Command) to Obedience

1. (Negative) Model of the Rich Young Man:
 - a. "When confronted by the summons to discipleship, the young man [of Matthew 19] and all of us face a yes or no choice.
 - b. "Only if he is obedient and follows Jesus down the road can the man enter into that relationship with Jesus in which he may know the mercy and graciousness of God." p. 21.
2. "Moral clarity is not a pre-condition of discipleship." p. 22.
3. "Unquestioning obedience is possible only because it is the trusting assent of faith in the One who is unconditionally trustworthy." p. 22.

I. Bonhoeffer calls such discipleship "liberating"

1. "When the Bible speaks of following Jesus, it is proclaiming a discipleship which will liberate mankind

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- a. from all man-made dogmas,
 - b. from every burden and oppression,
 - c. from every anxiety and torture which afflicts the conscience.
2. "If they follow Jesus, men escape from the hard yoke of their own laws, and submit to the kindly yoke of Jesus Christ.
 3. "...We can only achieve perfect liberty and enjoy fellowship with Jesus when his command, his call to absolute discipleship, is appreciated in its entirety.
 4. "Only the man who follows the command of Jesus single-mindedly, and unresistingly lets his yoke rest upon him, finds his burden easy, and under its gentle pressure receives the power to persevere in the right way.
 5. "The command of Jesus is hard, unutterably hard, for those who try to resist it." [Cost of Discipleship, p. 40.]
- J. Where does Christian discipleship lead?:
1. "And if we answer the call to discipleship, where will it lead us? What decisions and partings will it demand?
 2. "To answer this question we shall have to go to him, for only he knows the answer.
 3. "Only Jesus Christ, who bids us follow him, knows the journey's end.
 4. "But we do know that it will be a road of boundless mercy. Discipleship means joy." [Cost of Discipleship, p. 41.]
- K. The Cross of Christ as Moral Standard for Bonhoeffer
1. "For Bonhoeffer, the cross is the true measure of Christology in ethics.
 2. "Jesus is the image of God, the standard for humanity that overrules any philosophical definition.
 3. "Nothing is more revealing of Christ than his sufferings, nothing more definitive for the way of discipleship." [Spohn, p. 22.]

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4. "The cross is the sign of contradiction, which revolutionizes all our personal values and projects.
5. "Each value must be submitted to the unique historical standard of the cross and resurrection of Christ to determine its actual meaning." [Spohn, p. 23.]

L. Metaphor of "Hearing"

1. "As in the writings of the other proponents of the command of God, the metaphor of hearing is central:
2. it is not the disciple's responsibility to figure out how to follow, but only to hear and obey wholeheartedly." [Spohn, p. 24.]

M. Evaluation of Bonhoeffer's Approach

1. Positive Points:
 - a. Underlines the importance of *all* aspects of our moral life.
 - b. Has strong Biblical basis in terms of discipleship.
2. Negative Points:
 - a. Rather too sharply dichotomized: either you're obedient (and moral), or you're not (and damned?)
 - b. Lack of gradualism and growth in this model
 - c. "Obey or be punished" is rather low level of moral maturity (Kohlberg Level One).
 - d. Therefore, little room for use of human reason, intelligence and wisdom.

XXI. SUMMARY OF DIVINE COMMAND APPROACH

- A. Perduring Problem of Natural law-based moral normativity vs. Revelation-based moral normativity
1. Challenge of subjectivity

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2. Example of "normative eschatological ethics" based on a textual variant of Luke 6:5 found in Codex D (cf. Marxsen, p. 92).

B. Relation to the issue of how ethics is Christian

XXII. SCRIPTURE AS MORAL REMINDER

A. Our two basic questions:

1. For Fuchs, the primary and logically prior question would be "What is 'ethics'?"
 - a. Look again at the "handout" on definitions of moral theology and/or Christian ethics, and see Fuchs' "definition":
 - b. "For it is the moral theologian's task in the Church to identify the relationships between ethos and moral ordinance with the faith, to undertake the hermeneutic reading of the Bible in the awareness of moral questions, to read hermeneutically the moral traditions (and their history) that have grown up in the course of time, to deepen and develop moral values, to establish moral principles and norms credibly and contextually, to clarify the significance for correct moral behavior of the findings of other sciences, to tackle newly arising moral problems, etc." Joseph Fuchs, S.J., "Teaching Morality: The Tension Between Bishops and Theologians Within the Church," in *Christian Ethics in a Secular Arena*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown U. Press, 1984): 138-139.
 - c. In short, for humans I think Fuchs would say the task of ethics is expressed in this sentence: "the task and the real possibility for human beings to discover, on their own, values and norms for their self-realization." Josef Fuchs, "Christianity, Christian Ethics and the Crisis of Values", Ch. 2 in *Christian Ethics in a Secular Arena*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown U. Press, 1984): 21.
 - d. This task involves, for Fuchs, not only a "teaching" or "discovery" of norms and values,
 - e. But also a "paranetic" and a "mauietic" dimension which follows upon the discovery or realization of moral norms. This is where Scripture comes into play essentially.

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- (1) Parentic is to exhort
- (2) Maiuetic is to help bring to birth (“mid-wife”)

2. What is Scripture:

- a. A somewhat “functional” answer seems to be given, vis-a-vis, the relationship to ethics,
- b. Thus, Scripture plays this paranetic and maiuetic role:
- c. "The maieutic scope consists in the explicit affirmation of certain extremely high values, for instance, love of neighbor and also of one's enemy; this explicit affirmation serves to help man in the difficult task of discovering the highest and most demanding values and norms." Fuchs, *Christian Ethics in a Secular Arena*, p. 22.
- d. This role is important, but Fuchs seems to think it is not done “consistently” throughout the Bible, and therefore from the point of view of methodology, Scripture could not be the primary locus of “doing ethics”:
 - (1) "Our conclusion is, therefore, that the preaching of values and concrete norms in the New Testament is mostly not a new teaching but has rather a parenetic and maieutic task. Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that parenetic and maieutic preaching was not done systematically, but only occasionally and sporadically." Fuchs, *Christian Ethics in a Secular Arena* p. 22.
 - (2) Thus, there seems to be a clear inference for Fuchs that the task of Christian ethics is the explication of a normative code, rather than emphasis on Christian moral formation.

B. Brief Overview of the Model:

1. Explanation of how the term was changed by Fuchs himself from "Moral Teacher" to "Moral Reminder" (Role of the Paraclete)
2. According to Spohn, Fuchs would answer the moral question, "What ought I to do?" in these words:

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- a. "Be human,
 - b. for the Lord has redemptively accepted your humanity in the incarnation'.
 - c. God's intentions for humanity are structured into our innermost drives and recognized by reasonable reflection.
 - d. The grace of Christ restores and elevates that humanity which never completely lost its status as 'image of God.'
 - e. When we recognize what is authentically human, we are in effect discovering the will of God for us." [Spohn, p. 36.]
3. Function of Scripture to act as a moral reminder:
- a. "Scripture *reminds* us what it means to be human and
 - b. calls us to live an integral human life that our egotism would ignore.
 - c. However, the Gospel does not ask us to be something other than human;
 - d. rather it calls us to full humanity in relation to God and empowers us to live it.
 - e. Christians believe that full humanity is possible only through the grace of Christ." p. 36.
4. Absolutely key to Fuchs' understanding of ethics (and therefore any role Scripture might play in this) is the received and reinterpreted notion of the natural moral law. Therefore, we should turn to a brief excursus on what that natural law is understood to be.

C. Natural Law Overview

1. Scriptural Passage: *Locus Classicus* (Rm. 2:12-15)
 - a. "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.

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- b. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.
 - c. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law,
 - d. since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) (NIV)
2. Basic overview of natural law theory
- a. Ontological and metaphysical
 - b. Knowable
 - c. Normable
 - d. Normative, i.e., Performable
 - e. Universalizable
 - f. Universal
 - (1) Trans-historical
 - (2) Trans-cultural
- D. Key Concepts of the Natural Law
- 1. Principle of *Exitus et reditus*
 - 2. Inter-relation of the *lex aeterna* and the natural law
 - 3. *Recta ratio*
 - 4. *Lex indita, non scripta*
 - a. I.e., the New Testament “law of grace”
 - b. Relation to human conscience

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5. Fundamental and most universal principle of the natural moral law: *Bonum est faciendum et prosequendum, et malum vitandum*
 - a. Translate accurately
 - b. The task of ethics then is discovery and application according to reason
 - c. Not a voluntaristic “obedience”
 6. Levels of moral norms, with decreasing “certainty” and increasing “contingency”
- E. Fuchs’ two key articles on the Image of God and the Phenomenon of Conscience
1. "Our Image of God and the Morality of Innerworldly Behavior." Chapter 3 in *Christian Morality: The Word Became Flesh*, 28-49. Translated by Brian McNeil. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press; Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987.
 - a. Beware of overly “anthromorphisizing” God
 - b. God is neither a “commander” nor a “ruler” who stands “outside” or “alongside” of humans, sending in “categorical” moral demands
 - c. But God is within us, and therefore our human conscience is seen as our innermost sanctuary, i.e., where we encounter God as the holy Other, and where no other authority may legitimately enter by force.
 2. "The Phenomenon of Conscience: *Subject-Orientation and Object-Orientation*." Chapter 8 in *Christian Morality: The Word Became Flesh*, 118-133. Translated by Brian McNeil. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press; Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987.
 - a. Subjective–Objective “pole” (not dichotomy)
 - b. Thus, the understanding of what “objective” truly means: “objectively” true for this “subject”
- F. These important reflections on the nature of God and the nature of human conscience come together in a certain way when we consider the relevance of the Incarnation for human ethics:

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1. Christ became human, and thus has taken up and redeemed *all* of humanity
2. Thus, in a recap in two words, with reference to Christology, the ethical “action” question of “What ought I to do?”
3. “I must be human because the Lord has embraced that humanity in the incarnation.” [Spohn, p. 13.]

XXIII. FUCHS' ELABORATION OF THE MORAL REMINDER APPROACH

A. Fuchs' Theological Context

1. Enlightenment legacy
2. Collapse of natural law seen in World War II totalitarian states
3. Post-Christian Western Europe

B. Role and Relation of the Individual in Fuchs' scheme:

1. "God can call individuals to unique vocations through the action of the Holy Spirit,
2. but Fuchs does not believe that vocational experiences are the paradigm of Christian morality.
3. God's will is ordinarily mediated through the human experience of the Christian." p. 44.
4. [Here Bonhoeffer would most likely not agree
 - a. {nor do I};
 - b. Fuchs seems to have a rather specialized and exalted notion of the Christian vocation].
5. Moral life of the individual:
 - a. According to Fuchs, in the performance of our daily duties we respond to God, albeit in a mediated manner.

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- b. "'Moreover,' asserts Fuchs, 'to emphasize this explicitly it is of vital importance from the moral and religious point of view that we conceive the demand of the natural law
 - (1) in the concrete situation
 - (2) as the personal demand of the God
 - (3) to the personal man.
 - c. The spiritual encounter of man with his own being, the confrontation of his interior and exterior worlds, is in fact an encounter with God.' [NL, p. 132]
6. Fuchs' criticism with Barth:
- a. To preserve God's sovereignty, Barth at times emphasized the discontinuities between ordinary human morality and the command of God.
 - b. Fuchs, on the other hand, stresses the continuity to safeguard the consistency between God and his creation.
 - c. For both theologians, however, the absoluteness of the moral demand ultimately rests on the authority of the Absolute God." p. 44.
- C. Fuchs' Use and Development of Rahner's Anthropology
- 1. Fuchs employs the term "Christian intentionality" to refer to this stance, or in other words, to this core commitment to God.
 - 2. "It transforms natural obligations and virtues from within by giving them a personal reference to God they could not have on their own.
 - 3. Moreover, the power of the Spirit makes these obligations and virtues part of the person's character so they become habitual.
 - 4. In content, these virtues and moral standards are what constitute any serious moral life.
 - 5. God's will is unitary: that we be human in [Jesus] Christ." [Spohn's explanation, p. 47.]

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6. Example: both Christians and non-Christians are called to act justly (i.e. follow the same moral standards), but for the Christian the specific Christian intentionality should enter here.
7. Fuchs: "Christian motivation provides human conduct with a deeper and richer meaning,
8. which is subjectively part of the action itself." [Spohn, p. 47; Fuchs, "Is There a Specific Christian Morality," in Curran & McCormick, No. 2, p. 15.]

XXIV. BRUNO SCHÜLLER'S APPROACH TO ETHICS

A. Bruno Schüller's Biblical Exhortation Not Instruction

1. Key article, "The Debate on the Specific Character of Christian Ethics: Some Remarks"
 - a. The German original appeared in 1976 in *Theologie und Philosophie* 51 (1976): 321-343, under the title "Zur Discussion über das Proprium einer christlichen Ethik."
 - b. which first appeared in English in 1980 in *Readings in Moral Theology*, No. 2, Curran and McCormick, eds. pp.207-233.
 - c. Also found in English in Schüller's book, Chapter 1 of *Wholly Human: Essays on the Theory and Language of Morality*, 15-42. Translated by Peter Heinegg. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan; Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1986.
2. Biblical revelation does not confer a distinctiveness upon Christian ethics by furnishing moral norms otherwise inaccessible to human knowing.
3. Schüller thus concludes that those biblical imperatives derived from the Covenant theme in the OT and the Gospel in the NT should not be considered as normative ethics.
4. Instead, Schüller credits the Bible and Jesus insofar as he is a moral teacher with giving a hortatory (paranetic [Greek word for "exhort"]) influence on Christian morals.

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5. Schüller's distinction between normative ethical formulation and paranetic discourse:
 - a. "Schüller contrasts paranetic discourse with normative ethical formulation more or less as the appeal to abide by a moral rule is contrasted with the enunciation of the rule itself." [Gaffney, p. 24]
 - b. Thus, Schüller seems to imply that normative ethical discourse is logically anterior to paranetic discourse:
 - c. "Thus the force of paranetic discourse is basically motivational, whereas the force of normative discourse is taken to be mainly declarative or demonstrative." p.24.
 6. Distinction between new moral insights in Scripture (none, according to Schüller), and
 7. Hortatory nature of much Biblical ethics (paranesis)
 8. Schüller seeks to avoid "a `Christonomous moral positivism'
 - a. which he finds in Barth and others,
 - b. whereby mercy or justice is good only because Christ has decreed it so.
 - c. Christian motivations may deepen the subjective meaning of justice and compassion,
 - d. but they cannot constitute their moral validity." [Spohn, p. 51.]
- B. Critique of Bruno Schüller and certain aspects of the Moral Autonomy/Faith Ethics Debate
1. Pose again the two governing questions of the course: What is (his view of) Ethics, and What is (his view of) Scripture?
 2. We get a strong (if unintentional) hint of Schüller's answer to these questions in a statement he made in an earlier article:
 - a. "There are really only relatively few individual precepts that the NT sets forth explicitly. To the extent that the word of revelation does

contain individual precepts of the law of Christ, it probably intends to help people out at those points where they have not yet managed to apprehend moral precepts on their intrinsic grounds. Even if human beings should never manage to dispense with this assistance totally, nonetheless they should strive to require it as little as possible."

- b. From his 1966 essay, "Zur theologischen Diskussion über die lex naturalis," 41 (1966): 481-503, found in English as "A Contribution to the Theological Discussion of Natural Law," in *Readings in Moral Theology, No. 7: Natural Law and Theology*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, S.J., (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1991): 89.
3. Problematic with the rigidity of the debate, and an overly narrow "organizing metaphor" (ala Gustafson's work on methodology)
 - a. Not an either/or dichotomy
 - b. Use of Scripture in ethics does not destroy moral autonomy
 - c. Nor does it lapse into fideism
 4. Models vs. Paradigm
 - a. Schüller's "metaethics" seems to be more a paradigm than a model
 - b. Insights from Kuhn's work on the nature of paradigms
 - (1) I will follow Ian Barbour's helpful article, "Paradigms in Science and Religion." In *Paradigms and Revolutions: Applications and Appraisals of Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science*, 223-245. Edited by Gary Gutting. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980.
 - (2) Rehearses the central themes of Thomas Kuhn's paradigm theory, some of its criticisms and Kuhn's own refinements, and then moves on to consider how a theory of paradigms can be applied to religions.
 - c. A research community/scholar can be dominated by a "paradigm" which

- (1) Kuhn [via Barbour] describes as a "cluster of very broad conceptual and methodological presuppositions....," etc.
 - (2) [Which] transmit methodological and metaphysical assumptions along with key concepts." p. 223.
 - (3) These presuppositions, concepts,
 - (4) etc. in turn function as norms as to what constitutes "good" science (or in our case moral theology)
 - (5) And then lead "to the acquisition of `a strong network of commitments, conceptual, theoretical, instrumental, and methodological'." p. 224.
- d. Difficulties in achieving a "paradigm shift"
- (1) In normal research fundamental assumptions are not questioned and anomalies tend to be put aside, or accommodated by some sort of *ad hoc* modification.
 - (2) Any real change would amount to a "revolution" because essentially
 - (a) "Paradigms are incompatible.
 - (b) A new paradigm replaces the old;
 - (c) it is not merely one more addition to a cumulative structure of ideas." p. 224.
 - (3) Scientists/scholars "resist such revolutions
 - (a) because previous commitments have permeated all their thinking;
 - (b) a new paradigm prevails only when the older generation has been `converted' to it,
 - (c) or has died off and been replaced by a new generation." p. 225.

- e. Observations are paradigm-dependent.
 - (1) "Paradigms determine the way a scientist sees the world." p. 225.
 - (2) "Scientists with rival paradigms may gather quite dissimilar sorts of data;
 - (3) the very features which are important for one may be incidental to the other." p. 225.
- f. Criteria are also paradigm-dependent.
 - (1) "Competing paradigms offer differing judgments as to what sorts of solution are acceptable.
 - (2) There are no external standards on which to base a choice between paradigms, for standards are themselves products of paradigms.
 - (3) One can assess theories within the framework of a paradigm, but in a debate among paradigms there are no objective criteria.
 - (4) Paradigms cannot be falsified and are highly resistant to change.
 - (5) Adoption of a new paradigm is a 'conversion'." p. 225.

5. With the following example from Bruno Schüller we can see how this matrix of "paradigm" characteristics can function in an infelicitous manner.

C. Schüller's "Paradigm-Dependent" View of Scripture and Ethics

- 1. From his essay, "Zur theologischen Diskussion über die lex naturalis," 41 (1966): 481-503.
- 2. In English as "A Contribution to the Theological Discussion of Natural Law." In *Readings in Moral Theology, No. 7: Natural Law and Theology*, 72-98. Edited by Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, S.J. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1991.

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3. Schüller's view of paranesis:
 - a. "If the apostolic paranesis plays a comparatively secondary role in special moral theology, the reason is not that moral theologians did not study scripture,
 - b. but much more that by and large this paranesis only recalls what the whole world takes as self-evident." p. 88.
4. Recall Schüller's rather incredible anti-scriptural bias noted above:
 - a. "There are really only relatively few individual precepts that the NT sets forth explicitly. To the extent that the word of revelation does contain individual precepts of the law of Christ, it probably intends to help people out at those points where they have not yet managed to apprehend moral precepts on their intrinsic grounds. Even if human beings should never manage to dispense with this assistance totally, nonetheless they should strive to require it as little as possible." p. 89.
5. We need a corrective to this view!

D. Moral Significance of Paranesis

1. Be careful of "denigrating" paranesis as "mere exhortation;"
2. what moves people to convicted action is clearly at least as important as the "reasoning process" involved.
3. Consider the Six C's of any valid moral argument:
 - a. comprehensive,
 - b. comprehensible,
 - c. consistent/coherent
 - d. credible, and
 - e. convincing
 - f. And Christian

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- g. Paranesis enters especially into these last two aspects.
4. Moral Authority of Scriptural Paranesis
- a. Remember too that paranesis has more moral authority in a system more closely tied to a Scripture as sacred book/claim.
 - b. Recall Protestant idea of biblical "warrants" instead of natural law "norms".
5. Problematic of moral "norms" in Scripture
- a. Not the point of the ethical material in Scripture
 - b. Avoid conceiving of moral norms in a positivistic sense.
 - c. Consider what is involved in the "discovery" of moral norms and values.
 - d. Discovery here is not like a scavenger or Easter egg hunt.
 - e. Discovery implies "making" this value one's own, and here paranesis is important,
 - f. though albeit difficult to quantify and codify (probably accounting for its "non-reception" by moralists such as Schüller).
- E. James Gaffney: Moral Significance of *Paranesis*
- 1. "On Paranesis and Fundamental Moral Theology." *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 11 (1983): 24-34.
 - 2. This article is a response to Bruno Schüller's article, "The Debate on the Specific Character of Christian Ethics: Some Remarks"
 - 3. "Moral norms are not reasoning; rather they are propositions involved in reasoning as premises, as conclusions, or as both." p.27.
 - 4. "In a deductive system, formal moral norms would be involved mainly as premises, and material norms [i.e., specific, concrete actions commanded or prohibited {e.g., no artificial contraception}] mainly as conclusions." p.27

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5. "In an inductive system, they would be oppositely involved." p.27.
6. "But in no rational system could material norms be equated with reasoning while formal norms were contrasted with it." p.27.
7. Gaffney's example of the effect of the Jesus story on a believer's life:
 - a. a coed changed her view on permitting case-by-case abortions in non-life-threatening circumstances after realizing that Jesus would not have condoned such a position, and that she "admired" Jesus for his ethical stance.
 - b. Gaffney's analysis is that the coed was not convinced by ethical normative reasoning as such, but rather by the appeal (paranesis) that she felt Jesus would have made in this case.
 - c. Whereas Schüller would probably interpret this case as the coed responded to paranesis [this fact is incontestable], only because she "must already have adopted Jesus' norms, and only now come to perceive what was their true bearing on the abortion question." p.30.
8. Paranesis *does* lead to new moral insights, at least on the individual basis
9. Parenthetically, the experience and book of James Loder, *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981.
10. Gaffney's own position: One cannot draw a complete and sharp dichotomy between paranesis and ethical norms:
11. "For every ethical norm is paranetic, both intrinsically and reductively. To look for non-paranetic norms on which all paranesis depend is only the notoriously futile quest for some <is> on which all <oughts> depend." p.31.
12. But on the other hand--> "Pure paranesis is moral vapor; the only response to <I exhort> is a look of expectation: the verb requires a direct and indirect object." p.31.
13. Gaffney's conclusion: a combination approach:

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- a. "The view I have recommended as conformable to actual and traditional usage would regard moral norms as inextricably combining a kind of intellectual stating
 - b. with a kind of emotional urging." p.32.
- F. Other aspects of the evaluation of the approach, Scripture as a Moral Reminder
- 1. Stance toward Scripture itself more flexible:
 - a. When Scripture is a moral reminder, the theologian is less bound by some of its particular mandates,
 - b. which we now see are limits of an outdated culture.
 - c. The more flexible notion of human nature in more recent moral theology admits that nature does change through history.
 - d. Hence, some of the institutions that were taken for granted as natural in the Mediterranean cultures of the first century are no longer binding for us today.
 - e. Just as human nature changes with time, so do the moral standards flowing from it." p. 51.
 - f. Example: women cover your heads, wives be submissive to your husbands.
 - 2. Yet, perhaps Scripture tends to lose some of its moral force, its claim (a key concern of people like Bonhoeffer and Barth).
 - 3. Ultimately, I find this approach encumbered by a rather narrow concept of what "ethics" is, which in turn constricts the range of potential contributions "Scripture" might bring to the ethical sphere.

XXV. HISTORICAL/THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF SCRIPTURE AS CALL TO LIBERATION

- A. Socio-economic system of Latin America: feudal structure with capitalist economic model: a deadly, deadly combination.

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- B. Discrediting of the Economic "Development" Model of the 1960's, e.g. JFK's "Alliance for Progress"
- C. European Political Theology of Metz and Moltmann
- D. Return of Latin American Theologians trained in Europe: knew all the answers to questions the people weren't asking.
 - 1. Gustavo Gutiérrez in France, even at the PUG.
 - 2. Leonardo Boff, O.F.M. in Germany, student of Joseph Ratzinger
 - 3. Jon Sobrino, S.J. Spanish Jesuit, studied in the States, and elsewhere
- E. Close of Vatican II and 1968 Medellín Conference of CELAM.
- F. Publication of Gustavo Gutiérrez's *A Theology of Liberation* (English trans. 1973 by Orbis).

XXVI. FRAMING OF INTERPLAY BETWEEN SCRIPTURE AND ETHICS IN LIBERATION AND FEMINIST THEOLOGY

- A. If we were to cast the thesis of Gutiérrez's *A Theology of Liberation* in terms of the familiar moral question, "What ought I to do?" the response would be:
 - 1. "Act to liberate the oppressed because God is on their side." [Spohn, p. 54.]
 - 2. Note what sort of ethics this response entails (i.e. a religiously-based one)
 - 3. Note what arguments then are *not* being invoked, i.e., philosophically-based universal human rights language.
 - 4. This distinction/choice will be important in the eventual evaluation and critique of liberation theology.
- B. But, again more importantly will be our two guiding questions which we address also to liberation and feminist theologians:
 - 1. What is their understanding of Scripture?
 - 2. What is their understanding of ethics?

XXVII. KEY BIBLICAL THEMES USED IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

A. Exodus Model

1. "Three themes of the Old Testament define the meaning of exodus for Gutiérrez:
 2. the link between salvation and creation,
 - a. "It points to the goal of the liberating process, the creation of a new type of humanity, one unburdened from the exploitation of present social structures.
 - b. The exodus created a people where one did not exist; it was also a this-worldly act of salvation that embraced and transformed the whole human reality of the freed slaves." p. 59.
 3. the eschatological promises of the prophets
 - a. "God's final deliverance promised by the prophets is the second key to understanding the exodus.
 - b. "...The prophets called for a radical break with the past and for a new exodus for Israel which could come about only if Israel addressed the social evils of the day." p. 60.
 - c. Connection then to this particular use of Scripture in ethics:
 - d. "The Church in our time must first *denounce* the existing contradictions in society with the vehemence of prophetic indictment before it can credibly *announce* the Gospel." p. 60.
 - e. Parenthetical remark: our use of Scripture in moral may well depend to a large extent on the particular model of the Church out of which we operate.
 - (1) Here the model of Church as Herald would be paramount,
 - (2) while a model such as Sacrament or Mystical Body might seem to fade into the background.

- (3) It is important to let these models complement one another,
 - (4) and also to avoid reductionism--collapsing the Church into just or that model.
 4. the closeness of God to Israel as Emmanuel.
 - a. "The third clue to understanding the exodus is found in the Old Testament's teachings that God is closely committed to the people, even identified with the neighbor in need." [Spohn, p. 61].
 - b. Thus, the theological rationale for the so-called "preferential option for the poor."
 - c. Here Jesus Christ as particular fulfillment of this Old Testament theme is important.
 - (1) "Incarnation has a profound moral significance.
 - (2) Because Christ is incarnate in the neighbor's needs, we are called to an active and productive love that seeks out the neighbor, just as the Good Samaritan went out of his way to aid the man beaten by robbers." [Spohn, p. 61].
- B. Liberation
1. Notes that Gutiérrez successfully avoids the "trap of the early twentieth century proponents of the social gospel who too readily equated democratic reform with the arrival of God's Kingdom." p. 63.
 - a. Brief remark on the Social Gospel and its failure
 - b. Yet, this very failure and similarity is important in understanding the reluctance of many European and North American theologians to embrace fully the liberation theology project.
 2. For Gutiérrez liberation has 3 interdependent meanings:
 - a. political liberation,
 - b. the liberation of the human person throughout history, and

- c. liberation from sin and admission to communion with God." [TL, p. 176; {Spohn, p. 63}].

C. Kingdom

1. Here the work Johannes Fullenbach, S.V.D. is more developed than Gutiérrez et. al. [See F's *The Kingdom of God: The Heart of Jesus' Message for Us Today*. Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1989; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995]
2. Notion of Kingdom can be a valid and important bridge concept between social ethics and other branches of theology, as well as Scripture.
3. Other Liberation Theologians primarily use the concept of the Kingdom as an utopian vision of a new humanity.
4. Unfortunately this "vision" is rarely clarified in terms of a developed ethics, and this is a major criticism of moral theologians such as Spohn and others have of liberation theologians.
5. As Spohn trenchantly remarks, "This [lack of a theory of justice] is a significant omission because,
6. in a time of revolution, certain moral standards must apply lest the social transformation be corrupted by vindictive violence and retribution." p. 63.
7. My question: How do we keep the oppressed from becoming oppressors themselves, once they are liberated? Doesn't argue against liberation theology as such, but only against a certain "incompleteness" or perhaps a certain romanticism.

D. Realized Eschatology

1. This is an area which needs more work, and is a locus of my critique of liberation theologians.
2. For an important work in this area see Joachim Jeremias' monograph on the Sermon on the Mount: *The Sermon on the Mount*. Facet Books Biblical Series, no. 2. Translated by Norman Perrin. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963.

3. Again, this is an area treated well by Fullenbach; he speaks of "moments" of the in-breaking of the Kingdom, such as the 1986 Peoples' Power Revolution in the Philippines.

XXVIII. THEOLOGICAL METHOD OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY

A. Reading of Scripture from posture of prior commitment to the poor:

1. Central premise of all liberation theologians (including feminists):
 - a. "No neutral reading of Scripture can discern the call to liberation;
 - b. such a call presupposes a commitment to the poor and oppressed and
 - c. a willingness to act on their behalf.
2. Niebuhr wrote that revelation is unintelligible from the spectator's viewpoint. [Cf. *The Meaning of Revelation*.]
3. Gutiérrez goes one step further, insisting that only someone participating in the struggle for justice can hear God's word.
 - a. All reflection arises out of praxis, out of committed action on behalf of some cause.
 - b. The neutral observer is already committed to maintain the status quo even if he or she does not admit it." p. 55.

B. Notion of Theology as "Liberating"

1. "Theology that reflects upon commitment must be a liberating theology because it moves from reflection on the world to taking part in the transformation of the world." [Spohn, p. 56.]
2. Gutiérrez writes: "In this participation [in the process of liberation] will be heard nuances of the Word of God which are imperceptible in other existential situations and
3. without which there can be no authentic and fruitful faithfulness to the Lord." [*Theology of Liberation*, p. 49 {Spohn, p. 56}]

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4. In other words, this is the hermeneutical reality. Recall Fullenbach's expression that Scripture will "sound different" when read in a context of systemic oppression.
- C. Faith as "Performative" --- Orthopraxis over orthodoxy
1. Spohn's use of Avery Dulles' notion of 3 types of faith, in the latter's article, "The Meaning of Faith Considered in Relationship to Justice" in *The Faith That Does Justice* ,(New York: Paulist, 1977).
 2. Faith conceived as assent to authoritatively revealed truths: goal is illumination. [e.g. Aquinas and Augustine]
 3. Faith conceived as surrender in confidence to God's gracious gift in Christ: goal is radical personal trust in God. [e.g., Luther, Bonhoeffer, etc.]
 4. Faith conceived as "performative": "Moral commitment is added to intellectual conviction and personal trust because the acting out of truth is necessary for belief in it." p. 56.
 5. This distinction on different ways of understanding faith will help also in assessing the critiques of many of liberation theology, i.e., they are working primarily out of a propositional understanding of faith.
- D. Notion of Conversion in Liberation Theology:
1. "Gutiérrez also accepts the position that the values of individuals are formed by the economic structures they are confined to.
 2. Accordingly, Christian conversion involves both a repudiation of the exploiting structures of society and a willingness to transform them into more humane systems so that people living under them can become more human." [Spohn, p. 57].

XXIX. CRITICAL AND CORRECTIVE ASPECTS OF THEOLOGICAL METHOD OF LIBERATION AND FEMINIST THEOLOGY

- A. Ideology Criticism
1. Premise of ideology:

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- a. "It is characteristic of ideology that it is invisible to the one whose bias it underwrites.
 - b. Usually, only those who do not participate in the power system
 - (1) whose agenda is propagated by the ideology
 - (2) are aware that what seems to be simply 'the way things are'
 - (3) is actually an oppressive conceptual, cultural, and social system.
 - c. The 'hermeneutical advantage' of the oppressed is precisely this ability to see,
 - (1) from the margins of social reality,
 - (2) what is second nature to those who are the beneficiaries of the social system." [Schneiders, p. 183.]
2. ideology in the text:
- a. "First, the text is not neutral.
 - (1) The biblical text, like other historical documents, was written by the 'historical winners'
 - (2) who virtually never write *the* story *their* story." [Schneiders, p. 182.]
 - b. thus, ideology in the text impacts negatively on the marginalized, etc., who struggle
 - c. "with the material in the text that presents them [e.g., women] as inferior, marginal, or expendable." [Schneiders, p. 120]
3. ideology of the interpreters of the text:
- a. "... the interpreters of the biblical text
 - (1) never have been,

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- (2) and are not now, objective,
- (3) if by objective one means ideologically unbiased." [Schneiders, p. 183.]
- b. "People who are poor and/or politically oppressed tend to be concerned with the ideology of the *interpreters of the text*
- c. who have used the biblical material to legitimate the economic and political status quo from which the dispossessed suffer." [Schneiders, p. 120]
- 4. Canonization of the "historical winners"
 - a. "What both strands of ideology criticism have in common is their realization that
 - b. the Bible was produced and has been interpreted almost exclusively by the `historical winners',
 - (1) who have, deliberately or inadvertently, made history and interpretation serve their interests
 - (2) at the expense of the `historical losers'." [Schneiders, p. 120]
- B. Hermeneutics of Suspicion
- C. Hermeneutics of Retrieval/Recovery
- D. Development of an Ethic of Gender Respect
- E. Key Scriptural Themes
 - 1. Creation Intention
 - 2. Christian Community: Early Church Vision
 - 3. Recommend the work of Phyllis Trible
 - a. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.

- b. *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives. Overtures to Biblical Theology.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

XXX. OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE MODELS

- A. 1984 and 1986 CDF *Instructions* on Liberation Theology
- B. Positive Aspects and Contributions
 - 1. First and foremost, according to me, Liberation Theology is a valid attempt at an inculturated theology.
 - a. Thus, answers the charge of Jesus himself to go and make disciples of all nations.
 - b. A charge repeated more recently in Paul VI's 1975 *Evangelii nuntiandi*
 - 2. Central premise of all liberation theologians: "No neutral reading of Scripture can discern the call to liberation; such a call presupposes a commitment to the poor and oppressed and a willingness to act on their behalf." [Spohn, p. 55].
 - 3. "All reflection arises out of praxis, out of committed action on behalf of some cause. The neutral observer is already committed to maintain the status quo even if he or she does not admit it." p. 55.
 - 4. According to Gutiérrez, the Church "performs a disservice when it uses the rhetoric of Church unity to mask the antithetical interests of the rich and exploited." p. 64.
 - 5. 3 observations of Richard McCormick, reported by Thomas Schubeck, concerning how liberation theology has influenced moral theology:
 - a. "It first demolished the separatist mentality that dichotomizes reality into the profane and the sacred and replaced it with a perspective that sees Christ's action // permeating every dimension of human existence.

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- b. "Second, it expanded the Church's mission of charity to include active participation in constructing a just order. Liberation theologians call this active form of charity 'praxis'.
- c. "Third, liberation theology reminded Christians and continues to remind them at every turn, that morality should give primacy to social concerns and not yield to the individualism rampant in Western industrialized democracies." Thomas L. Schubeck, S.J. "Ethics and Liberation Theology." *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 107-108.

C. Negative Aspects and Questions

- 1. Problematic of the so-called "hermeneutical circle":
 - a. "'discovering' in Scripture interests that were established prior to interpreting the Word of God.
 - b. Every use of Scripture begins from some interest, but does that use allow Scripture to challenge that original position?" p. 54.
- 2. Gutiérrez' thesis insisting that only someone participating in the struggle for justice can hear God's word.
 - a. Some problems with nature of grace and revelation here; a new form of Semi-Pelagianism?
 - b. I'd basically agree with most of Gutiérrez, but once again make the observation that such a conversion may often be very gradual, and the "if you're not part of the solution you're part of the problem" attitude unnecessarily polarizes the Christian community in a counter-productive way.
- 3. On notion of radical [economic] conversion:
 - a. Seems to employ a Power model which may ultimately prove problematic, plus
 - b. my continuing question on the nature of conversion: must it *only* be instantaneous and radical, a "paradigm earthquake" instead of a series of smaller "shifts"?

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4. Spohn's central critique of liberation theologians is that they lack a developed ethics. "Revolutionary zeal and compassion do not ensure justice in the world that follows the revolution,..." p. 65.
 5. Blunting of the "realism" of the Scriptural vision of the human condition: "Scripture teaches that sin will never be fully eradicated from history until its end point, and that persistent sinful tendencies of individuals can sabotage the most carefully managed social systems." p. 65.
 6. Gutiérrez' use of the poor as a sort of "moral proletariat" -- reflecting Marx's use of the poor in his economic view.
 - a. "They are the class that holds the seeds of the future; they have the latent energy to transform existing structures because they experience the contradictions of such structures most fully." p. 65.
 - b. Spohn's critique, via use of Scripture:
 - (1) "It is undeniable that the Bible mandates a special concern for the poor as proof of fidelity to the covenant with the Lord;
 - (2) it does not seem to confer on them a privileged position of greater wisdom as if they hold the key to social progress." p. 65.
 - c. Danger of romanticizing the poor since they are marginalized and uncontaminated by abuse of power usage. However, they are sinners too.
- D. Challenges and Further Work for the Future:
1. Developing/clarifying the points mentioned above.
 2. Ongoing issues of epistemological privilege of the poor
 3. Impact of the preferential option for the poor on traditional understanding of ethics
 - a. "On the ethical front, critics charge that liberation ethics, by using preferential option as its foundational principle, seems to turn traditional ethics on its head.

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- b. "Traditional philosophical ethics and moral theology insist that moral thinking be impartial;
 - c. they reject partiality, therefore, because by definition it gives unfair advantage to one group." Schubeck, "Ethics and Liberation Theology," p. 109.
4. Yet, we must continue to wrestle with this issue: Should ethics be partisan?
- a. "Yes, says Philippine theologian Patricia McAuliffe, because our historical nature `leads us to recognize that we are limited in terms of our capacity to give and to relate to all others'.
 - b. "Following Juan Luis Segundo's notion of efficacious love, she says we must choose between needs of groups, and should make that choice on the basis of the greatest need.
 - c. "Like Latin American theologians, McAuliffe argues that the universal good is achieved through the particular good.
 - d. "Preferential commitment intends justice for all and not a reversal of situations (i.e. reverse discrimination)." Schubeck, "Ethics and Liberation Theology," p. 114.

XXXI. FURTHER BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A. Hennelly, Alfred T., ed. *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990.
 - 1. Contains 59 important documents which help trace the background, origins, development, and controversy surrounding liberation theology.
- B. Schubeck, Thomas L., S.J.
 - 1. "Ethics and Liberation Theology." *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 107-122.
 - a. Part of the annual "Notes on Moral Theology."
 - b. Overview of some of the contributions liberation theology has made to Christian ethics, as well as noting some ongoing concerns and tensions.

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- c. *Liberation Ethics: Sources, Models, and Norms*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- C. Enrique Dussel
1. *Ethics and Community*. Translated from the Spanish by Robert R. Barr. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988.
 2. *Ethics and the Theology of Liberation*. Translated by Bernard F. McWilliams. Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 1978.
 - a. Originally delivered as lectures at a course organized by the Justice and Peace Study Center, Buenos Aires, in 1972.
 3. "An Ethic of Liberation: Fundamental Hypotheses." *Concilium* 172 (1984): 54-63.
 - a. One of a series of articles in this issue devoted to the ethics of liberation.
- D. Antonio Mõser and Bernardino Leers
1. *Moral Theology: Dead Ends and Ways Forward*. Translated by Paul Burns. Wellwood: Burns & Oates; and Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990.
 2. Written in Brazil, this work deals with moral theology and theology of liberation.
- E. Gottwald, Norman K., ed. *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983.
1. Divided into five sections: 1) Social Scientific Method in Biblical Studies; 2) Social Class as a Hermeneutical Factor; 3) Sociological Readings of the Old Testament; 4) Sociological Readings of the New Testament; and 5) The Bible in Political Theology and Marxist Thought.
 2. Controversial
- F. Lohfink, Norbert. *Option for the Poor: The Basic Principle of Liberation Theology in Light of the Bible*. Berkeley: BIBAL Press, 1987.

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- G. Meier, John P. "The Bible as a Source for Theology." *Proceedings of the Forty-Third Annual Convention*. Catholic Theological Society of America. 43 (1988): 1-14.
 - 1. Critiques two key liberation theologians' (Jon Sobrino and Juan Luis Segundo) use of Scripture in their theology in terms of their exegesis and interpretation.
 - 2. Meier is an exegete.
- H. Miranda, José Porfirio.
 - 1. *Communism in the Bible*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982.
 - 2. *Marx and the Bible: A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression*. Translated by John Eagleson. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974.
- I. Rowland, Christopher and Corner, Mark. *Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989.
- J. Christine E. Gudorf's "Liberation Theology's Use of Scripture," *Interpretation* 41 (1987): 5-18.
 - 1. Discusses the impact of differences in the social context between North and South America upon the reading of Scripture in reference to the use of Scripture in Liberation Theology.
 - 2. Gudorf has established herself as a leading North-American voice in liberation theology.

XXXII. INTRODUCTION TO NIEBUHR'S THEOLOGY RESPONSE TO REVELATION

- A. Recall a brief biography of H. Richard Niebuhr
 - 1. 1894-1962
 - 2. Son of German immigrants, (father was a Evangelical minister), younger brother of Reinhold.

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3. PhD in religion from Yale in 1924, taught at Yale from 1931 until his death. Somewhat more academic background than his older brother Reinhold.
 4. Influenced by Karl Barth, Søren Kierkegaard and Ernst Troeltsch.
- B. Influence of Niebuhr's approach
1. Professor of James Gustafson
 2. Effect on Stanley Hauerwas
 3. William Spohn and others

XXXIII. BACKGROUND OF H. RICHARD NIEBUHR'S *ETHICS OF RESPONSIBILITY*:
FOUR FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS

- A. All of our moral actions can be seen as *responses* to what is going on in the world. "Response" means that these actions are done in the light of "meaningful events."
- B. *Interpretation* done in the light of *meaningful events*. Our actions are responses to realities that are already full of meaning because of the *interpretations* that our seeing brings.
- C. *Accountability* to both past AND anticipated future. Refers to the way in which the actions of a responsible person not only respond to the past but also fit into an anticipated future. Here, moral "responsibility" means staying with your action.
- D. Responsible *stories* are those which foster *social solidarity*. The responsible self is responsible for living in, learning from, and helping to shape community.
- E. Key work for Niebuhr's ethics of responsibility is his *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy*. With an Introduction by James M. Gustafson. New York: Harper & Row, 1963.
 1. Published posthumously, and based principally on the 1960 Robertson Lectures delivered at the University of Glasgow, with selected passages from the Earl Lectures delivered at the Pacific School of Religion (Berkeley, CA) and a series of addresses given at the Riverside Church in New York City.
 2. The book contains a preface by the author's son, R. Richard Niebuhr,

3. plus a long introduction by James M. Gustafson, one of Niebuhr's most well-known former students.

XXXIV. INTERPRETING EVENTS: "WHAT IS *GOD* DOING IN *MY/OUR* SITUATION?"

- A. Need to interpret our experience
- B. Consider the following from T.S. Eliot's "The Four Quartets."
 1. "Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.
Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present."
 2. From *Burnt Norton* [lines 42ff]
- C. Niebuhr's 3 "War Articles" in *Christian Century*: "What is God doing in the War?"
 1. Which side of the War (WWII) is God on? Wrong question, according to Niebuhr.
 2. Titles of the Three Articles:
 - a. "War as the Judgment of God"
 - b. "Is God in the War?" (Response by Virgil Aldrich)
 - c. "War as Crucifixion"
- D. The Standpoint of Christian Faith
 1. Hermeneutical Principal: "Events are always understood from one standpoint or another." p. 73.
 2. Like the Bible, they are not self-interpreting--this is a simple point, but nevertheless crucial.
 - a. E.g., the Persian Gulf Crisis is an "event"--but its interpretation depends largely on which standpoint we have, what Spohn calls a "framework of meaning."

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- b. Different frameworks of meaning will render different interpretations.
 - c. We can see this in almost any event, e.g. current situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.
 3. Our Question then is "What "standpoint" does Scripture have?"
 - a. The Cross
 - b. The Resurrection
 - c. Here the New Testament "standpoint" is crucial for us, as Christians; we cannot use *only* the Old Testament.
 4. Significance of our Christian Standpoint:
 - a. to understand, to "decode" our events.
 - b. The preceding is very important for a proper understanding also of the work of such people as Stanley Hauerwas, and I'd add, Philip Keane {cf. his *Christian Ethics and Imagination*}.
- E. Discerning God's Action in the Event(s)
 1. 3 simultaneous actions (aspects):
 - a. "God *governs* in part through the limitations of our own finitude,
 - b. *judges* by calling us to repentance, and
 - c. *redeems* by bringing to light new possibilities of reconciliation that were hidden to our despairing hearts.
 - d. Parenthetically, we can see a certain Protestant Reformed "nuance" here in this theological depiction.
 2. God does all of these three actions (governs, judges, redeems) simultaneously.
 3. Therefore, God's judgment should not be dismissed as being penal and vindictive,

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4. as though we could abstract God's judgment from God's gracious mode of governance and redemption.
5. Imperative of having a proper *theology*, i.e., a sound understanding of who God is
6. Significance not only for using Scripture in Christian ethics, but also for our theodicy.
7. To elaborate such a theology, consider the story of Etty Hillesum, a young Jewish woman who lived in Amsterdam during WWII, and died in Auschwitz
 - a. as quoted in Paul Wadell, C.P. *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1992): 66-67.
 - b. Etty realizes in the last few months of her life that there is nothing God can do to save her from the Nazis.
 - c. But rather than leading her to despair, she vows to come to God's assistance, even if God cannot come to hers.
 - d. She resolves, in the face of God's helplessness, to look after God's interests in the world.
 - e. One day she writes in her diary:
 - (1) But one thing is becoming increasingly clear to me: that You cannot help us, that we must help You to help ourselves.
 - (2) And that is all we can manage these days and also all that really matters:
 - (3) that we safeguard that little piece of You, God, in ourselves.
 - (4) And perhaps in others as well.
 - (5) Alas, there doesn't seem to be much You Yourself can do about our circumstances, about our lives.
 - (6) Neither do I hold You responsible.

- (7) You cannot help us be we must help You and defend Your dwelling place inside us to the last. [p. 67]
 - (8) [From Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1981): 186-187.]
8. Wadell uses this anecdote to illustrate the notion of benevolence in friendship for God:
 - a. "Just as God so often intercedes in our lives, helping us, blessing us, befriending us, so, too, can we sometimes intercede for God by watching after God's interests in the world." p. 67.
 - b. "We have benevolence toward God when, like Etty, we try to make God's will our own." p. 68.
 - c. I would hold that this is related to H. Richard Niebuhr's notion of the responsible self.
 9. And in Niebuhr's terminology, I think this might be a good example of Christian responsibility, and a *fitting* response to God's revelation.
 10. Sometimes, in fact, it seems that God isn't enabling us to do much else in this or that situation!

XXXV. JESUS CHRIST AS THE CHRISTIANS' KEY SYMBOL

- A. The Perspective of the Cross: From H.R. Niebuhr's "War Articles"
 1. "Only the context of the central symbol of the New Testament, the cross of Christ, can render intelligible the suffering of the innocent millions caught in the path of the war machines.
 2. ...Neither a theory of vindictive justice nor the purity of non-involvement can grasp the meaning of the cross or the war.
 3. The cross points to an order of grace that comes through the vicarious suffering of the innocent to those who are guilty, not to a world order where good is always rewarded and evil punished.

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4. The suffering of the guiltless becomes a call to religious conversion, an act of grace in the paradox of tragedy." p. 75.
 5. This is an important contribution to our understanding of ethics and theodicy, but we should note that it does have a certain potentiality for abuse—e.g., in a misunderstood call to “passive” acceptance of suffering.
- B. A Non-Christian vs. Christian Perspective:
1. "When viewed in the context of retributive justice, the appropriate response to war would be righteous anger toward the guilty.
 2. From the perspective of the cross, however, the fitting response is a repentance that acknowledges our own complicity in permitting injustice and turns to the renewing call of God." p. 76.
- C. Ultimate significance of God's Revelation in Jesus Christ for Niebuhr: his notion of radical monotheism.
1. A "radical monotheism" to avoid a "polytheistic dualism"
 2. As Niebuhr states: "To deny that God is in the war, is for the monotheist equivalent to the denial of God's universality and unity--to the denial that God is God. ...
 3. To look for God's judgment is to affirm as radical monotheists that there is no person, no situation, no event in which the opportunity to serve God is not present." [Niebuhr, "Is God in the War?" p. 954 {Spohn, p. 77}]
- D. Parenthetically, this is a good point to keep in mind in our pastoral application of moral theology,
1. e.g. in counseling or confession--to invite the Lord into those dark areas of sin which we would like to tidy up first.
 2. The Lord is already there, but our "inviting Him in" helps us recognize this fact, and then lets His healing power reign in our hearts.
- E. Ignatian notion of Finding God in *All* Things.

XXXVI. NOTION OF THE (RESPONSIBLE) SELF & MORAL BECOMING

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- A. Logical priority of the question, "Who am I?":
 - 1. is ethically prior to "What ought I to do?"
 - 2. Because our/my "Self-understanding" will define, or at least describe, the perspective of the moral agent.

- B. Need for antecedent religious conversion to become a Responsible self:
 - 1. "On its own, the self is unable to see experience in any other way [than self-centered].
 - 2. When my race or class or profession becomes the center of value, it is merely egotism expanded.
 - 3. Only the gracious revelation that the whole of reality is trustworthy can unself the agent and evoke a universal loyalty to offset the innate parochialism of the human spirit.
 - 4. The root sin of humanity is this self-love, which expresses itself in defensiveness of personal interests and exclusion of others.
 - 5. The necessary condition for moral conversion, therefore, must be religious conversion to redefine the self." [Spohn, p. 78.]

- C. A Quotable Quote from Niebuhr:

"As a rule men are polytheists, referring now to this and now to that valued being as the source of life's meaning. Sometimes they live for Jesus' God, sometimes for the country and sometimes for Yale." *Meaning of Revelation*, p. 57.

XXXVII. SYMBOLS FOR THE "REASONING HEART"

- A. Context of this expression in American Protestantism
 - 1. Great Awakening and Jonathan Edwards: 17th c.
 - 2. Methodism, and Revivalism to an extent

- B. Niebuhr's Understanding of how the heart "reasons":

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1. "The heart reasons with the aid of revelation because the heart uses the images provided by the community of faith to discover an intelligible pattern in its own experience." [Niebuhr, *Meaning of Revelation*, p. 79 {Spohn, p. 79.}]
2. "Revelation does not accomplish the work of conversion; the reasoning heart must search out memory and bring to light forgotten deeds. But without the revelatory image this work does not seem possible." [Niebuhr, *MR*, 88-89; {Spohn, p. 79}]
3. Thus, an important correction to Enlightenment rationalism.

XXXVIII. STORY AND SELF-UNDERSTANDING

- A. A mnemonic moral aid; cf. Fuchs
- B. Theological Notion and Importance of the Story:
 1. Gain a sense of self:

"To gain this sense of self, the imagination needs an image that can fit a history, a personal character that emerges through time.
 2. [Story as Personal Imaginative Device]
 - a. It needs the particular imaginative device of the *story*.
 - b. Only stories can convey the dramatic unity appropriate to a unique lifetime: the intelligible //pattern of character emerges through the twists and turns of the plot." [Spohn, pp. 79-80.]
- C. Alasdair MacIntyre's notion of the Narrative
 1. Indispensable
 2. Dramatic
 3. Moral self seen in terms of this narrative unity
 - a. "In what does the unity of an individual life consist?"

- b. The answer is that its unity is the unity of a narrative embodied in a single life." (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 218).
- 4. Elaboration of MacIntyre's theory from his *After Virtue*
 - a. "To be the subject of a narrative that runs from one's birth to one's death is, I remarked earlier, to be accountable for the actions and experiences which compose a narratable life.
 - b. It is, that is, to be open to being asked to give a certain kind of account of what one did or what happened to one or what one witnessed at any earlier point in one's life than the time // at which the question is posed." pp. 217-218.
 - c. "The other aspect of narrative selfhood is correlative: I am not only accountable, I am one who can always ask others for an account, who can put others to the question.
 - d. I am part of their story, as they are part of mine.
 - e. The narrative of any one life is part of an interlocking set of narratives.
 - f. Moreover this asking for and giving of accounts itself plays an important part in constituting narratives." p. 218.
 - g. "It does follow of course that all attempts to elucidate the notion of personal identity independently of and in isolation from the notions of narrative, intelligibility and accountability are bound to fail." (*AV*, p. 218.)
- 5. This notion of narrative will be taken up and expanded in Hauerwas's model of story and Christian discipleship.

XXXIX. CONVERSION THROUGH REVELATION

- A. Implication of Conversion in one's own story:
 - 1. "Conversion implies moving into a different story, making the common memory and tradition of the Christian community our own.

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2. This story now becomes our story, but we are no longer the center of the narrative." [Spohn, p. 80.]
- B. Conversion and the community's corporate story:
1. Again, the liturgical life of the community, in which we re-create the Christian story in our time, could be an important aid here.
 2. Consider too, the Jewish notion of the *Haggadah*, i.e. the "telling of the story"
 - a. to enculturate individuals into the community,
 - b. as well as a summons of all in the community to "remember"
- C. How this Conversion works with and through Scripture:
1. "Conversion takes root as the self reinterprets its own past and future in light of this self-disclosure of God and responds appropriately. Scripture provides paradigms for this response." p. 80.
 2. According to Niebuhr: "The revelation of God is not a possession but an event which happens over and over again when we remember the illuminating center of our history." [Niebuhr, *MR*, p. 129 {Spohn, p. 81 }].
 3. Relation to the notion of the deposit of faith.
 4. "By recalling that event, we discover God in the present, and progress toward a new self-understanding." p. 81.
 5. Example of the Prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures:
 - a. who "convict Israel more by challenging national self-understanding with powerful imagery." [Spohn, p. 81].
 - b. E.g. Hosea who uses the image of adultery to accuse Israel.

XL. NIEBUHR'S UNDERSTANDING OF CHRISTIAN REVELATION

- A. The "Point of View"

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- B. Philosophical Hermeneutical Premise: No "Neutral" Vantage Point is humanly possible.
- C. "The historical point of view of the observer must be taken into consideration in every case since no observer can get out of history into a realm beyond time-space; if reason is to operate at all it must be content to work as an historical reason." *MR*, p. 12.
- D. However, avoid solipsism:
 - 1. Our individual point of view is conditioned and informed by the past experience of the community, as well as subjecting my/our story to "evaluation" by others.
 - 2. This point will be important for fleshing out the notion of the community's "story" for ethics.
 - 3. "To be in history is to be in society, though in a particular society.
 - 4. Every view of the universal from the finite standpoint of the individual in such a society is subject to the test of experience
 - 5. on the part of companions who look from the same standpoint in the same direction
 - 6. as well as to the test of consistency with the principles and concepts that have grown out of past experience in the same community." *MR*, p. 15.
- E. The "Story" of Our Life
 - 1. Faith in Our History
 - a. Revelation is not *identical* with history
 - (1) Faith critiques what we "see" in our history
 - (2) Avoid error of creating a "sacred history" outside of "secular history"
 - b. "The error frequently made in the Christian community which has been the occasion for the rise of many difficulties in understanding and propagating the historical faith has been the location of revelation

in external history or in history as known from the non-participating view.

- c. So revelation has been identified with some miracle, whether this was the single act of a person or his whole life or the life of a community, such as Israel or the church.
- d. In this way certain events in external history were set apart as sacred, or a sacred history //of one community has been opposed to the secular histories of other societies."MR, pp. 54-55.

2. External vs. Internal History

- a. Elaboration of Niebuhr's point of Faith critiquing our history.
- b. External history: "... the data of external history are all impersonal; they are ideas, interests, movements among things.
- c. Even when such history deals with human individuals it seeks to reduce them to impersonal parts.
- d. Jesus becomes, from this point of view, a complex of ideas about ethics and eschatology, of psychological and biological elements." MR, p. 47.
- e. Internal history: "Internal history, on the other hand, is not a story of things in juxtaposition or succession; it is personal in character.
- f. Here the final data are not elusive atoms of matter or thought but equally elusive selves." MR, p. 47.

3. Notion of "Spectator's" vs. "Participant's" Point of View:

- 4. "If we begin with the spectator's knowledge of events we cannot proceed to the participant's apprehension.
- 5. There is no continuous movement from an objective inquiry into the life of Jesus to a knowledge of him as the Christ who is our Lord.
- 6. Only a decision of the self, a leap of faith, a *metanoia* or revolution of the mind can lead from observation to participation and from observed to lived history.

7. And this is true of all other events in sacred history." *MR*, p. 61.

F. The "Event-for-God"

1. The "Ultimate" nature of the Event: (tied in once again with HRN's understanding of "radical monotheism")

a. "The ultimate nature of an event is not what it is in its isolation only but

b. what it is in its connection with all other events,

c. not what it is for itself but also what it is from an inclusive point of view.

d. The event, as it really is, is the event as it is for God who knows it at the same time and in one act from within as well as from without, in its isolation as well as in its community with all other events.

e. Such knowledge of the nature of events is beyond the possibility of the finite point of view." *MR*, p. 61.

f. Fundamental to the notion of "Response" to Revelation.

g. Humanly impossible to see as God sees:

(1) "Though we cannot speak of the way in which the two aspects of historical events are ultimately related in the event-for-God

(2) we can describe their functional relationship for us.

(3) Such a description must once more be given confessionally, not as a statement of what all men ought to do

(4) but as a statement of what we have found it necessary to do in the Christian community on the basis of the faith which is our starting point." p. 62.

h. So this is precisely where the community's "faith-full" meditation on Revelation, and ongoing discernment, become crucial.

- i. Parenthetical observation: Though Niebuhr is using different language his thought here bears a certain resonance to Rahner, e.g. his *Hearers of the Word*.
- j. Also related to the notion of “reading the signs of the times” and “discernment of spirits”

G. Reasons of the Heart

1. Interplay between Imagination and Reason

- a. "Revelation means for us that part of our inner history which illuminates the rest of it and which is itself intelligible." *MR*, p. 68.
- b. As Christians we appeal to the Revelation of God in Jesus Christ:
- c. "Revelation means this intelligible [Christ] even which makes all other events intelligible." *MR*, p. 69.
- d. Don't separate Imagination from Reason:
- e. "We make a false distinction when we so separate reason and imagination as to make the former the arbiter in our knowledge of the external world while we regard the inner life as the sphere of the latter." *MR*, p. 70.

2. Moral and Immoral Uses of our Imagination:

- a. Proper "moral" use of our imagination, a concept which is increasingly seen as foundational to human morality::
- b. "The question which is relevant for the life of the self among selves is not whether personal images should be employed but only what personal images are right and adequate and which are evil imaginations of the heart." *MR*, p. 72.
- c. Immoral use: "Evil" imagination:
- d. "Evil imaginations in this realm are shown to be evil by their consequences to selves and communities just as erroneous concepts and hypotheses in external knowledge are shown to be fallacious by their results." *MR*, p. 73.

- e. Hauerwas uses this concept in his own notion of “false stories”
3. Niebuhr's "Reasoning Heart" metaphor:
- a. "The heart must reason; the participating self cannot escape the necessity of looking for pattern and meaning in its life and relations.
 - b. It cannot make a choice between reason and imagination but only between reasoning on the basis of adequate images and thinking with the aid of evil imaginations." *MR*, p. 79.
4. Interpretation through Progressive Revelation
- a. Theological Prenote (Reminder): As "Revelation" then my "understanding" stands under the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - b. "Through the cross of Christ we gain a new understanding of the present scene;
 - c. we note relations previously ignored;
 - d. find explanations of our actions hitherto undreamed of.
 - e. Deeds and sufferings begin to compose themselves into a total picture of significant action in which the self no longer occupies the center." *MR*, p. 90.
 - f. The Revelatory moment(s) which makes my reality "intelligible"
 - (1) "First of all, the revelatory moment is one which makes our past intelligible.
 - (2) Through it we understand what we remember,
 - (3) remember what we have forgotten and
 - (4) appropriate as our own past much that seemed alien to us." p. 81.
 - (5) Recall the role of the Paraclete according to Jesus in John's Gospel:

- (a) John 14:16-17
 - (b) John 14:26
 - (c) John 16: 7-15
- g. The insight of this "moment" usually comes in form of some "image"
- h. which illumines the past:
- i. calling us to both
- (1) confession (in both senses of the word):
 - (a) Confession of Faith in Jesus Christ
 - (b) Confession of the past, a past I often would like to (and could) forget, if left to myself.
 - (c) "By reasoning on the basis of revelation the heart not only understands what it remembers but is enabled and driven to remember what it had forgotten.
 - (d) When we use insufficient and evil images of the personal or social self we drop out of our consciousness or suppress those memories which do not fit in with the picture of the self we cherish." *MR*, p. 83.
 - (2) and community (I do not stand alone)
 - (a) Integration into the community means acceptance, at least up to a point, of the community's story.
 - (b) Niebuhr uses the example of "Americanization" and the story of the Pilgrims.
 - (c) "When men enter into a new community they not only share the present life of their new companions but also adopt as their own the past history of their fellows." *MR*, p. 84.

- (3) the community *also* is called to corporate examination of its past, and confession of its sins.
 - j. Progressive nature of Revelation also calls us to reason with our hearts about the present, what God is doing in our world now
 - k. and to reason about the future as well: the potentiality for my and the my community's actions, attitudes, "imagination," etc.
- H. A God Who Reveals God's Self
- 1. An Event, not a "Possession"
 - a. "The revelation of God is not a possession but an event, which happens over and over again when we remember the illuminating center of our history.
 - b. What we can possess is the memory of Jesus Christ, but what happens to us through that memory we cannot possess." *MR*, p. 129.
 - c. Be careful of misinterpreting the import of the traditional term "deposit of faith"
 - (1) not some static "treasure chest"
 - (2) Much less a "bank" deposit of "faith" into our eternal IRA!
 - (3) Remember the parable of the talents
 - (4) Recall too *Dei verbum* on progressive appropriation of revelation
 - 2. Revelation as call to continuing conversion
 - a. "Continuing" rather than "continuous":
 - (1) Realistic view of human life, like a plot
 - (2) Therefore, there will be key developments; the plot will thicken.
 - b. Niebuhr's summary:

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- c. "Revelation is not a development of our religious ideas but their continuous conversion.
- d. God's self-disclosure is that permanent revolution in our religious life by which all religious truths are painfully transformed and all religious behavior transfigured by repentance and new faith." *MR*, p. 133.

XLI. USE OF SCRIPTURE IN RESPONDING TO REVELATION (Skip and Remove if no time)

- A. Hermeneutical problem: which images, themes, etc. are the appropriate ones to guide our moral theology?
- B. This problem and its resolution will become crucial when we consider the practical "prova" of the 5 Step methodology.
- C. General guidelines for the selection and appropriation of biblical images to ethics:
 - 1. The appropriate biblical images should be central to the canon of Scripture.
 - 2. The guiding images should convey or be coordinate with a theologically sound image of God. E.g. Exodus image of God as Redeemer and Deliverer of captives.
 - 3. The images should be consistent with God's definitive revelation in Jesus Christ. E.g. "Crusading Warrior" image of the Holy War would seem inconsistent with the New Testament character of Jesus.
 - 4. The images should be appropriate to the situation and shed light upon it.
 - 5. Finally, these images should indicate courses of action that concur with the standards of ordinary human morality.
 - 6. I.e, Christians are not called by God to behavior that is patently harmful to themselves or others.
 - 7. This criterion introduces the practice of a public test to check any suspension of the moral law in the name of personal inspiration.
- D. Final "Methodological Moral Reminder"

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1. Any *coherent* moral argument should draw on the four sources of Christian ethics in an *integrated* manner.
2. Thus, our "selection of biblical material must be justified by the other sources we use: theological validity in the tradition, consistency with the normative portrait of the human person found in ethics, and relevance to the factual situation as determined by the best empirical analyses available." p. 84.
3. Niebuhr warns against "evil imaginations of the heart": i.e., "symbols that send us down false ways and evoke self-centered affections.
4. They obscure the truth of who we are and what we are doing, thus leading to a future not of life, but of death.
5. Evil imaginations of the heart are detected by the consequences they lead to, just as concepts are invalidated by their erroneous results." p. 84.
6. [In this context cf. Ignatius' Rules for Discernment in the Second Week]
7. Spohn offers here the example of
 - a. apartheid,
 - b. nationalism, and
 - c. commercialism [e.g. when you pray for your Motor Home, be sure to tell God what color you want].
8. Recall the point of Fowl & Jones on relation between the character of the moral community and a valid interpretation of Scripture.

XLII. CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

- A. Preliminary Consideration of the Human Person as Moral Agent
 1. How one views the human person will have great impact on how one conceives morality.
 2. Essentialist--a human *nature*
 - a. Scholastic tradition

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- b. person respects the ends of this nature
 - c. Problems, as we shall see with physicalism,
 - d. and the use of a philosophical language which is no longer really current.
3. Universalist moral agent
- a. Kantian
 - b. Person as ends, never means
 - c. Act so that moral actions can be universalizable (i.e., categorical imperative)
 - d. Strong emphasis in the Enlightenment,
 - e. heavy stress on individualism
 - f. and individual human rights.
 - g. However, it would be good to note Alasdair MacIntyre's critique of this view:
 - (1) "To be a moral agent is, on this view, precisely to be able to stand back from any and every situation in which // one is involved,
 - (2) from any and every characteristic that one may possess,
 - (3) and to pass judgment on it from a purely universal and abstract point of view
 - (4) that is totally detached from all social particularity."
[MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 31-32]
4. Moral Agent as Character
- a. Importance of roles
 - b. Narrative

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- c. Communal focus
 - d. Greater prominence given to both the positive and negative role of the emotions in moral life and action.
 - e. Virtues, as they relate to character formation, will have greater prominence in this theory,
 - f. As well as attention to the social particularity of the moral agent.
 - g. This view has stronger biblical basis,
 - h. especially in reference to discipleship,
 - i. as well as greater correspondence in other ethical systems, such as Confucianism.
 - j. As well, is more congenial to existentialism.
- B. Background: Discipleship in the Mediterranean World
- 1. Jewish Rabbi and his disciples
 - 2. Greek notion of teacher and disciples
- C. Discipleship as a Moral Response
- 1. Premise: "Discipleship is not translatable into a slate of rules or pre-determined moral responses." [Spohn, "What...", "p. 95.]
 - 2. "Discipleship begins with the conviction that the most appropriate path is the one already blazed by Jesus and
 - 3. that the Christian must creatively embody that way of life in all situations.
 - 4. The moral question, 'What ought I to do?' is recast in more particular terms:
 - 5. How should I act as a disciple of Jesus in these circumstances?" p. 89.
 - 6. Problem with the model of discipleship for deontological meta-ethics

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- a. Focuses on the particular and specific, rather than on the general and universal
 - b. Cuts against "universal" moral discourse as a *terminus ad quem*
7. Different aspects of discipleship highlighted in the approaches by:
- a. Hauerwas
 - (1) focuses on the distinctive story of Jesus.
 - (2) Involves understanding of narrative theology.
 - b. McFague
 - (1) uses parable as the basic revelatory medium.
 - (2) I will not treat McFague

XLIII. SUMMARY COMMENTS ON THE DISCIPLESHIP APPROACH

- A. Common Fundamental Conclusion:
 - 1. discipleship must develop and grow,
 - 2. as the disciple(s) interiorize their learning.
- B. Scriptural "Call to Discipleship" Accounts
 - 1. The Synoptics: Following Jesus
 - a. Call *by* Jesus
 - (1) Into a discipleship group/community
 - (2) Usually called by twos; always *sent* in companionship
 - 2. John: Choice of the Liberating Truth
 - a. Jn 6:28-29

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- b. Jn 8:30-32
 - c. Witness of the Christian community
 - d. Distinct from the world
 - e. Role of the Paraclete
 - (1) Jn 14:16-17, 26
 - (2) Jn 16:7-15
3. Paul: Living as the New Creation
- a. 2 Cor 5:16-17
 - b. Gal 6:15
 - c. Live individually and corporately in accord with the significance of the New Creation
 - d. Mystical Body of Christ
- C. Discipleship and the American Social Gospel Movement
- 1. Protestant ecclesiology and social commitment
 - 2. Classic example: Charles M. Sheldon's religious novel, *In His Steps*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1956).
 - a. Classic religious novel of the American Protestant Social Gospel movement at the turn of the century.
 - b. The story concerns a group of Christians who decide to make all the daily practical decisions of their life according to the sole criterion, "What would Jesus do in this case?"
 - c. This work had immediate and widespread success, and was translated in numerous languages.
 - d. It remains an excellent means of comprehending the mentality behind the Social Gospel movement.

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- D. Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship*
 - 1. Importance for Post-War Christian ethics
 - 2. Bonhoeffer's notion of radical obedience
- E. Dulles' Sixth Model of the Church: "Discipleship Community of Believers"
 - 1. Originally given as a talk at the NY Province Congress in 1980.
 - 2. Published as Chapter 1, "Imagining the Church for the 1980's," in his *A Church to Believe In: Discipleship and the Dynamics of Freedom*, New York: Crossroad, 1982).

XLIV. DISCIPLESHIP ETHICS IN THE WORK OF JOHN HOWARD YODER

- A. Biography of Yoder
 - 1. Mennonite
 - 2. Teaches at Notre Dame
 - 3. Died 1997.
- B. Key Bibliography
 - 1. *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution: A Companion to Bainton*. Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, 1983.
 - a. Designed as a companion to Roland Herbert Bainton's Christian attitudes toward war and peace: a historical survey and critical re-evaluation.
 - 2. *The Christian Witness to the State*. Institute of Mennonite Studies Series, 3. Newton KA: Faith and Life Press, 1964.
 - a. Most of the material in this book was originally prepared as a working paper for a 1955 conference in Puidoux, Switzerland on the theme, "The Lordship of Christ Over Church and State."

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3. *The Fullness of Christ: Paul's Revolutionary Vision of Universal Ministry.* Elgin IL: Brethren Press, 1987.
 4. *He Came Preaching Peace.* Scottdale PA: Herald Press, 1985.
 5. *The Original Revolution: Essays on Christian Pacifism.* Christian Peace Shelf Series, 3. Scottdale PA: Herald Press, 1971.
 6. *The Pacifism of Karl Barth.* Washington, D. C.: Church Peace Mission, 1964.
 7. *The Politics of Jesus.* 2nd Ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972, 1994.
 - a. Yoder argues for a radical position of the implementation of Jesus' "politics" of non-violence as the true, legitimate Christian response of discipleship.
 8. *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel.* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.
 - a. Yoder examines first the theoretical and scriptural foundations of Christian social ethics,
 - b. then he reviews the historical efforts of the Anabaptists to "return" to the fundamental ethics of the New Testament, before concluding with an analysis of democracy and civil religion in the contemporary world.
 9. *What Would You Do? A Serious Answer to a Standard Question.* A Christian Peace Shelf Selection. Scottdale PA: Herald Press, 1983.
 - a. Yoder addresses the issue of violence and pacifism,
 - b. using examples from the lives of various people such as Dale Augerman, Leo Tolstoy, Joan Baez and Tom Skinner.
 - c. *When War Is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking.* Introduction by Charles P. Lutz. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984.
- C. Key aspects of Yoder's stance
1. stresses the normative material of the New Testament,

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2. interpreted through a political reading of the cross of Christ.
 3. Mennonite tradition: not literal obedience to biblical rules,
 4. but insistence that Jesus did proclaim a social ethic applicable to our contemporary world.
 5. As Joel Zimbelman observes, "Yoder is not an apologetic grounded in the logical or scientific proof of the reality of God incarnate.
 6. "Rather, the reality of Christ's work is witnessed to most profoundly by the presence, posture, and performative action of the community that confesses him.
 - a. "Jesus' importance and normativeness is that he is the Christ, but this is understood and experienced by the individual only when this affirmation is made as a member of the community called to such witness." p. 369.
 - b. Joel Zimbelman, "The Contribution of John Howard Yoder to Recent Discussions on Christian Social Ethics," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 45 (1992): 367-399.
- D. Yoder's Doctrine of solidarity elaborated in four ways:
1. "First, solidarity communicates God's intention for human salvation, redemption, and participation. Christ's resurrection implies the resurrection of all human beings." p. 369.
 2. "Second, Christ's act of solidarity empowers a new form of logical and theological `reasoning by solidarity'.
 - a. "The solidarity of the Christian community with Christ intimately relates the act of personal regeneration with an eschatological vision and hope in a world radically transformed and converted.
 - b. "Solidarity results in the setting right of personal relationships in conformity to a vision of restored communion and consequently restored capacity to obedience." p. 370.
 3. "Third, Christ's expression of solidarity with humanity through the cross witnesses to a descriptive and normative reversibility of the community with

Christ, 'the exchanged of character of Christ in our place and we in His'." p. 370.

4. "Fourth, Christ's posture in this relationship of solidarity provides a foundation and grounding--an image and model--of what is substantively required of the Christian community in posture and action.
 - a. "Christ the King, rather than being exalted, is humbled; rather than reveal himself in pomp, he exists among humanity in a station of little worldly note;
 - b. rather than shape the direction of history to his own ends and goals, he rejects the use of the methods and powers of the world; ..." p. 370.

E. Characteristics of Yoder's methodology:

1. "Yoder's approach is *phenomenological*. Christ's presence and work is experienced and understood in lived situations of communal or personal transformation." p. 372.
2. "Finally, Yoder's position is *political*.
 - a. "In opposition to a realist conception of politics (defined as the management of force, violence, and coercion by an elite as a means of directing events and outcomes)
 - b. Yoder argues for the fundamental political nature of Christian community construed as the establishing of individuals in community." p. 373.

F. Yoder's Understanding of the Authority of Scripture

1. "First, biblical realism establishes the normativeness of Scripture and its grounding on the Word of God mediated and incarnate in the community of faith.
 - a. "Scripture itself witnesses to the essential datum of the community as the concrete embodiment of Scripture's witness.
 - b. "Yoder suggests that this communal hermeneutic is an essential prerequisite to the realization of the incarnation in history. God's purposes cannot be understood--Scripture and history cannot be

deciphered--apart from the constituting of a community that confesses Christ as Lord." p. 374.

2. "Second, biblical realism sets the terms and concepts of Christian theological and ethical discourse.
 - a. "Rather than simply approach Scripture as a depository of revelation that furnishes correct postures, strategies, and answers to questions, respect for the authority of Scripture requires that it be permitted to inform how one engages in interpretation.
 - b. "Scripture is thus a reservoir of inspired insight and a source of correction and constraint both at the level of substance (theological and ethical) and critical method.
 - c. "The hermeneutic of biblical realism is accepted not because it definitionally supports the authority *of* Scripture, but because it is the method witnessed to *in* Scripture." p. 375.
3. "Third, biblical realism distances itself from fundamentalism and the advocates of a posture of propositional revelation, biblical legalism, and rigid casuistic reasoning in relating Scripture to changing contexts." p. 375.
4. "But Scripture's most important task is not to prove or make a point on narrow questions of morality and politics. It is rather to set questions and agendas." p. 375.
5. "Scripture's methodological imperative is that the Christian community remain open to the internal logic of the Word of God and explore conversationally and in full awareness of the base points of biblical realism the Gospel's implications for political community." p. 375.
6. "Finally, biblical realism argues for the relevance of the biblical vision (though not its changing ideologies and strategies // of concretizing transcendent visions in history) to all times and places.
 - a. "Scripture's message of reconciliation and redemption witnessed to in Scripture is not logically dependent on any concrete ideological formulation, worldview, or cultural perception.
 - b. "It is a message that stands in creative tension with all human attempts to express it exhaustively." pp. 375-376.

G. Yoder's use of Christology for ethics

1. "Christ's solidarity with humanity through his free choice of the cross empowers a like posture in the community of faith.
2. "First, the cross witnesses to a distinctive and normative ethic of servanthood and sacrifice." p. 378.
3. "The call for such a posture is the demand for a distinctive life-witness, established not in a framework of command-and-obedience to laws and rules, but rather based on the call of the community to 'an exceptionally normal quality of humanness'.
 - a. "Yoder thus argues for a prescriptive use of Scripture,
 - b. but one premised on and cognizant of his christological and hermeneutic presuppositions." p. 379.
4. "Second, the cross is the basis of a distinctly Christian political ethic." p. 379.
5. Christian political community "is best understood in terms of a 'non conformed quality of involvement in the life of the world. It thereby constitutes an unavoidable challenge to the powers that be and the beginning of a new set of social alternatives'." p. 379.
6. "Third, Yoder argues that the cross serves as the foundation for a new theology of history. The New Testament *kerygma* is a message of God's promise and its fulfillment enacted in the context of history.
 - a. "Christ's incarnation informs and shapes the meaning and possibilities of history.
 - b. "The profession of this fact--the elaboration of a new eschatological vision--is essential to the Christian witness." p. 380.
7. "By underestimating the way in which sin has warped the ego and the rational and intellectual capacities of human beings, Constantinianism, more than many other political visions, incorrectly assumes that human beings can manage the causal relationship between events and desired outcomes.

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8. "Equally troublesome for Yoder is its tendency to assume the morally justified use of force, coercion, and violence in attaining proximate or ultimate ends." p. 382.

H. Love and Non-violence as Gospel Mandates

1. "Christian morality is more than interpretive method and a concern with right motives, intentions, and religious // orientation.
2. "It must embody as well the fundamentally other-regarding imperatives witnessed to by Christ.
3. "Yoder's is a praxis-oriented morality, requiring the deliberative application of those imperatives to changing situations." pp. 384-385.
4. "According to Yoder, nonviolence entails the willingness to renounce the power of the world and to reject a concern with efficacy for a position grounded in the prior claim of Christ." p. 385.

I. Justice for Yoder:

1. "Justice is understood by Yoder to express a fundamental posture or orientation of righteousness toward God.
2. "Such righteousness presupposes conversion--`likemindedness' with Christ--and membership in the Kingdom of God manifest as a participant in the witnessing community.
 - a. "But in addition to the necessity of such a religious orientation, justice as righteousness also embodies an attitude or disposition of concern and care for the neighbor.
 - b. "And in this regard the just Christian is called to act on these dispositions to creatively and efficaciously mediate God's love to others in concrete, tangible ways." p. 390.
3. "For Yoder, the justice of the Kingdom is most fully embodied in the `hard sayings' of the Gospel as Jubilee and so possesses a fundamentally efficacious and other-regarding dimension.
 - a. "But this eschatological conception of justice differs both in fundamental orientation

b. and to a lesser degree in substance from 'worldly' justice." p. 390.

4. "The biblical mandate also informs procedural conceptions of justice. The Christian community cannot give unreserved support to specific forms of political economy (e.g. democratic capitalism, socialism)." p. 391.

J. Relationship of Church and State in Yoder

1. "Since the Church alone is called to reflect and witness to the work of Christ, the state's most important task will be to 'simply...keep things from falling apart so that the Church can do the work of the Kingdom'." p. 392.

2. "According to Yoder, the state embodies a 'necessity of orders' willed by God." p. 397.

3. "While the Church is not to sacrifice its distinctiveness from the state, nor establish a 'Christian cultural alternative' // to the prevailing ethos, neither should it exhibit a posture of 'systematic withdrawal'." pp. 397-398.

4. "Yoder's concern, then, is to frame the issue of the Christian's answer to the call of the state not in terms of 'what can I do and still call myself a Christian',

5. but in terms of 'what does the Call ask of me, and can I be called to obey or collaborate with the state in light of the prior claim of Christ?'" p. 399.

K. Evaluation and Critique of Yoder

1. Difficulty in taking a "prophetic" stance and making it "normative" for the entire Christian community.

2. His exegesis is frankly a bit forced, and problematic with trying to discover a New Testament ethics as such.

3. Positively, Yoder does take the Cross seriously.

4. Challenges the common assumption that we have to make the world come out right.

5. Prophetic vision, especially in regards to pacifism.

6. Great influence on Hauerwas, but not a mainstream position.

XLV. THE CHRISTIAN ETHICS OF STANLEY HAUERWAS

A. Background on Hauerwas

1. Born in 1940 in Texas.
2. Humble family background; non-academic.
3. Ph.D. from Yale, under James Gustafson.
4. Southern Methodist tradition, with fascination for Mennonites, who lived, taught, and worshiped for 14 years in the Roman Catholic community of UND.
5. Colleague of John Howard Yoder.
6. Brief look at Hauerwas' publications to see his major concerns and themes:
 - a. Community
 - b. Character
 - c. Virtue
 - d. Vision
 - e. Pacifist non-violence

B. Hauerwas' Premises on the Christian moral life

1. What Christian morality is, and is not:
 - a. "The Christian life is more than a series of existential decisions or moments of obedience to a clear command of God." p. 93.
 - b. Significance for Hauerwas' theological anthropology, and its relation to moral *formation*--which he sees as the key task of Christian ethics:
 - c. [Spohn]: "We are not people whose morality emerges at occasional moments of decision,

- d. but people with a gradually developing consistency that places those decisions in a personal context." p. 92.
- C. Notion of Christian Character and Virtue
1. Transformation of character which serves as the central aspect of Christian discipleship.
 2. Concomitant use of virtues which give a "consistency" to the self.
 - a. Harkens back to the tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas.
 - b. While Aristotle and Aquinas present the virtues in general terms, and based on a discussion of human nature, and
 - c. therefore logically applicable to any human, Hauerwas uncovers "the normative virtues for Christians in the story of Jesus presented by the Gospels." p. 93.
- D. Theological Use of the Christian Story
1. "Hauerwas derived the notion of story from H. Richard Niebuhr, but he departs from Niebuhr on three points.
 - a. First, the Gospel narrative presents a more specific call than the exploratory discernment that uses biblical symbols to interpret events.
 - b. Second, Hauerwas corrects Niebuhr's 'intuitionism' by presenting a normative pattern of conscious virtuous dispositions.
 - c. Third, he insists that the Church must be the location for reflecting on what God is doing in one's life." [Spohn, p. 93].
 - d. Example of Hauerwas' *Resident Aliens*
 2. Use of Scripture to discover the Christian story
 - a. "The moral use of Scripture, therefore, lies precisely in its power to help us remember the story of God for the continual guidance of our community and individual lives." [A *Community of Character*, p. 66]

- b. "The three foundations of his argument are:
 - (1) the narrative, which shapes Christian life,
 - (2) the community of the Church as the place where Scripture has authority, and
 - (3) the inadequacy of more philosophical accounts of Christian ethics." [Spohn, p. 93].

- 3. Nicholas Lash's Notion of "Performing the Scriptures"
 - a. Cf. Lash's *Theology on the Way to Emmaus*, (London: SCM Press, 1986), pp. 37-46.
 - b. the social embodiment of Christian life necessary for interpreting Scripture entails 'performing the Scriptures' under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
 - c. "Christian practice, as interpretative action, consists in the *performance* of texts which are construed as 'rendering', bearing witness to, one whose words and deeds, discourse and suffering, 'rendered' the truth of God in human history.
 - d. "The performance of the New Testament enacts the conviction that these texts are most appropriately read as the story of Jesus, the story of everyone else, and the story of God." [Lash, p. 42]

- E. A "Story-Defined" Disciple
 - 1. Example of Jesus' rebuke of Peter in Mk 8:31-36:
 - a. Mark 8:31-33: Rebuke of Peter

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

b. Mark 34-36: Conditions for discipleship

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?"

2. "Either this story changes Peter and the other hearers so that they embark on that fateful journey, or else they cease to be Jesus' disciples." p. 94.
3. "For Hauerwas, like Niebuhr, Christian ethics aims to transform the self-understanding of the agent. Here the dominant story that shapes the character of the would-be disciples clashes with the story of Jesus." [Spohn, p. 94]

F. A "Story-Defined" Community

1. Philosophical Premise and starting point: "No Man is an Island"
 - a. "What we do and how we do it are ultimately rooted in a way of life, a story that shapes our self-understanding and that of the communities to which we belong.
 - b. No one can have a completely private story: a way of life is always determined by a specific community to which //we are loyal." [Spohn, pp. 94-95].
2. Function of the Story for the Community
 - a. "An adequate and effective community story encourages its adherents to face the particular challenges and tragedies of life.
 - b. Christians, however, believe the story of Jesus not because of its functional value in ordering life but because of its truthfulness. ...
 - c. What kind of people does this community and its story produce?" [Spohn, p. 95]
3. Connection with Hauerwas' ecclesiology

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- a. "The life of the Church is the acid test of the truthfulness of its story. It must live up to its proclamation or it gives the lie to the Gospel." p. 95.
 - b. "The primary social task of the Church is to be itself authentically.
 - c. It may challenge secular society on specific issues, but on specific issues, but it must first be visibly different from the world." [Spohn, p.95].
- G. A Community of Character and the Valid Interpretation of Scripture, the Christian Story
1. Point developed by Stephen Fowl and L. Gregory Jones in their *Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991).
 2. Relation between ethos and use of Scripture.
 3. Recall H. Richard Niebuhr's concept of "evil imaginations of the heart."
 4. Use the example of the South African Dutch Reformed Church: "The rise of the theological and scriptural superstructure that supports apartheid with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC) provides a further example of the interrelationships between character and interpretation." p. 96.
 5. "It was only after apartheid had received its theological rationalization and was the *status quo*, however, that large-scale biblical justifications of this situation were offered.
 6. The most systematic and comprehensive of these accounts came out in 1974 under the title *Human Relations and the South African Scene in the Light of Scripture*." p. 98.
 - a. Dutch Reformed Church, Cape Town-Pretoria, 1974. Official English translation of *Ras, Volk en Naise en Volkereverhoudinge in die lig van die Skrif*,
 - b. which was accepted by the DRC's General Synod in October, 1974.
 7. "... the document claims that while God affirms the solidarity of humanity, God also ordains ethnic diversity.

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8. "The document goes on to assert that this diversity can best be maintained by the practices of separation institutionalized in apartheid." p. 98.
9. Fowl and Jones' critique of the weaknesses of such interpretation
 - a. Methodological certainly, but more fundamentally,
 - b. a flaw in the community's *character*, which in turn led to and supported the flawed biblical interpretation.
 - c. "This failure is not simply a failure of interpretive method; it is a failure to have a well-formed character capable of faithful interpretive practice." p. 99.
 - d. Gravity of the problem:
 - (1) "When distortions of character enter and deeply permeate the life of any Christian community,
 - (2) that community loses its ability to read Scripture in ways that would challenge and correct its character.
 - (3) Scripture simply becomes a mirror reflecting a community's self-deceptions back to itself disguised as the word of God.
 - (4) This is what happened to the DRC. It lost the ability to read Scripture over against itself;
 - (5) it lost the ability to hear the critical, prophetic voice of Scripture." p. 99.
10. Ethos, the individual and the community
 - a. Need to develop this above section in conjunction with a sustained treatment of ethos.
 - b. It also would point up one of the weaknesses of an individually based meta-ethics,
 - c. i.e., the community dimension, and how to come to terms with it.
11. Prophetic denunciation of the community's ethos

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- a. "If and when a community becomes unable to hear the word of the Lord rightly
 - b. because of deeply embedded character distortions,
 - c. it gets caught in the downward spiral of mutually reinforcing failures of character and interpretation.
 - d. In such situations, a prophet like Jeremiah,
 - (1) one who can stand on the fringes of that community
 - (2) and yet address the word of the Lord to the community in its own language,
 - (3) may be the only one who can break the downward spiral."
[Fowl & Jones, *Reading*, p. 102].
- H. Normative nature of the Story: Testing its truth
- 1. Return to the theology of Stanley Hauerwas
 - 2. Inadequacy of the natural law according to Hauerwas
 - a. "at best negatively limits action: it cannot tell us what to do, even though it may indicate something that is inappropriate for our humanity." p. 97.
 - b. Previous attempts at natural law are now seen to be culturally or historically time-bound: e.g. acceptance of slavery, subordination of women. "They were natural only to those who shared that limited cultural story." p. 97.
 - 3. Inadequacy of Kantian universalism according to Hauerwas
 - a. "attempts to transcend cultural differences by appealing to a common rationality." [p. 97]
 - b. "Hidden agenda":
 - (1) It embodies a story that is largely unrecognized:

- (2) the story of self-sufficient free agents who deal with each other as strangers, not as members of communities with committed roles.
 - (3) Cf. John Rawls' approach to justice.
 - c. Critique of "Moral Esperanto" ala Jeffrey Stout in his *Ethics After Babel*
 - (1) A language no one speaks as a mother tongue
 - (2) NOT in fact intelligible to all
 - (3) Always will involve an underlying grammar of one or another language.
 - d. Destructive of community:
 - (1) "The lawsuit rather than the family discussion becomes the paradigm for settling differences." p. 97.
 - (2) Adjudication of issues by impersonal judge, on basis of individual rights,
 - (3) rather than by the litigants themselves,
 - (4) in the context of the community, and
 - (5) on the basis of the roles that each has.
 - e. According to Hauerwas such an approach does not aid us in judging the "truthfulness" of our stories.
 - f. "Moreover, any ethical theory that is sufficiently abstract and universal to claim neutrality would not be able to form character." [*Truthfulness and Tragedy*, p. 24]
4. Norms for Testing the Truth of a Story
- a. To illustrate the concept of testing the "truthfulness" of stories Hauerwas uses Augustine's i and Albert Speer's *Inside the Third Reich*, the latter being a story which fosters self-deception.

- b. According to Hauerwas "A truthful story exposes the tragedy and compromising nature of our lives."
 - (1) "Only the story of Jesus, which asserts the necessity of the cross, can shape a self capable of facing such unpleasant truths.
 - (2) Discipleship will always go against the grain." [Spohn, p. 99]

XLVI. CRITIQUE OF NIEBUHR AND HAUERWAS

A. Some Common Critiques

- 1. Weak role of articulated moral norms, what Spohn calls the "Problem of the Vanishing Rules."
- 2. Ambivalent or negative evaluation of the role of the natural law.
 - a. Typical Protestant theological view.
 - b. There is a "natural law" theory implied in almost every person's reasoning process.
 - c. Difficulty to dialogue with non-Christians or non-believers if we do not use the natural law.
- 3. Overall Positive Critique: takes Scripture seriously, and reflects more systematically on how it can be used in moral issues.

B. Critique of H. Richard Niebuhr

- 1. Negative critique ala Hauerwas
 - a. First, the Gospel narrative presents a more specific call than the exploratory discernment that uses biblical symbols to interpret events.
 - b. Second, Hauerwas corrects Niebuhr's 'intuitionism' by presenting a normative pattern of conscious virtuous dispositions.

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- c. Third, he insists that the Church must be the location for reflecting on what God is doing in one's life." [Spohn, p. 93].
- 2. Positive Critique
 - a. Profound influence on a whole generation of moral theologians, Protestant and Catholic.
 - b. Key Notion of Revelation:
 - (1) Revealed Reality
 - (2) Internal History
 - c. Response to Revelation
 - (1) Creature's response to the Creator and Lord.
 - (2) Work with God.
 - (3) Participant's vs. Spectator's Viewpoint.
- C. Critique of Hauerwas
 - 1. Negative Critique
 - a. Spohn's Critique of Hauerwas: "he does not explain precisely how the literary impact of a story effects human transformation.
 - b. We listen to many stories for amusement or curiosity, stories that do not call for radical change in our lives.
 - c. How does the New Testament story make such a claim on us?" p. 97.
 - d. [I'd say in response, that it is the "Sacred Claim" which the New Testament story has that allows it to transform us. This comes from an a priori acceptance somehow based in the community.]
 - e. Hauerwas' ecclesiology: a church apart from the world.
 - f. His method is a bit hard to pin down, to explain, and to apply.

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- g. Overall problem of acceptability of "story moral theology" as common discourse. Do people in fact talk in this sort of language?
- h. Ethics in the subjunctive mood.
- 2. Positive Critique
 - a. Notion of the Story is valid
 - b. Emphasis on character
 - (1) transformation
 - (2) moral education
 - (3) retrieval of the discourse on virtue
 - c. Emphasis on community in moral life
 - d. A Full "Definition" of what Christian ethics involves.

XLVII. SCRIPTURE AS BASIS FOR RESPONDING LOVE

- A. Key point, recalled from Spohn, is the *rational* nature of emotions.
- B. Scripture used to shape and reshape our emotions and religious affections.
- C. Definition and Limits of Spohn's Model
 - 1. Specific use of Jonathan Edwards' Christian "Affections"
 - 2. Not a treatment of the "Love Commandments" as such (e.g., no real mention of the "Double Commandment" in the Synoptics).
 - 3. I am rearranging Spohn's presentation here, hopefully in a clearer fashion.
 - 4. I also think that the nature of love as a passion, as understood by Thomas Aquinas, could help flesh out the theological anthropology of Spohn's model and give it a firmer philosophical grounding.

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5. Therefore, I will make a few additions along these lines to the presentation as we go along.
 6. Highly recommended and very readable book for Thomistic ethics: Paul Wadell, *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas*. New York: Paulist Press, 1992.
- D. Answers the Moral Question: "What Ought I to Do?" by investigating *both* the motive and the norm for loving others in reference to:
1. the witness of God's love in Scripture
 2. which has been confirmed in the individual's (and community's) own experience.
- E. Response Nature of this Love:
1. "Love is the norm and the central motivation in New Testament ethics;
 2. because it is initiated by God, it always has the character of response." p. 106
 3. Gift and call (*Gabe und Aufgabe*)
- F. Thomistic Excursus on the Appetites and Passions in Christian Ethics
1. "Aquinas's moral theology argues eloquently that we are not yet who we should be, and that we do not have within us what is lacking for our completion. What is requisite for wholeness stands outside us." p. 86.
 2. "...thus, it is not so much a question of self-development, but of being developed by another." p. 87.
 3. Nature of love as a passion, according to Aquinas:
 - a. "A passion is a sign of deficiency, a confession of need.
 - b. The word passion signifies the need for further development, it speaks of incompleteness yearning for growth;
 - c. however, it also recognizes that wholeness is not something we can bestow on ourselves,

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- d. but is something we acquire through the agency of another.
 - e. To say that love is the key to our moral deliverance, and to identify it as a passion, is to know that our perfection comes by receiving a good we not only lack, but by nature are incapable of giving ourselves." [Wadell, Primacy, p. 87.]
4. Recall the central role of the passions in Thomistic ethics
- a. "Passion not only registers need, it also registers receptivity, for it suggests that whatever wholeness is lacking is brought to us through the agency of someone else." p. 87.
 - b. Relation to Thomistic understanding of "potentiality,"
 - (1) i.e., the recognition that our needs can be met, or
 - (2) in Thomistic vocabulary, a relation of potentiality to actuality.
 - (3) However, in terms of the passions and love, this potentiality is not primarily "actualized" or self-generated or self-fulfilled through our own efforts,
 - (4) but rather through "our openness to whatever has the goodness and power to draw us more fully to life." p. 87.
 - c. "For Aquinas the most important concern for the moral life is the development of our feelings according to what is best for us.
 - d. "The Christian moral life, Aquinas insisted, does not demand extirpating the passions, but transforming them.
 - e. Morality needs the passions because it is only when there is something for which we care that we do anything at all." [Wadell, Primacy, p. 79.]
5. Note the teleological thrust to the passions (direction) as opposed to a deontological understanding of the passions (control).
- G. Role of the Christian "Affections" according to Spohn in his model of Responding Love

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1. According to Spohn, "Christian experience is shaped by a set of symbols on one side and a set of affections on the other." p. 107.
2. "This approach focuses on the change of 'heart' and the dynamics that dispose the heart to action, the *affections*." p. 107.
3. Summary of Spohn's argument:
4. "The affections are the central dispositions of moral character that lead to particular ways of acting.
5. Affections are defined by the experiences that give rise to them and by the objects toward which they tend.
6. Scripture both evokes and directs the affections in distinctive ways.
7. Therefore, biblical symbols and narratives have a normative correlation with a distinctive set of affections that form Christian character in community." p. 107.

H. The Object of Christian Affections

1. Spohn is spinning out a theological reflection based on Jonathan Edwards' 1746 book *Religious Affections*.
2. Moral (Anthropological) Nature of Affections:
 - a. "Affections are the basic motivations that shape an individual's character; they are also dispositions for acting in ways consonant with a person's convictions and commitments.
 - b. "Affections are both stable and dynamic aspects of the character because they deepen if they are acted out, fade if they are ignored.
 - c. "More permanent facets of motivation than feeling and under more control than moods, affections continue to exist in the agent even when not being experienced consciously.
 - d. "An older vocabulary referred to them as habits of the soul, virtues and vices that lead to specific ways of evaluating and acting." p. 112.
3. Origin and Object of Affections:

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- a. Methodological Premise:
 - b. "One useful way to examine the affections is to look at their origin and their object.
 - c. Affections are not irrational;
 - d. rather, they provide a felt, wholistic evaluation of the situation as they grasp its qualitative tone in a way that pure reason could never do.
 - e. They are sound if object and origin are both properly grounded." p. 112.
 - f. Object and Origin of Christian agape:
 - g. "The object and origin of Christian love defines its character.
 - h. It is not self-generated by responsive to One who has first shown love to //the undeserving subject. Both origin and object are personal.
 - i. Only persons evoke love, and love seeks some sort of union with the beloved.
 - j. *Agape* is not limited to others who are attractive, which would betray the merciful graciousness that occasioned it originally." pp. 112-113.
- I. Love and Friendship with God
1. Thomistic understanding of the moral significance of Christian love and friendship. [From Wadell, Primacy]
 2. "We cannot love God and remain unchanged. To love God in charity is to become like God in goodness.
 3. There is a terrible vulnerability to any love because to love is to become like the one we love.
 4. There is a loss of control in this, indeed a loss of self, because to love is to lose one kind of self and take on another.
 5. Nowhere is this transformation more drastic than in charity.

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6. Charity fosters vulnerability to God, an openness so exhaustive that we ultimately become defenseless before the love who is our life.
7. To become defenseless before God in charity is to absorb fully the Spirit, it is to be made over by the love that is God's happiness,
8. and when that transfiguration is achieved we have not only changed, we have changed in a way that makes us enough like God to be another self to God;
9. it is then we can truly speak of ourselves as God's friends." p. 75.
10. "Love brings likeness, not identity.
11. In making us another self to God, charity does not abolish differences between God and ourselves;
12. rather, it works for the union of hearts that is every friendship's perfection." p. 76.
13. Related point on the Imitation of Christ as seen in the light of the Third Degree of Humility proposed by St. Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises*
 - a. Our love for Jesus Christ moves us to want to be like him even in his sufferings, dishonor, etc.
 - b. Hard to conceive of this moral desire as a "universalizable" moral norm.
14. "Finally, although to speak of God as another self does not mean God's self becomes our own,
15. it does mean we cannot be ourselves without God.
16. [friends] are substantial, irreplaceable parts of our lives, which is why to change our friends is to change ourselves.
17. If this is true in every good friendship, it is also true in our friendship with God.
18. To call God another self is a confession of need, a heartfelt acknowledgement that we need God in order to be." p. 77.

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J. Charity and Godliness according to Thomas

1. "To increase charity is to grow weaker in the ways we can resist God, stronger in the ways we can receive God." [Wadell, Primacy, p. 91]
2. "To love God in charity means we lose control over our precisely where the risk is greatest: we lose control over our self. To have charity is to be recentered on God, not only because God becomes our primary attachment, but more significantly because God becomes the One by whom we are." [Wadell, p. 92.]
3. Example of Thomas More in Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*:
 - a. Thomas More in the Tower of London explaining to his daughter Margaret why he will not submit to King Henry
 - b. "Finally, it's not a matter of reason, finally it's a matter of love

K. The Origin of Christian Affections

1. Two main origins of Christian affections: "the memory of having been loved by Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit." [Spohn, p. 118].
 - a. Memory as *anamnesis*, which is fundamental to our understanding of the Eucharist.
 - b. "First of all, we must presuppose some human experiences at the origin of any affection, religious or otherwise. For the assertion that God is love to make sense we must take for granted some memories of human love in the one who hears it. If the individual lacks any experience of trustworthy friends or parents, it may be meaningless to call God faithful or constant." p. 118
 - c. [This is precisely the locus of my problem with Spohn; his "model" may well be inaccessible to vast numbers of people, who are nevertheless in their own way doing the best *they* can to live morally good lives.]
 - d. And this is a point where deontology is quite important. We do need rules, and an understanding of morality based on norms.
 - e. Another point in favor of a "mixed deontology" view.

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2. Here Spohn argues that the Christian community has a special vocation to love these people: "For those who have no experience of genuine love and concern, the service and love of Christians must provide the initial referent that will make the Gospel meaningful for them. This referent will always be ambiguous because any limited experience is never untainted by human selfishness." p. 118.

L. How Scripture "Schools" the Affections

1. E.g. Our "Naming" God in faith:
 - a. "Scripture schools the affections by presenting the various names the believer uses to address God and the narrative that orders those images into a remembered whole.
 - b. In religious experience, God is the object of address long before being the object of speculation.
 - c. We cannot address God under a specific aspect or image unless we assume the affective stance connoted in that image.
 - d. By revealing the appropriate names of God, Scripture instructs our hearts in new ways of relating to God." p. 113.
2. Being taught by Jesus to call God, "Abba"
3. Therefore, love for God becomes "filial" love:
 - a. "For the Christian, however, this love is not an indefinite global affection because it is now determined and shaped by the name 'Abba'.
 - b. The love of Jesus for God is the particular filial affection for the father;
 - c. this is the relationship into which he invites his followers when he lets them share his prayer." p. 113.

M. The Memory of Jesus Christ's Love and Presence

1. "We must have some experience of God in our lives, however obscure it may be, that is analogous to the experience of the first disciples.

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2. ...Faith comes through *recognizing* this same God in our lives. ...
3. To recognize, to disclose, means that a hidden reality is 'unveiled';
4. literally, it is the basis of the word 'revealed'.
5. This disclosure occurs when our suffering is grasped as somehow meaningful in light of the cross of Christ, or,
6. rather, when the one who hung on the cross has been present in and to our own struggles." p. 119.

N. Gratitude: The Path from Memory to Action

1. "Gratitude is the central affection that moves us from faith memory to corresponding action.
2. It makes the memory an empowering source of moral generosity;
3. it recognizes that the gift of God requires us to act generously toward others." p. 121.
4. Parable of the parable of the unmerciful minister (cf. Mt 18:21-35) with the required debt as an example of someone who has not grasped this central role of gratitude.
5. "This is what ultimately condemns the man: his ingratitude, not his inconsistency or "unfairness." p. 122
6. Gratitude translates into moral imperative:
 - a. "All of the moral imperatives of the Bible are authorized and energized by this gratitude for such undeserved mercy and love." p. 122.
 - b. "Our memories of grace are not complacent. They incite moral action because gratitude enables us to see what they imply--that we are now required to do likewise--and also empowers us to do it." p. 122.
7. Psycho-moral importance of gratitude,

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- a. Insight from Charles Shelton's "Reflections on the Mental Health of Jesuits." *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits* 23 (September, 1991): 33.
 - b. "In my experience, gratitude serves as a graced encounter.
 - c. In addition, from a psychological perspective, gratitude can be pivotal for adult Christian faith.
 - d. The psychologist Dan McAdams, in his empirical study of identity/intimacy development, discovered that the quest for identity is characterized by what he terms 'nuclear episodes'.
 - e. Briefly, nuclear episodes are significant events that transform our lives, leading us to increased self-understanding and renewal of our life goals.
 - f. I would suggest that experiences of gratitude serve as nuclear episodes in our quest for adult Christian faith.
 - g. "When we experience gratitude we come to know ourselves as valued and accepted."
 - h. Speaking as a vowed religious, Shelton said that personally, "The fruit of my gratitude was a greater freedom and availability, a deepening desire for service."
- O. Imitation of Jesus Christ as Christian moral task
1. "Imitation of God and imitation of Christ is the most comprehensive form of scriptural morality:
 2. 'Be holy as I am, says the Lord' in Old Testament language;
 3. 'Your attitude must be that of Christ the New (Phil 2:5).
 4. Love responds to an energizing action that instructs and empowers its actions. This imitation is not external." p. 122.
 5. "This formulation points back to the particular history of the individual and the tradition that has revealed the distinctive ways of God.

6. These become both motive and norm for a distinctive moral response from those who have been so loved and forgiven.
 7. 'Go and do likewise' sums up this morality of imitation." p. 122.
- P. Role of the Spirit as Source and Norm of Christian moral life
1. "Even though this has rarely been a locus of clear theological exposition, the gift of the indwelling Spirit is presented by the New Testament writers as an important source of moral life.
 2. The Fathers of the Church described this union between the Christian and the Spirit as a 'participation' in the life of God." p. 123.
 3. "In the Pauline writings the role of the Spirit in human transformation and ministry is intriguing but unclear.
 4. The ambiguity lies in *pneuma*, which variously refers to the divine presence of the Holy Spirit and to the new dimension of the person that is introduced by the presence of the Spirit, as in 'spirit' contrasted with 'flesh'.
 5. In Romans 8 we find the two usages blending together. Despite the confusion of terms, Paul is undoubtedly asserting a new dynamic that will guide and empower the convert over the old dynamic of sin and the flesh." p. 123.
 6. "This new dimension of life produces characteristic qualities in the person, the 'fruits of the spirit,' which are opposed to the 'works of the flesh' that divide and pit people against each other." p. 123.
 7. Depiction of the Spirit in the Gospels of Luke and John:
 - a. "The Gospels of Luke and John expand on this gift of the Spirit as a personal guiding force in the post-resurrection community.
 - b. The gift of the Spirit on Pentecost seems to effect for the disciples what the baptism of Jesus with its gift of the Spirit effected for Jesus. It launches public ministry with a messianic anointing: the sick are healed, blind people have sight restored, the Gospel is proclaimed fearlessly." p. 124.
 8. "The early Christians saw themselves in continuity with the disciples of Jesus by this link of the Spirit. They were conscious of being formed by the same

Spirit as the early disciples, and through that Spirit were present to the vitality of the risen Lord who retains the character of the historical Jesus.

9. The person of the historical Jesus and the values he embodied could as a result be the criterion of charismatic experience. They could ask "Is the Spirit of Jesus here?" p. 126.
10. "The community internalizes the values of Christ through the Spirit of Jesus so that, as it matures, it judges according to the fundamental norm of Christian morality, the person of Jesus Christ.
11. To the extent that the community is faithful to the Spirit, it mediates to the individuals who compose it this 'mind of Christ' as normative for their own formation of character and moral decisions." p. 127.

Q. Centrality of the Love Command in John 13:34

1. Text and Context
2. Spohn's conclusion:
 - a. "Although no single verse can capture the rich diversity of the moral teachings of Scripture, the principle enunciated by Jesus
 - b. in John 13:34 is perhaps the most comprehensive.
 - c. We are commanded to love another in just the same way that Jesus has loved us.
 - d. Because Scripture's witness of that love shapes the heart and its affections, it functions as a 'school of affections'." p. 107.
 - e. The shape of the engendering deed.
 - f. Which shape will be teleological.
3. Elaboration of the argument
 - a. Parable of the Foot Washing: "The narrative of the foot-washing acts out as a parable the meaning of this distinctive new command." p. 108

b. Do this for one another:

- (1) "The love they have experienced from Jesus should be both the norm and the motivation for their love of others.
- (2) Their love continues the mission of Jesus' life by being sent to witness to others.
- (3) Memory and intention define this command by reference to the specific history of Jesus." p. 108.
- (4) "The new commandment goes beyond *imitation* to *participation*." p. 109.

R. The Normative Nature of Jesus' Life for Christians

1. "When we expand our concept of what is normative, we discover a way in which the life of Christ as presented in the Scripture can be a norm for Christian living.
2. "Norms are not only general principles or moral values that have been abstracted from the story of Jesus and then reapplied in the lives of his followers.
3. "(This remains part of the task of Christian ethics: to specify the meaning of Gospel non-violence, poverty, compassion, etc. in an intellectually clear fashion.
4. "In the more concrete regions of the heart, a different sort of //norm emerges. The memory of the whole life of Jesus and the story of God's dealings with Israel provide a norm for Christian affections.
5. "The story schools the affections, shaping a discerning heart that can perceive the moral response that is appropriate.
6. "Actions that are incompatible with this story will clash with the affections of the mature Christian;
7. they will be ruled out because of this felt inconsistency, not primarily because of logical incompatibility with abstract moral norms.
8. "Hence, the object of Christian affections, the One toward whom they stretch, functions as a norm for Christian moral discernment." pp. 127-128.

S. Negative Critique of Spohn's Model

1. Is it in fact a "model" -- a way of organizing common experience in a heuristic way?
2. There are certainly some "exploratory" or heuristic elements, principally Spohn's redaction of Edward's "Christian affections"
3. But, as a "model," I find it difficult to see Spohn's approach as significantly different from the work of Niebuhr and Gustafson to qualify as an independent model.
4. In fact, to a certain degree this same critique could be made of all these so-called "models"-
5. there are differences, varieties of emphasis, etc.,
6. but if we look for different models I think we'd have to admit that here we have *one* fundamental model,
 - a. which could be contrasted with what Spohn and Gustafson call "non-viable" models--
 - b. e.g. "fundamentalism."
7. Does it represent a representative cross-section of Biblical material?
8. Does it warp Christology, by substituting Jesus' command for his teaching on the Kingdom and obedience to the Father?
9. In fact, Jesus' basic preaching is not "Love another" but "Be converted, for the Kingdom of God is at hand."
10. Do people start with love, or is this where they end? Is Spohn's model in fact intelligible to people who are not yet very good lovers?
11. Problematic use of the term "Affections": Spohn is developing it, and that is good, but he ultimately uses this term in a way rather different from the commonly understood meaning.
12. Problematic assumptions about the independent existence of the Christian community as a cohesive community in our pluralistic world.

T. Positive Critique of Spohn's Model

1. He does begin to delineate the nature of significance of Christian love, something which is long overdue for a look in our era.
2. More precisely, he begins to move towards the identification of love with the action of grace (though he could have been more explicit and detailed in this treatment).
3. Involves the Christian community as community in the fulfillment of the love command, therefore moving love beyond a privatized, individual affection.
4. Positive contribution in highlighting the significance of Christian contemplation for the use of Scripture in moral theology.
5. Implied tie-in with spirituality, and presumably, ascetical theology as well.
6. Spohn's critique of Schüller's position on love as nothing more than the Golden Rule is good, and advances the specificity of Christian ethics debate.
7. Positive contribution in highlighting the pneumatology of the Christian moral life.
8. This will help nourish (recover?) the notion of discernment in moral life (which is one of my themes).
9. Also highlights the connection and role of the Spirit in Christology, i.e., making the Resurrection present to the Christian community.
10. At the same time this brings the significance of the Resurrection itself into sharper focus for Christian ethics.
11. Has also advanced and fleshed out the meaning of moral norms in *Christian* ethics, and showed their connection and grounding in what Spohn calls Christian affections, but which we might also call Christian character, vision, virtue, etc.

I. SPOHN'S REVISED MODEL OF SCRIPTURE AS BASIS FOR RESPONDING LOVE

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- A. From his revised edition of What Are They Saying About Scripture and Ethics?. Rev. ed., New York: Paulist Press, 1984, 1995.
1. In the revised edition Spohn has moved from six models to five, and has joined together under the rubric of discipleship the models of "Response to Revelation" and "Call to Discipleship" which had been treated as separate models in the original edition.
 2. Calls this a "supplemental model" to the four models previously discussed.
- B. Spohn's understanding of ethics:
1. This model "answers the moral question 'What ought I to do?' by replying, 'Love others as God has loved you in Jesus Christ'.
 2. Christian moral life as the character of *response* because God's love comes to us first and our actions correspond to the character of that love." p. 94.
- C. Basic methodology: pattern and analogy
1. "The love which is the central norm for the Christian life is not an abstract principle but an experience that has a definite shape or *pattern*."
 2. "That pattern is specified in the story of Jesus and other biblical symbols which enable us to interpret our own experience to recognize the same Lord who is described in the biblical material." p. 94.
 3. A patterned moral response is made possible by use of the analogical imagination.
 - a. Concept borrowed from David Tracy
 - b. Spohn uses this concept theologically, but with a special focus on how Scripture can function in our Christian moral imagination.
- D. Theological Understanding of Analogy
1. Theological meaning of revelation of God in Jesus: for Christians "Jesus Christ is the one to whom the revelations of other traditions point.
 2. "Morally, it means that Jesus Christ plays a normative role in Christians' moral reflection through the 'analogy of experience'.

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3. "These are elements in the contemporary experience of individuals and the Christian community which are sufficiently like the original to enable us to identify with that reality and also elements sufficiently different that we can appropriate it creatively." p. 95.
4. "In briefer form, this model of responding love considers how to obey the command Jesus frequently used to close a parable: 'Go and do likewise.'" p. 96.
5. This last point resonates with Joseph Sittler's concept of the "shape of the engendering deed"
 - a. which Spohn had used in the first edition, but which seems to have disappeared in the revised edition.
 - b. Example given in the meaning of the Foot-washing commandment in John 13.
 - c. Spohn's oft-repeated comment, that this commandment is not about feet!

E. The New Commandment of Jesus

1. "The eucharistic meal and the washing of feet become paradigms for Christian life.
2. "They set patterns which will be applied analogously in countless new situations.
3. "The pattern is what becomes normative rather than any lesson about humility or equality which might be distilled from the memory of foot washing and the image of Jesus who come [*sic*] not to be served but to serve." p. 97.
4. "The new commandment goes *beyond imitation to participation* in two interrelated ways, a union of life and mission.
 - a. "In the first place, Christians' service evolves out of participation in the life of Christ as they enter into the same humiliation and exaltation he underwent." p. 96.
 - b. "Secondly, they take part in the *mission* of Jesus.

- (1) "Their response is not primarily directed back in memory to an historical event.
- (2) "In John's gospel, Jesus does not say, 'As I have loved you, so you should love me in return'.
- (3) "Gratitude leads the disciples forward into the same mission of Jesus, not backward into nostalgia.
- (4) "They will participate in the life of Jesus if they participate in his mission." p. 98.

F. Spohn's Notion of Jesus as the "Concrete Universal" of the Moral Life

1. Spohn notes the following problematic: "The greatest challenge to having Jesus function as a moral norm is epistemological: how can a particular life have universal significance?" p. 99.
 - a. He goes on to add the following insight about the nature of the relationship of the particular in ethics:
 - b. "Particulars are the basis of ethics, not universals.
 - c. "Moral concepts derive from patterns in particular experiences;
 - d. moral reflection moves analogically from paradigmatic cases to more problematic ones that contain novel elements;
 - e. and moral wisdom rests more on discerning sensibility than deductive acumen." p. 101.
2. "I propose that Jesus of Nazareth functions normatively as a **concrete universal**, because his particular story embodies a paradigmatic pattern which has universal moral applicability. ...
3. "Christians move imaginatively from his story to their new situation by analogical reasoning.
4. "The concrete universal guides three phases of moral experience: perception, motivation, and identity since it indicates

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- a. 1. *which* particular features of our situation are religiously and morally significant;
 - b. 2. *how* we are to act even when *what* we should do is unclear;
 - c. 3. *who* we are to become as a people and as individuals." p. 102.
5. In this view, the *entire* story of Jesus becomes "normative" for Christians, and thus by extension for Christian ethics:
- a. "I propose that the entire story of Jesus is normative for Christian ethics as its *concrete universal*. ...
 - b. "Jesus is not the only norm of Christian ethics because human nature, practical effectiveness, accurate descriptions of data, and the accumulated wisdom of the tradition are also normative.
 - c. "Nevertheless, whatever actions and dispositions these other sources suggest must be compatible with the basic patterns inherent in the story of Jesus.
 - d. "In addition, Jesus as concrete universal may mandate certain actions and dispositions, like forgiveness of enemies, to which the other sources would not give the same importance.
 - e. "Jesus functions normatively in Christian ethics through the paradigmatic imagination and moral discernment, which are distinctive ways of exercising moral authority." p. 99.
- G. Discerning the Patterns in Experience: Considers the roles of attention and vision in morality.
1. "The difference between the Athenian philosophers and the prophets of Israel does not stem from intelligence but from their imaginations and vision.
 - a. "The paradigms of an insistent tradition sharpened the vision of the prophets.
 - b. "They paid attention to the widow, the orphan, and the immigrant workers out of Israel's exemplary memory.

- c. "They caught the rhyme between their liberation from Egypt and the need of the marginalized in subsequent eras. ...
 - d. "By contrast, because Plato and Aristotle did not *see* the poor *as* morally significant, they did not *see* them at all." p. 102.
2. "Moral recognition is a special case of perception in general. We only *perceive* what we *perceive as* something." p. 103.
3. In relation to this understanding of the dynamic of the patterning aspect of moral experience, Spohn gives the following caveat about a potentially problematic Christology:
- a. "The danger of some 'imitation of Christ' spiritualities is that they terminate in the person of Jesus, like worshiping an icon, whereas the Jesus of the gospels was radically concerned about God and about the poor, the outcast, the sinner.
 - b. "To be a disciple of Jesus is to take seriously what he took seriously. What Jesus took seriously was not himself but the breaking in of the Reign of God and the people most in need of justice and reconciliation." p. 103.
 - c. I would add that we could make any number of things, issues, or people "icons" in a similar way
 - (1) E.g. Liberation theology also runs the risk of making an "icon" of the "poor."
 - (2) We can make an "icon" out of material success, etc.
4. Spohn's analysis of H. Richard Niebuhr's "War Articles" as a "Test Case" of Discernment of God's action.
- a. "Niebuhr begins from the presupposition that God acts in an through the intentions of finite agents.
 - b. "The believer is called to discern and respond to the creating, judging and redeeming God.
 - c. "Therefore, before asking, 'What ought I to do?' believers should ask, 'What is God doing in this situation?'

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- d. "The answer will not come from any direct command of God or from a reasonable assessment of what is normatively human, but from a process of discernment guided by key biblical symbols and perspectives.
- e. "*Discernment* is an exploratory way of knowing in the concrete which employs imaginative and affective criteria to discover what the appropriate response should be to God's action." p. 105.

H. Scripture Guides How Christians Ought To Act

- 1. "Moral principles, however, do only part of the work of ethics.
- 2. "We rely more on mature character and virtuous habits to recognize what is going on, to appreciate the values involved, the interactions with others, and discern an appropriate response.
- 3. "Accordingly, the formation of character is the most important issue in moral maturation.
- 4. "If we adopt the perspective of virtue and character ethics, Scripture has extensive moral authority but on a different level of experience than the rational application of principles." p. 107.
- 5. Discusses the experience of the hostage-journalist Terry Anderson, and the forgiveness of his captors after his seven year imprisonment.
- 6. By contrast, Spohn relates a problematic saying attributed to the "The early twentieth century labor organizer, Mother Jones, [who] supposedly said, 'Until justice is established, there is no time for mercy!'"
- 7. "Pitting justice against mercy violates the paradigm scenarios of Jesus's parables and his treatment of persons." p. 109.

I. Scripture and the Religious Affections

- 1. "Scripture, through a gradual process of reflection and assimilation in faith, can engender a distinctive set of affections correlative to its story, which disposes the agent to act in distinctive ways." p. 11.

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2. "Gustafson cites some of the principal affections that Scripture as a whole should engender: a sense of radical dependence, of gratitude, repentance, obligation, possibility and direction.
 3. "Like a mobile, they are interdependent and reciprocally defining. For example, repentance without a sense of hope and possibility would not be a fitting response to the reality of God as witnessed in the biblical tradition." p. 110.
 4. Spohn further highlights gratitude and hope:
 - a. "Gratitude and hope are the central affections that move us from faith memory to corresponding action.
 - b. "They make the memory of God's gift an empowering source of moral generosity by recognizing that the gift of God requires us to act generously toward others." p. 111.
 5. Offers here a further "Test Case" of the Salvadoran Identification with the Cross and Resurrection
- J. Prayer and the Moral Life of Scripturally-nourished ethics
1. "How do these virtuous dispositions get incorporated into the character of believers? One of the main ways is through the language of prayer and praise." p. 114.
 2. "*Contemplation* is the imaginative entry into a particular scene. ... By identifying with their experience based on similar ones of my own, I am also able to identify with their reactions to the words of the Lord--they are spoken to me too." p. 115.
- K. Community focus/locus of Scripture and the Christian Identity
1. "Because Scripture addresses communities rather than individuals, the appropriate moral response is discerned within the community of faith.
 2. "The four elements of the hermeneutical process we identified in the introduction are
 - a. 1) the communities that authored Scripture in relation to

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- b. 2) the challenges they faced which sets the pattern for the discernment of
 - c. 3) contemporary communities of faith reflecting on
 - d. 4) the issues that challenge them today.
3. "The central question, therefore, is: How are we to respond to our challenges in ways analogous to the responses which the early Christian communities made to their own challenges as we strive the same Lord?" p. 118.

L. Methodological Reminders on Employment of Scripture in Christian ethics

1. "Any appeal to analogy has to observe certain standards so that the original or 'prime analogate' controls the application in contemporary practice. Otherwise, the biblical material will not be a prototype but only a decoration to the author's presentations." p. 120.
2. "Some current writers seem to have abandoned proof-texting for 'proof-theming', that is, selecting biblical images that support moral conclusions which they have reached on other grounds." p. 120
3. "What criteria can prevent the all too familiar corruptions of biblical discernment? "There are several criteria, though none are [*sic*] foolproof:
 - a. "1. *Centrality of the Image or Story.*" p. 120.
 - b. "2. *Theological Soundness.*" p. 120.
 - c. "3. *Consistent with Christ.*" p. 120.
 - d. "4. *Fittingness.*" p. 121.
 - e. "5. *Moral Rightness.*" p. 121 [i.e., concur with ordinary standards of human morality]

II. GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF SCRIPTURE IN RESPONDING TO REVELATION

A. Recall the notion of a "valid" interpretation

1. Distinction between "correct" and "valid" interpretation.

- a. "Correct" implies *one* "objectively true" interpretation,
 - b. but "there is no single meaning that alone corresponds to and constitutes the meaning of the text.
 - c. Multiple interpretations are not only possible but demanded by the very nature of the text as text.
 - d. The question then concerns *validity*." [Schneiders, p. 164.]
2. Sandra Schneiders' criteria for a *valid* interpretation
- a. Premise:
 - (1) "...not all interpretations are valid,
 - (2) and some valid interpretations are better than others." [Schneiders, p. 164.]
 - b. "First, a valid interpretation should *account for the text as it stands*
 - (1) or establish, independently of the proposed interpretation,
 - (2) why and how it should be emended." [Schneiders, p.165.]
 - c. "Second, a valid interpretation has to be *consistent with itself*,
 - (1) that is, free from internal contradictions.
 - (2) Furthermore, the type of interpretation proposed should be *used integrally* and be *valid for the text as a whole and the whole of the text*." [Schneiders, p. 166.]
 - d. "Third, a valid interpretation should be equally as or more successful than its competitors at *explaining anomalies* in the text." [Schneiders, p. 166.]
 - e. "Fourth, a valid interpretation ought to be *compatible with what is known from other sources*, both biblical and extrabiblical." [Schneiders, p. 166.]

- f. "Finally, a valid interpretation should have *used responsibly all the methods that are appropriate* within the framework of interpretation chosen.
 - (1) "No interpretation can involve the use of all available methods.
 - (2) It is perfectly legitimate to propose an historical or a feminist or a psychological interpretation of a text." [Schneiders, p. 166.]

- B. Hermeneutical problem: which images, themes, etc. are the appropriate ones to guide our moral theology?

- C. This problem and its resolution will become crucial when we consider the practical "prova" of the 5 Step methodology.

- D. General guidelines for the selection and appropriation of biblical images to ethics:
 - 1. The appropriate biblical images should be central to the canon of Scripture.
 - 2. The guiding images should convey or be coordinate with a theologically sound image of God. E.g. Exodus image of God as Redeemer and Deliverer of captives.
 - 3. The images should be consistent with God's definitive revelation in Jesus Christ. E.g. "Crusading Warrior" image of the Holy War would seem inconsistent with the New Testament character of Jesus.
 - 4. The images should be appropriate to the situation and shed light upon it.
 - 5. Finally, these images should indicate courses of action that concur with the standards of ordinary human morality.
 - 6. I.e, Christians are not called by God to behavior that is patently harmful to themselves or others.
 - 7. This criterion introduces the practice of a public test to check any suspension of the moral law in the name of personal inspiration.

- E. Final "Methodological Moral Reminder"

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1. Any *coherent* moral argument should draw on the four sources of Christian ethics in an *integrated* manner.
2. Thus, our "selection of biblical material must be justified by the other sources we use:
 - a. theological validity in the tradition,
 - b. consistency with the normative portrait of the human person found in ethics,
 - c. and relevance to the factual situation as determined by the best empirical analyses available." p. 84.
3. Niebuhr warns against "evil imaginations of the heart":
 - a. i.e., "symbols that send us down false ways
 - b. and evoke self-centered affections.
4. They obscure the truth of who we are and what we are doing, thus leading to a future not of life, but of death.
5. Evil imaginations of the heart are detected by the consequences they lead to, just as concepts are invalidated by their erroneous results." [Spohn, p. 84].
6. [In this context cf. Ignatius' Rules for Discernment in the Second Week]
7. Spohn offers here the example of apartheid, nationalism, and commercialism [e.g. when you pray for your Motor Home, be sure to tell God what color you want].

III. PROBLEMATIC APPROACHES TO USE OF SCRIPTURE IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS

A. Proof-Texting

1. Can happen to the best of us; and can be of two varieties, negative and positive
 - a. negative (e.g. Gay-Bashing)

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- (1) Example of *negative* proof-texting,
 - (2) Anti-gay demonstration, see photo of sign carried in the parade: "God hates Fags!" Lev. 18:22
 - (3) Other examples: for capital punishment, (let he who lives by the sword, die by the sword) etc.
- b. positive (i.e. for a positively good argument, etc)
 - c. Consider the following from the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, *Catechesi tradendae* [Catechesis in Our Time]
 - d. 16 October 1979, following up on the 1977 Synod of Bishops, which had catechesis as its theme.
 - e. #64. "... I beg you, ministers [priests] of Jesus Christ: Do not, for lack of zeal or because of some unfortunate pre-conceived idea, leave the faithful without catechesis. Let it not be said that 'the children beg for food, but no one gives to them'."
 - f. Lamentations 4:4 speaks of the context of exile and ruin in Israel, not of catechesis!, as just two additional verses would make abundantly clear:
 - g. "Even the jackals offer the breast and nurse their young, but my people has become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. / The tongue of the infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the children beg for food, but no one gives them anything. Those who feasted on delicacies perish in the streets; those who were brought up in purple cling to ash heaps." {Lamentations 4:3-5} [New RSV]
2. Proof-texting either runs the risk of blunting or skewing the biblical message,
 - a. or, as we see in the case of *Catechesi tradendae*, of "spiritualizing" it overly much,
 - b. or, as in the case of the Gay-Bashing, helping to present an untenable, unsound, and untheological portrait of God and God's relations with humankind

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3. However, make the distinction between proof-texting and legitimate brief uses of Scripture
 - a. illustrative, illuminative
 - b. symbolic, part for whole

- B. Fundamentalism
 1. Often related to proof-texting.
 2. This approach views Scripture as a revelation of strict moral norms and behavior.
 3. Considers this normative material to be self-interpreting.
 4. Does play into a certain human need for clear and strict rules, boundaries, etc.

- C. Timeless, Metaphysical, Ideals
 1. Unbiblical: Bible's approach is not that of Greek ethics.
 2. By its very nature the language of ideals does not translate easily into the language of norms.
 3. A third issue concerns how moral ideals can be applied in a particular historical situation which differs considerably from the original scriptural context.

- D. Analogy and/or Allegory
 1. Positive and negative uses
 2. Positive
 - a. Recall Spohn's treatment of analogy in the positive sense
 - b. Foot-washing is not about feet
 - c. Go and do likewise
 - d. The shape of the engendering deed: Sittler

- e. Key Christian symbols of Cross and Resurrection
- 3. Negative, or simplistic, use of analogy and allegory
 - a. One problem: "providing persuasive evidence that the circumstances of, for example, a political and military situation in our time are similar in any significant respects to the circumstances in biblical times."
 - b. "A second is the problem of determining which biblical events will be used for purposes of an analogical elucidation of the moral significance of present events."

[Gustafson, "The Place of Scripture in Christian Ethics: A Methodological Study." In *Readings, No. 4*, p. 163]
- E. Gustafson's "Looser Method" for approaching Scripture in moral theology:
 - 1. "A fourth use of scripture is looser than the first three. It could be stated as follows:
 - 2. Scripture witnesses to a great variety of moral values, moral norms and principles through many different kinds of biblical literature:
 - a. moral law, visions of the future, historical events, moral precepts, paranetic instruction, dialogues, wisdom sayings, allegories.
 - b. They are not in a simple way reducible to a single theme;
 - c. rather, they are directed to particular historical contexts.
 - 3. The Christian community judges the actions of persons and groups to be morally wrong, or at least deficient,
 - 4. on the basis of reflective discourse about present events
 - 5. *in the light* of appeals to this variety of material as well as to other principles and experiences.
 - 6. Scripture is one of the informing sources for moral judgments, but it is not sufficient in itself to make any particular judgment authoritative." [pp. 164-65.]

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- F. Evaluation of Gustafson's "Looser Method" for use of Scripture in Moral:
1. Is Biblical, i.e., respects the variety of biblical discourse in terms of genres, themes, historical contexts, etc.
 2. Meshes well with *other* sources for our moral theology.
 3. Recognizes the need for *discernment* in any and every use of Scripture in moral theology.
 4. Strong dimension given to the Christian community in this approach.
- G. Scripture as opening a "window" on the moral situation
1. Relation to Christian ethics
 2. Helpful point made by Karen Lebacqz in relation to problems of injustice and justice:
 - a. "Finally, the Bible must be for Christians a *sine qua non*."
 - b. No theory of justice can claim to be Christian unless it takes seriously the common record considered canon by the Christian community."
 - c. From her *Justice in an Unjust World: Foundations for a Christian Approach to Justice*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987.
 - (1) Using biblical images and models the author portrays divine justice and God's call for us to heed the cry of suffering and to work for justice in an unjust world.
 - (2) Lebacqz is professor of Christian ethics at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley.
- H. Recall Problematic approaches to Scripture:
1. "But here the pitfalls are particularly great, for the temptation is to look to Scripture for rules of justice:
 - a. 'give away half',
 - b. 'leave the edges of the fields for gleaning by the poor',

- c. and even 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'.
2. "The approach to justice proposed here does not permit such a use of Scripture. The Bible is not a rule book.
3. It is the living memory of a people.
 - a. It is a collection of stories and poems and laws and sayings
 - b. that give expression to a people's understanding of God's response to injustice and the people's response to God.
4. The Bible must be used accordingly.
5. It provides stories that illumine justice.
6. Part of the power of biblical stories is that they have stood the test of time. They have relevance today.
7. It is not wrong, therefore, to look for contemporary situations that appear to provide parallels to biblical stories.
8. "At the same time, even those stories are subject to the distortions of the human community.
9. The history of our race suggest that the Bible itself, as the record of the human community, will be limited by that community.
10. Thus, biblical stories are illustrative of justice, but they do not provide that theory.
11. They offer windows through which we might glimpse injustice and justice, but they do not offer a plan for the perfectly just world." [Lebacqz, Justice, p. 154.]

IV. 5-STEP METHODOLOGY FOR APPLICATION OF SCRIPTURE TO MORAL ISSUES

1. Selection and Precision of the Concrete Moral Case

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- a. Recall earlier assertion of the need for the interpretation of *any* text (no text is self-interpreting).
- b. Much the same can be said for the moral case, and the larger world in which it is located.
- c. No such thing as a self-evident or self-interpreting moral case.
- d. Thus, there will always be the need for casuistry to a certain extent.
- e. Notion of "reading the world" (in tandem with "reading the text") developed by Stephen Fowl and L. Gregory Jones
 - (1) "We have argued that Scripture is best read in and through Christian communities.
 - (2) Such communities, however, find themselves within the political arrangements of wider societies.
 - (3) They need to understand these larger contexts and the ways in which they impinge on Christian communities if Christians' readings of Scripture are to enable them to live faithfully.
 - (4) Hence faithful interpretation requires not only 'readings of the texts' but also 'readings of the world'." p. 44.

Stephen E. Fowl, and L. Gregory Jones, *Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991.
- f. Similar to reading the "signs of the times", which has now been canonized by *Gaudium et spes*.

2. Selection of Scripture Text(s)

- a. Logical caveat: no one can consider every possible Scriptural text for each and every ethical issue
- b. However, need to be aware of, and seek to mitigate the natural tendency to create a "canon-within-a-canon"
 - (1) to such an extent that a major part of the Bible,

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- (2) plus the historical experience of the whole Christian community (i.e., Tradition) are ignored or sidestepped as "irrelevant."
- c. Undoubtedly selection must be made, but it should be done in recognition of both the whole biblical canon and the Tradition of the Church.
- d. Here, again the notion of a "lectio continua" would be helpful
 - (1) Corrective against tendency to create a canon-within-a-canon
 - (2) Help us to here as many voices as possible from Scripture
 - (3) Plug into the ongoing liturgical life of the Church,
 - (a) precisely the moment in the Church's life where this "lectio continua" is practiced
 - (b) Better integrate our moral theology into our liturgical life
- e. Recognition of different ways in which Scripture speaks to moral issues:
 - (1) specific biblical texts on the specific issue
 - (2) specific biblical texts on related issues
 - (3) general or overarching biblical themes, patterns, etc. which have broad ethical ramifications. E.g. sin, forgiveness, cross and resurrection.
 - (4) [This comes from Cahill and is re-worked Gustafson]
- f. Pay particular attention to those Scripture passages which have stood the test of time in selection for ethical use, e.g., Sermon on the Mount, key sections of Pauline theology, etc.
- g. Make sure you have a complete "unit" and a passage of suitable length

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- (1) Avoid taking the passage out of context
 - (2) No Proof-Texting!
3. Exegesis of the Text:
- a. be able and willing to do the research and reflection that this requires!
 - b. Logical corollary: not every moral theologian will be able to master these scholarly requirements; therefore, need for both specialization and cooperation.
 - (1) E.g., the collaboration in Bishops' Pastoral on the Economy.
 - (2) Perhaps also an explanation for the reluctance among some moral theologians to take *Optatam totius* as seriously as they might.
4. Interpretation of the Text
- a. Principle of Hermeneutics: no text is "self-interpreting"
 - b. Aid here from work done in both hermeneutical theory in general, and more specifically in biblical hermeneutics
 - c. Insight from the practice of *lectio divina*, namely the two "moments" of interpretation,
 - (1) First, the *meditatio* in which we meditate on the text, trying to "open" up the meaning of the text itself, and
 - (2) Second, the *contemplatio* in which we sit before the text and try to open ourselves to the voice of God who inspires the text and speaks through it to us.
 - d. The question/problem of interpretation will move us logically and inexorably to the next step: application of the text to the ethical problem.
5. Application of the Text to the Ethical Situation: Scripture as a Source for Moral Theology

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- a. "No situation in which Christians (either now or in the past) find themselves is self-interpreting.
- b. "The process of faithfully embodying an interpretation of Scripture presupposes that Christian communities have already analysed and diagnosed the contexts in which they find themselves.
- c. "Such analysis must be informed and directed by Scripture, but it is not simply an interpretation of Scripture." [Fowl & Jones, p. 45].
- d. Involves the whole problematic of the use of models in Scripture
- e. Plus the added problem/concern of Fundamental Moral Theology on the notion of "Sources" for Christian ethics.

V. BIBLIOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF ETHICS IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

- A. Christopher Wright: *An Eye for An Eye: The Place of Old Testament Ethics Today*. Downers Grove (IL): InterVarsity Press, 1983.
 1. Same book as *Living as the People of God: The Relevance of Old Testament Ethics*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983.
 2. Has a good basic bibliography of further books and articles for each chapter of the book.
 3. NOT fundamentalistic, despite the publisher.
 4. Wright's basic premise:
 - a. "...the *primary* ethical thrust of the Old Testament is in fact social.
 - b. "The Old Testament is the story of a people--God's people;
 - c. and all the morally memorable tales of individuals are part of that wider story." p. 10.
 5. Wright uses the model of a triangle to illustrate Old Testament ethics, with the three points being
 - a. God (the theological angle);

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- b. Israel (the social angle);
 - c. and the Land (the economic struggle). pp. 19-20.
- B. Birch, Bruce C. Let Justice Roll Down: *The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991.
- 1. Discusses methodological questions,
 - 2. the importance of the Hebrew narratives as a moral resource,
 - 3. and specific texts and themes which might inform Christian ethics.
- C. Ringe, Sharon H. Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee: Images for Ethics and Christology. Overtures to Biblical Theology, 19. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.
- 1. Good series
 - 2. Interesting attempt to link Jesus and Christian ethics with an important tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures.
- D. Brueggemann, Walter. The Land: *Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*. Overtures to Biblical Theology. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977.
- 1. Excellent book for understanding the theological function of the Promised Land in the Covenant Theology of the Old Testament,
 - 2. as well as its implications for the New Testament.
- E. Reventlow, Henning Graf, and Hoffman, Yair, eds. Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and their Influence. Journal for the Study of Old Testament Supplement Series, 137. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992.
- 1. Important to study Jewish scholars and their approach to our common Scriptures.
 - 2. This work has several interesting articles.
- F. Article by Douglas Knight: "Old Testament Ethics." Christian Century 20 January 1982, 55-59.

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1. Despite its title, most of the article is a quite intelligible summary of the principal issues facing the use of Scripture in ethics.
 2. The Old Testament is used as a point of reference for Knight's discussion, and the fundamental values of the Old Testament ethos are presented.
 3. "Among such fundamental values observable in Old Testament morality are the following:
 - a. affirmation of the goodness of life in this world
 - b. (thus the Old Testament offers us more of a this-worldly than an other-worldly or eschatological ethic):
 - c. the importance of viability for all members of society
 - d. (thus a decisive stand against oppression or exploitation which restricts human fulfillment);
 - e. the priority of good relationships
 - f. (thus the importance of life in community and, consequently, of social ethics);
 - g. and the preference for prudence and moderation
 - h. (thus an ethic which seeks happiness and fulfillment not in excesses but in a deliberative, responsible lifestyle).
 - i. Such values, while not all present at every point of Old Testament morality, do in fact underlie the bulk of the moral norms and principles we find there." p. 58.
- G. Adalbert Rebić', "Righteousness in the Old Testament." Theology Digest 39 (1992): 139-142.
1. Digested version of "Der Gerechtigkeitsbegriff im Alten Testament." Communio 19 (1990): 390-396.
 2. The Occidental Christian concepts of retributive and punitive justice are inadequate for understanding the Hebrew concept of righteousness (*zedaqah*).

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3. In the Hebrew Scriptures righteousness refers above all to God's relationship with God's people.
4. Several Old Testament texts, plus the opinion of many biblical exegetes are marshalled to support the author's thesis.

VI. BASIC APPROACH TO THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES AND/OR OLD TESTAMENT

- A. Language here is not merely "political correctness" and/or sensitivity to our Jewish sisters and brothers.
- B. Rather, we need to avoid thinking of the Hebrew Scriptures merely as Part I, labelled "Promise,"
- C. with the clear implication that the New Testament is Volume II entitled "Fulfillment."
- D. Recall too that the "Scriptures" of the early Christian Church was, and was only, the Hebrew Scriptures.
- E. Fundamental themes:
 1. The concept of *B'rit*, i.e., the Covenant.
 2. Creation
 3. Redemption

VII. WRIGHT'S "TRIANGLE" OF OLD TESTAMENT ETHICS

- A. Geometric Notion of a "Triangle"
 1. Logically a triangle cannot rest on any single angle
 2. This ethical triangle has a social context,
 - a. i.e., the end is the community, the People of God;
 - b. thus, "individual" ethics must be understood always in relation with God and God's People.

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B. The Theological Angle: Yahweh

1. "Old Testament ethics are God-centered in
 - a. origin,
 - b. in history,
 - c. in content
 - d. and in motive." [Wright, p. 21].

2. God-Centered Origin
 - a. "God acts first and calls people to respond.
 - b. "This is the starting point for the moral teaching of the Old Testament. ...
 - c. "Ethics then becomes a matter of response and gratitude, not of blind obedience alone.
 - d. "This might not always appear so when we read the laws of the Old Testament by themselves.
 - e. "That is why it is important that we pay attention to the narrative framework in which they are set." [Wright, p. 21].

3. God-Centered History
 - a. "God was believed to have acted, and to be continuously active, in history;
 - b. therefore events and sequences of events took on moral significance.
 - c. Without this conviction of God's active involvement and interest in affairs,
 - d. ethics becomes pragmatic and even dispensable. For who cares?" [Wright, p. 24].

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- e. Theologically, we speak of this dimension in terms of redemption and eschatology
 - (1) "The eschatological aspect signifies the belief that in those redemptive acts God has a continuing purpose.
 - (2) This he will ultimately bring to complete fulfillment
 - (a) in the elimination of evil,
 - (b) the vindication of the righteous,
 - (c) the establishment of justice
 - (d) and peace,
 - (e) and the restoration //of harmony between God, humanity and nature.

- f. "The combination of these two poles of Israel's historical faith gave immense ethical importance to the present.
 - (1) What I do here and now matters because of what God has done in the past
 - (2) and what he will do in the future." [Wright, pp. 25-26.]

- g. Historico-theological example: the "Ten Words"
 - (1) Given only *after* the redemption of Israel from Pharaoh in Egypt.
 - (2) Therefore, the following of the Law is seen as response given in gratitude for God's prior action on their behalf.
 - (3) The Law, then, is not an ethical pre-condition for salvation, in which the community "merits" divine redemption.
 - (4) Here we see the importance of the historical narrative for understanding theologically the ethics of the Hebrew Scriptures.

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4. God-Centered Content

- a. "Holiness should not really be thought of in terms of personal piety, ritual cleanliness, etc.,
- b. but rather as a reflection of God's holiness, which is "thoroughly practical.
- c. "It includes generosity to the poor at harvest time, justice for workers, integrity in judicial processes," [Wright, p. 27.]
- d. "Walking in God's way: way to describe the Old Testament ethics;
 - (1) "as distinct from the ways of other gods,
 - (2) or of other nations,
 - (3) or one's own way,
 - (4) or the way of sinners." [Wright, p. 27.]
- e. God's way: "condescending love,"
 - (1) which requires "an inward response of love and humility in return:
 - (2) 'Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer' (Dt 10:16)." [Wright, p. 27.]

5. God-Centered Motivation

- a. Look at what God has done for us, and therefore out of gratitude we should do the same for others.
- b. "Personal experience of God is turned into motivation for consistent ethical behaviour." [Wright, p. 29.]
- c. Cf. Dt 15:15 for typical motivation clause:
 - (1) "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; for this reason I lay this command upon you today." [Dt 15:15 NSRV]

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- (2) "This kind of `motive clause' is one of the most characteristic features of the Deuteronomic laws,
 - (3) for the purpose of Deuteronomy was not just to state the law,
 - (4) but to persuade and motivate the Israelites to obey it.
 - (5) "It has been described as `preached law'." [Wright, p. 29.]
- d. "The prophets attributed Israel's later moral decline and outright disobedience to precisely this failing:
- (1) they had forgotten God
 - (2) and were no longer motivated by the ethical implications of their own history." [Wright, p. 30.]
 - (3) Cf. Amos 2:6-8;
 - (4) Hosea,
 - (5) Micah 6:3-5;
 - (6) Is 1:2-4; 5:1-7;
 - (7) Jer 2:1-13; 7:21-26;
 - (8) Ez 16, 20.
- e. Ritualization of motivation in various ways
- (1) Daily Prayer
 - (a) Shema: Dt 6:4-6
 - (b) Mezzuzah and tefillin
 - (c) Cf. Dt 6:7-9; 11:18-21
 - (2) The Pesach, or Passover

C. The Social Angle: the Community of Israel

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1. The Pattern of Redemption
2. Old Testament ethics is basically social:
3. "It is not simply a compendium of moral teaching to enable the individual to //lead a privately upright life before God." [Wright, pp. 34-35.]
4. In the Ten Commandments, the individual is addressed,
 - a. but always "as part of the community,
 - b. and their purpose is not just individual purity
 - c. but the moral and spiritual health of that whole community.
5. "For God's purpose, as we have seen, was not just righteous individuals,
6. but a new community who in their social life would embody those qualities of
 - a. righteousness,
 - b. peace,
 - c. justice
 - d. and love
 - e. which reflect God's own character and were his original purpose for mankind." [Wright,p. 35.]
7. Therefore, do not interpret the Old Testament text ethically with just the question, "What does this say to *me*?"
 - a. but "study the passage within its own social context of life in Old Testament Israel
 - b. and ask what it has to say within the present community of God's people,
 - c. and then, further, what social implications it may have in human society at large." [Wright, p. 35.]

8. The Distinctiveness of Israel
 - a. The Chosen People, Chosen by God
 - b. In order to complete God's will,
 - c. moral duty/calling to create an eschatological community
 - d. Function of priests: to make known the word and will of God to the people.
 - e. "Now if Israel as a nation were to be a priesthood,
 - (1) the implication is that they would represent God to the peoples of mankind in an analogous way.
 - (2) "God's way would be made manifest in their life as a nation."
[Wright, p. 41.]

D. The Economic Angle

1. The Land in Israel's Story
 - a. The land for Israel is not a neutral stage,
 - (1) but rather the land "in all its dimensions--
 - (2) promise, conquest, shared possessions, use and abuse, loss and recovery--
 - (3) was a fundamentally theological entity.
 - b. "... The land was part of the pattern of redemption too, because the social shape of Israel was intimately bound up with the economic issues of the division, tenure and use of the land." [Wright,p.50.]
 - c. See also Walter Brueggemann: *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*. Overtures to Biblical Theology. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977.
2. The Land as Divine Gift

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- a. "In the first place, it was *a declaration of Israel's dependency*.
 - (1) "... Israel, therefore, could make no 'natural' claim to any land." [Wright, p. 51.]
- b. "Secondly, the land-gift was *a declaration of God's dependability*.
 - (1) "Every harvest reminded Israel of this." [Wright, p. 52.]
- c. "Thirdly, in combination of both the above points, the land-gift functioned as *proof of the relationship between God and Israel*." [Wright, p. 53.]
- d. "Fourthly, it was the historical land-gift tradition which generated *individual property rights* in Israel." [Wright, p. 54.]
- e. "Fifthly, the sequel to the Naboth incident opens up our understanding of *the prophets' preoccupation with economic exploitation*." [Wright, p. 55.]

3. The Land Under Divine Ownership

- a. The land was always still God's land.
 - (1) "He retained ultimate title of ownership
 - (2) and therefore also the ultimate right of moral authority over how it was used." [Wright, p. 57.]
- b. Thus, just as "the land as divine *gift* generated a strong set of *rights* for both the nation and individuals,
- c. so, on the other hand, the concept of the land as under continuing divine *ownership* generated a wide range of *responsibilities*." [Wright, p. 58]
- d. Namely: responsibility to God, to one's family, and to one's neighbors.

VIII. PRINCIPAL THEMES IN OLD TESTAMENT ETHICS

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A. Economics and the Promised Land

1. Divine Ownership and Divine Gift

a. Since God is Lord and ultimate "owner" of all created things

(1) "any claim of economic ownership by man // (collectively or individually) is secondary

(2) and subordinate to God's ownership, from which it derives.

b. "...On the other hand, God has given the earth to man as his trustee.

(1) "Part of the implied purpose of making man in his own image was so that he would be capable of being entrusted with dominion over the rest of the created order." [Wright, pp. 67-68.]

(2) "*Stewardship*, then, is the key word in this creation perspective." [Wright, p. 68.]

2. Theological-ethical ramifications:

a. Shared Resources

(1) "The creation narratives cannot be used to justify privatized, individual ownership,

(2) since it is to mankind as a whole that the earth is entrusted.

(3) This is *not* to say that there can be no legitimate private ownership of material goods;

(4) "... It *is* to say that such individual property rights,

(a) even when legitimate,

(b) always remain subordinate to the prior // right of all men to have access to and use of the resources of the earth." [Wright, pp. 68-69.]

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- b. The responsibility of work
 - (1) Command to fill the earth and subdue it entailed work,
 - (2) so work "itself is not the result of the fall, though it was certainly affected by it." [Wright, p. 69]
 - (3) The human, created in the image of God, is a worker.
 - (a) "It is thus mankind's nature,
 - (b) as well as his responsibility
 - (c) and his right,
 - (d) to be engaged in productive economic work with the material resources of the world." [Wright, p. 69.]
 - (4) We have a responsibility not only for work ourselves, but also to allow and enable others to work.
 - (5) "So to prevent another person working, or to deny or deprive him of work, is to offend against his humanity and the image of God in him, as well as failing in one's responsibility to God for him." [Wright, p. 69.]
- c. Expectation of economic growth
 - (1) "The guiding ethos of Old Testament economics could be said to be summed up in the tenth commandment: 'You shall not covet'."
 - (2) "... this fundamental commandment locates the source of all sinful forms of economic growth where they truly originate-- the greed of individual human hearts." [Wright, p. 82.]
 - (3) Cf. Proverbs 30:8f.
- d. Stewardship before God of what is produced
 - (1) Story of Ruth and Boaz.

- (2) "The point of dwelling thus on this story and the customs that lie behind it
- (3) is that the economic ethics of the redeemed community take us beyond the realm of simple *sharing*
- (4) into the realm of *sacrifice*. [Wright, p. 87.]

B. Politics and the world of nations

1. Political reality

- a. The sphere/world in which God acts
- b. In the Bible politics and religion are both essential dimensions of what it means to be a human.
- c. "Man the worshipper is also man the political animal, for God made him so." [Wright, p. 105]

2. Effects, though, of the Fall and of Sin, in political life, as in every segment of life.

- a. Expulsion from the Garden Eden
- b. Sin of Cain
- c. The Flood
- d. The Tower of Babel
- e. Sodom and Gomorrah
- f. Etc., etc., etc.

3. Call of God's saving will found through a return to God's creation intentionality.

4. The Chosen People

- a. `People' not `race'

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- (1) In Hebrew *`am* normally means "a people considered as a community, large or small;
- (2) and *goy*, used of a nation in the politico-geographical sense.
- (3) "Israel is usually referred to as the *`am* of God, the community created by and belonging to Yahweh.
- (4) "*Goy* is generally used of surrounding nations and races.
- (5) The Old Testament concept of election is not, therefore, simply a matter of God arbitrarily picking out one nation or race from the rest.
- (6) "Rather, he called into being a community of people who would then live among the nations to serve his purpose." 109.

b. A mixed multitude

c. Only by grace

- (1) Divine realism
- (2) God's characteristic way of dealing with the real world.

d. One for all

- (1) "This strain of universalism in the mission of Israel
- (2) prevents the concept of a 'chosen people' being taken as mere chauvinism or national pride." [Wright, p. 110.]

C. Righteousness and Justice

1. Vocabulary of Righteousness and Justice

- a. "...righteousness and justice in the Old Testament thought are not abstract ideas.
- b. "They are highly personal and relational terms.

- c. "Theologically, they characterize God in action in relationship with men--men at large, and especially his own people. //
 - d. "Socially, they are required of people in their relationship with one another." [Wright, pp. 135-136.]
 - e. Cf. also Adalbert Rebić, "Righteousness in the Old Testament." Theology Digest 39 (1992): 139-142.
 - (1) The Occidental Christian concepts of retributive and punitive justice are inadequate for understanding the Hebrew concept of righteousness (*zedaqah*).
 - (2) In the Hebrew Scriptures righteousness refers above all to God's relationship with God's people.
2. Righteousness and Justice in Providence
- a. "The fact that God is righteous and exercises his justice especially on behalf of the weak and oppressed is closely linked with his providential care for the whole of creation." [Wright, p. 137.]
 - b. See Psalms 145-147.
3. Righteousness and Justice in Redemption
- a. "Every act of redemption is an act of righteousness, but not every act of righteousness is part of his redemptive purpose.
 - b. "What occurs within God's overall, providential ordering of human affairs, as sovereign Lord of the whole of creation, is wider than the scope of his redemptive activity at any one point in history.
 - c. "Therefore when the oppressed are liberated,
 - (1) or certain wrongs righted,
 - (2) or justice executed,
 - (3) we should not regard any or every such event or process in and of itself as part of God's *redemption*.

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- d. "We should, however, certainly want to affirm such things as part of the *providential* will and ordering of God the Creator and righteous Judge of all men." [Wright, p. 139.]
 - 4. Righteousness as the Social Foundation of Israel
 - 5. The Ten Commandments: Responsible Freedom
 - a. See the Decalogue as "a kind of 'Bill of Rights', human and divine,
 - b. expressed in the form of responsibilities necessary to preserve and enjoy their freedom as a redeemed people." [Wright, p. 143.]
 - 6. Maintaining Justice: The Function of the Laws and the Leaders
 - 7. 'Seek Justice': Two Key Features of the Message of the Prophets
 - a. First: theological basis: God as axiom.
 - (1) "Since God is the source of all righteousness and justice,
 - (2) knowledge of God is prior to the practice of justice.
 - (3) "Therefore, they [the prophets] can confidently link
 - (a) the failure and tragedy in the realm of social injustice
 - (b) and general wickedness
 - (4) to failure to 'know' God (Is. 1:3ff.; Ho. 4:1ff)." [Wright, p. 146.]
 - b. "Second, *its social bias*.
 - (1) The bias of the prophets in favour of the poor, the weak, the oppressed, the dispossessed and the victimized is obvious." [Wright, p. 146.]
- D. Law
- 1. The Main Legal Blocks

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- a. The Decalogue: Exodus 20:2-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21
 - b. The Book of the Covenant: Exodus 20:22-23:33
 - c. The Levitical Collection: The Holiness Code (Lv 17-26)
 - d. The Deuteronomic Collection
2. The Different Kinds of Law
- a. Criminal Law
 - (1) Tenth Commandment shows that "a person could be thought of as morally 'criminal' before God
 - (2) without having committed an external, judicially punishable, offence." [Wright, p. 153.]
 - b. Civil Law
 - c. Family Law
 - d. Cultic Law
 - e. Charitable Law
 - (1) "...such is the degree of penetration of Israel's theological beliefs into the practicalities of legal life, that it comes as really no surprise to find hosts of these charitable and humanitarian instructions scattered throughout the legal codes." [Wright, p. 157.]
 - (2) for examples see Footnote 6, p. 157
3. Hermeneutics of Legal Interpretation
- a. No distinction between "civil" and "religious" law
 - b. Therefore. both the context and narrative are crucial in order to "decode" the Law and its ethic relevance

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- c. "So the task of interpreting the laws for our own ethical instruction requires careful thought.
 - d. "We need to see how any particular law functioned in its own Israelite context and what moral principles underlie it.
 - e. "It is those principles (or 'middle axioms') which then feed our ethical thought and action in our own environment." [Wright, p. 158.]
4. Theological Reflections on Old Testament Law
- a. Theological Orientation
 - (1) "...keeping the law was by no means an end in itself, but rather the way to 'knowing God' in personal covenant relationship.
 - (2) In that sense, the law was indeed 'life'.
 - (3) It was in living as God commanded that they would be the people he wanted and so fulfil his purpose in the world (Ex. 19:5f)." 159.
 - (4) For Christians,
 - (a) who though not under the law,
 - (b) are still not "without the law";
 - (c) the abiding theological and ethical validity of the law for us is found in what it points us toward:
 - (d) "a redemptive, covenant relationship with God.
 - (5) There is, therefore, a continuity and discontinuity in biblical ethics as regards the *law*,
 - (6) which is parallel to the continuity and discontinuity in biblical theology as regards *redemption*." [Wright, p. 161.]
5. Ingredients or types of punishment according to the Law

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- a. Retribution,
 - b. Purging,
 - c. Deterrence,
 - d. Restoration,
 - e. Compensation
6. Due Process and Limitations of the Law
- E. Society and culture
- 1. Rejection and Prohibition
 - 2. Toleration with Control
 - a. Polygamy
 - b. Divorce
 - c. Slavery
 - 3. Acceptance and Affirmation
 - a. Affirm all that which is good
 - b. Realistic vision of the world
 - (1) In principle the world is good, however
 - (2) There will always be sin
 - (3) and there will always be weak and sinful people
 - c. God does not seek to "exterminate" the weak and sinful,
 - d. rather God aims to instruct, create, conserve, etc.
 - e. Pastoral Application

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- (1) Not tolerance in the sense of permissiveness
- (2) But rather seek to lead the people to conversion
- (3) To destroy "in the name of divine justice" therefore is very dangerous, and often a type of self-deception particularly insidious.

F. Christians and Culture

1. "... the Old Testament leads us to expect that there will be some aspects of fallen human society which must be rejected as abhorrent to God.
2. The only Christian response to them is renunciation and separation.
3. It also gives us some clues on how to identify such features. ... four in particular:
 - a. the idolatrous,
 - b. the perverted,
 - c. that which was destructive of persons
 - d. and callousness to the poor." [Wright, p. 187.]
4. The Old Testament also "prepares us to allow for the fact that society is fallen. Even God does so!" [Wright, p. 188.]

G. Moral Theological Import of God's incarnation in Jesus:

1. "In becoming man--one particular man--God accepted all the limitations of the far from perfect society of first-century Palestine.
2. "Without compromising his own holiness he was able to tolerate the institutions and structures // of his day,
3. while at the same time challenging and undermining them with the revolutionary message of God's dynamic rule among men.
4. "The church, as the continuing agent and vehicle of God's kingdom, is entrusted with the same dual task.

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- a. "Yeast has to `tolerate' the dough.
- b. "But it will not leave it unchanged." [Wright, p. 190.]

H. The way of the individual

1. The Individual in Community

- a. "We tend to begin at the personal level and work outwards,
- b. but to see things from the Old Testament perspective we have reorient our ethical pattern of thought. [Wright, p. 197].
- c. Don't look at ethics in terms of "*This* is the kind of person you must be; *that* kind of society is a bonus in the background." [Wright, p. 197.]
- d. OT emphasis is rather the opposite; thus the question become:
 - (1) "Now if that is the kind of society God wants,
 - (2) what kind of person must you be once you belong to it?
 - (3) How can anyone `live a life worthy of the calling you have received' (cf. Eph. 4:1)?
- e. Individual ethics are thus derivative from the theology of the redeemed people of God.
- f. Put another way, individual ethics in the Old Testament, just as much as social ethics, are *covenantal*." [Wright, p. 198.]
- g. Thus our perspective:
 - (1) "...it is the nature of the *community* God seeks
 - (a) (and will, in the eschatological vision, ultimately create)
 - (b) which governs the kind of *person* he approves.

- (2) "Social and personal are inseparable in Old Testament ethics." [Wright, p. 199]
2. Personal Responsibility
 - a. Indispensable
 - b. Each person is "responsible"
 - c. The Ten Commandments, etc., are formulated in the second person *singular*.
 3. Models of Morals
 - a. The Wise Man
 - b. The Moral Apologia
 - (1) Job, the moral self-defense.
 - (2) A "snapshot" of the moral person: cf. Wright, p. 204-5.
 - c. The Acceptable Worshipper
 - (1) Link between morality and worship, especially in the prophets.
 - (2) Cf. Amos, Micah 6, Jer. 7. Is. 58, Hos. 4:1, Ps. 15 & 24
 - (3) "acceptable worship is inseparably linked with acceptable living." [Wright, p. 207.]
 4. Failure and Forgiveness
 - a. "Awareness of sin and failure is not the paralysis of ethics in the Old Testament. //
 - b. "Knowing your sin does not stop you walking in the way of the Lord;
 - (1) it simply tells you where you have to start from,
 - (2) before you can set foot on it.

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- c. "That starting point was God's objective provision of atonement and the subjective experience of forgiveness.
- d. "In the Old as well as the New Testament, gospel precedes ethics."
[Wright, p. 209-210.]

IX. EVALUATION OF THE USE OF THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES FOR CHRISTIAN ETHICS

A. Weaknesses

- 1. Tendency to legalism and fundamentalism
- 2. Clearly our faith in Jesus Christ has to precede, contextualize, condition, and be the criterion *par excellence* for *Christian* ethics.

B. Importance of the Hebrew Scriptures for the Primitive Church

- 1. The greater part of the Bible is the Hebrew Scriptures
- 2. These are also more diverse and rich from the point of view of
 - a. history
 - b. culture
 - c. various ethical situations
- 3. Still fundamental to the liturgical life of the Christian community
- 4. Also common "sacred texts" with Jews

C. Can offer a good corrective for "Hellenistic" ethics

- 1. Morality is "religious"
- 2. Based on the community
- 3. Basically positive view of the world and creation

D. Contemporary importance for

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1. Theology of Liberation
2. Concept of a living God active in our history
3. The Covenant
4. Universal vocation to holiness for all Christians, cf *Lumen Gentium*, ch. 5
5. Community
6. Narrative theology and the *Haggadah*
7. Concrete approaches to moral problems

X. OVERVIEW OF PRINCIPAL NEW TESTAMENT ETHICAL THEMES

A. Introductory Comment on the Distinction between Norm and Ideal

1. Ideals are teleological; norms deontological
2. Don't confuse one with the other; important to have both
3. Ideals move us forward, can be an important "check" for our discernment
4. Norms frequently can keep us from falling backwards
5. Humans often have a *key* ideal, such as the love command (and this is good)
6. But we still need norms.
7. However, norms *without* an over-riding ideal, such as love, fall easily into mere casuistry and legalism.

B. New Testament Ideals

1. Not universalizable meta-ethical norms
2. Do not try to "translate" ideals language into normative language
3. Let Scripture speak in *its* own voice, do not try to force it into a Kantian-type discourse.

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- C. The Love Command
 - 1. Already covered this essentially in Spohn's Sixth Model, "Scripture as a Basis for Responding Love."
 - 2. Further Bibliographical Hints
- D. Scriptural References for the Love Command
 - 1. Extended exegesis in Victor Paul Furnish's chapter on Jesus' commands to love in Chapter 1 in *The Love Command in the New Testament*, pp. 22-69.
 - 2. Furnish's basic thesis:
 - a. "the Christian gospel of love cannot be distilled into some universal proposition or commandment,
 - b. but can only be grasped in its concreteness as it impinges upon specific relationships and situations in history....
 - c. The gospels do not just *exhibit* Jesus' teaching, but
 - d. rather receive, transmit, and apply it in specific ways relevant to the needs of the church the writers' own times.
 - e. Thereby they demonstrate their faithfulness to one of the most crucial aspects of Jesus' teaching:
 - f. that it did not consist of the mere promulgation or exposition of general truths, values, and rules, but
 - g. was rather a call, a summons, a command addressed to specific persons in actual situations.
 - h. And so there is no golden nugget--or Golden Rule!--which can be singled out as the essence of the love ethic in earliest Christianity." p. 23.
- E. The "Great Commandment" found in the Synoptics:
 - 1. Mark 12:28-34

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2. Matthew 22:34-40
 3. Luke 10:25-28
- F. Loving One's Enemies
1. Matthew 5:43-48
 2. Luke 6: 27-36
- G. Johannine Vision of Full Humanity, Revealed in God's Love
1. Revelatory Nature of the Love Commandment
 2. Revelation as God's Children
 - a. Who we are now: 1 John 3:1-3
 - b. Call to be true to our true nature
 3. Tension with the "World" -- the enemy of the Truly Human
 4. Divine empowerment to love
 - a. I John 4
 - b. Johannine Syllogism: I Jn 4: 16-17
 5. Progressive deepening of God's love in us.
 6. God's love as basis for human solidarity
 - a. Contribution of Moser and Leers: *Moral Theology: Dead Ends and Ways Forward*.
 - b. "The Scriptures make clear that God is love, and therefore the basic directive for all human action is solidarity that makes us neighbours one of another.
 - c. "All love that makes others grow as human beings is a reflection of God's love for men and women and originates in this.

- d. "Because of this link, as Jesus showed on the cross, even weak and sinful men and women can come to forgive their enemies and executioners." p. 164.

H. MacNamara's Insights on Agape and the Love Command

- 1. From his two books
 - a. "The Issue of the Specificity of Agape," Chapter 6 in *Faith and Ethics*, pp. 146-176.
 - b. "The Truth in Love," pp. 62-85, chapter 4 of *The Truth in Love: Reflections on Christian Morality*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988.
- 2. First of all, MacNamara accepts the special nature of Christian agape:
 - a. "If there is one thrust or recommendation that stands out in the ethos-ethic of the Bible
 - b. it is that of neighbour-love, what the New Testament calls agape." [*Truth in Love*, p. 62.]
- 3. Difference between philosophical and theological ethics:
- 4. "Philosophical ethics generally recognises ideals but it gives them a special status. They are commendable but not obligatory and perhaps only analogously part of morality." p. 167.
- 5. [However] "Theological ethics cannot hold the same position as philosophical ethics here--and that for two reasons.
 - a. "The general tradition of Christian ethics would not accept as an adequate statement of moral demand the rather jejune concept of moral duty proposed by some of the philosophers, e.g. Strawson or Hart.
 - b. Christianity holds out the ideal of agape to all Christians.
 - c. "Christianity does not regard biblical ideals in the same light in which secular ethics regards ideals:
 - d. ideals have a different status in the two systems." p. 171.

6. Special nature of the character of Christian moral demands:
 - a. "I think Christians generally would take the view that while all people may be reproached for the non-performance of duties,
 - b. those in the community of believers may be intelligibly harder on themselves and may reproach one another for not going the second mile." p. 171
 - c. "But if again we return to a notion of virtue,
 - d. if we see morality on a scalar model,
 - e. then all falling short of the perfection of Christian life is some moral imperfection, some failure.
 - f. It seems that the Christian must see it in this light.
 - g. There is only one perfect moral way for the Christian. That is the way lived by Christ, the fullness of agape. ...
 - h. But to fall short of ideals is not necessarily to be deserving of moral condemnation." p. 175.
 7. Or, in the words of one of my students, "the Christian duty is to perform the ideal."
 8. Need to contextualize this understanding of Christian duty in terms of sin, grace and forgiveness.
- I. Kingdom of God as Central New Testament Theme
1. Notion of *Proclamation*
 - a. Not a philosophical argument; Jesus is not Plato, etc.
 - b. Jesus begins his public ministry in the Gospel of Matthew with the words: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" [Mt 4:17].
 - (1) Read the Greek
 - (2) Comment on the key words:

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- (a) *κηρυσσεῖν καὶ λητεῖν*
- (b) *Μετανοεῖτε*
- (c) *ἠγγικεν*
- (d) *βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν*

- c. Therefore, any consideration of New Testament/Gospel notion of the natural law will be seen in the context to Jesus' kerygma.
- d. Kingdom never "defined" by Jesus, but proclaimed the "Good News."

2. The Nature of God's Kingdom

- a. "Nearness"
 - (1) Eschatological inbreaking of God's reign
 - (2) Makes moral decision paramount
- b. Intrinsic Relationship with God's Justice
- c. God's justice is primarily seen in *historical* and *relational* terms.
- d. The key metaphor for God's justice is not a Rawlsian "objective" construct, but rather is based on the Covenant
- e. See Karen Lebacqz's *Justice in an Unjust World: Foundations for a Christian Approach to Justice*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987.
 - (1) Using biblical images and models the author portrays divine justice
 - (2) and God's call for us to heed the cry of suffering
 - (3) and to work for justice in an unjust world.
 - (4) Lebacqz is professor of Christian ethics at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley.

J. Setting for the Sermon on the Mount

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1. Jesus as the Obedient Son of God
 - a. Baptism by John
 - (1) Request by Jesus for baptism initially refused by John (Mt 3:13-14)
 - (2) However, Jesus' response to John the Baptist is important to establish the theme of obedience to the will of God the Father.
 - (3) Therefore, Jesus tells John: "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" [Mt 3:15].
 - (4) Here both John the Baptist and Jesus act in obedience to the righteousness which will be seen in Matthew's Gospel as constituting obedience to the will of God the Father.
 - b. Theophany upon coming out of the water
 - (1) Confirms the appropriateness of this obediential stance: (Mt 3: 16-17).
 - (2) Authority of Jesus as God's Son established.
 - (3) Parallelism to be repeated in ascending the Mount, and "opening" his mouth to proclaim God's revelation of Beatitude.
 - c. Testing in the Desert
 - (1) Conflict and testing with powers of evil.
 - (2) Jesus' response must become paradigmatic for the Church.
2. Inception of Jesus' Public Ministry
 - a. Initial preaching: Mt 4:17 [already discussed]
 - b. Summoning of first disciples
 - c. To learn from Jesus, and share in his ministry

K. The Sermon on the Mount

1. The Beatitudes

- a. Organization of eight Beatitudes in the traditional third person: Mt 5: 3-10
- b. Begin and end with promise of God's Kingdom, and sub-divided into two groups of four by the theme of righteousness (*δικαιοσυνη*)
- c. The beatitudes describe a community of the sons and daughters of God who are promised the Kingdom of heaven, as well as satisfaction of their true innermost desires: comfort, mercy, righteousness, etc.

2. Beatitudes as Proclamation of God's Community of Sons and Daughters

- a. Matthew reports that crowds have been following Jesus from the beginning of his public ministry.
- b. Now through the proclamation of the beatitudes Jesus is beginning to transform these people into a community of disciples.
- c. They have been given a common identity, i.e., sons and daughters of God, and promised both great blessings as well as the accompanying persecution that awaits those who will enter the Kingdom of heaven.
- d. The community of disciples discover their identity through close companionship with Jesus.
- e. The beatitudes reflect the character of Jesus himself as the truly happy one who has the joy of the Kingdom by giving himself completely to the doing of the Father's will.
- f. The remainder of the Sermon on the Mount is a further explication of the meaning and demands of the identity of the community of disciples as the sons and daughters of God.

3. The Antitheses

- a. Four Hermeneutical Principles in Mt 5:17-20
 - (1) Work of Hans Dieter Betz

- (2) Final principle: "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. [Mt 5:20]
 - (a) shows the foundational attitude which must be the same for the disciples and Jesus,
 - (b) namely, fidelity to the surpassing righteousness of performing the Father's will.
 - (c) This sort of righteousness is never to be interpreted as mere external observance of precepts of the Torah,
 - (d) but rather as a complete turning of the human heart towards God.
 - b. The Six Antitheses spell out the ramifications of this last principle for the disciples.
- L. Moral Community as Key New Testament Theme
- 1. Importance of the moral community, according to Vincent MacNamara.
 - a. "The task of the moral community then is to discover the expression of neighbour-love and to enable human beings to align their lives with it." [*Truth in Love*, p. 63.]
 - b. "It is only when we accept the community of others and recognise our responsibility to them that our own humanness becomes possible.
 - c. That requires of us a shift from a perspective and purpose in life in which the only thing of value is our own plans to one in which the welfare of others becomes a significant part of that purpose." [*Truth in Love*, p. 68].
 - 2. The Call to Perfection: Moral Community in the Kingdom of God
 - a. Conclusion of the Six Antitheses at Mt 5:45 with the next three verses serving as a summary for the entire section (Beatitudes and Antitheses).
 - b. Mt 5:46-48:

"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." [Mt 5:46-48]

- (1) Meaning of the word "Perfect"
 - (a) *Teleioi/teleios* in Greek
 - (b) *Shalom* in Hebrew
 - (c) *Perfectus* in Latin
 - (2) Not a static concept; therefore, the call is to *become*, not to *be*.
 - (3) Implications for natural law: a process of becoming human, rather than conformity to a static "nature"
- M. The Sermon on the Mount as Vision and Gospel Ethic for the Normatively Human
1. Call to disciples to model themselves on their/our Father in heaven.
 2. Extend boundaries of the moral community
 3. Relational/communitarian dimension, then, on what is meant by the truly human.
- N. The Law of Praxis in James
1. Christian Freedom in Doing:
 - a. James 1:25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom,
 - b. and continues to do this,
 - c. not forgetting what he has heard,
 - d. but doing it--

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e. he will be blessed in what he does.

2. Law of Charity

a. James 2:8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself,"

b. you are doing right.

c. James 2:9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

d. James 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and

e. yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

f. James 2:11 For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder."

g. If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

h. James 2:12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ...

XI. PLACE OF SCRIPTURE IN CONTEMPORARY NATURAL LAW REFLECTION

A. Point of Departure and Context for Consideration: Three fundamental approaches

1. Bernard Häring (inculturation)

2. Josef Fuchs

a. Biblical "proof" for the natural law

b. Refutation of Protestant anti-natural law position

c. Dialogue with secular humanists

3. John MacQuarrie

a. Christological approach

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- b. Ecumenical
 - c. Natural law as "bridge concept" for dialogue
- B. Bernard Häring
- 1. Bernard Häring's Ch. 7 of *Free and Faithful*, vol. 1
 - 2. "What we call `natural law', as part of the Church's teaching, must be explored, above all, in the light of Holy Scripture. There, it is presented as a part of the Good News of salvation." p. 312.
 - 3. Natural law in the context of evangelization:
 - a. "The original purpose of theories about natural law in the first Christian centuries was evangelization. The servants of the Gospel did not want to destroy or discard what people already knew about God and about good.
 - b. "Rather it was their conviction that Christ, the Saviour, had already reached out to those who did not belong to the Jewish tradition, and that they had a law written in their hearts." [Häring, p.316.]
- C. Some principal ancient cultural expressions of the Natural Law
- 1. Greek Influence: "Nature"
 - 2. Roman Influence: "Law"
 - 3. Chinese Confucian Tradition
 - a. Mandate of Heaven
 - b. Superior Person and the "Mean" Person
 - c. *Tao Te*: the Way to Virtue
 - d. The Five Relationships
 - 4. Semitic world: Covenant Treaty with Creation

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- a. This is the thrust of Mons. Mejía's article on the Natural Law in Scripture: that our creation in the image of God puts us under His Law.
 - b. Although parenthetically I might add that the use of "Law" here might not have identical nuances with the expression in Scripture.
 - c. I think the "Covenant" idea is better nuanced; also used by Mons. Caffarra in his *Living in Christ*.
- D. Avoid a false problematic:
1. i.e., separating "natural law" from any consideration of revelation.
 2. As Bernard Häring trenchantly observes:
 - a. "Much of what we call 'natural law' was conceived by them [Taoists, Confucianists, Hindus, etc.] as part of God's revelation.
 - b. "Therefore, we would do well to follow an approach similar to that of the Apostle of the Gentiles in his epistle to the Romans, chapter 1 and 2. We would then distinguish carefully what our particular faith tells us from what are good arguments proposes, however, in a perspective of God's revealing himself to humankind through the humble ones and holy, inspired persons.
 - c. "Keeping in mind this dimension does not diminish our good use of reason and our careful pondering of arguments. It allows a more congenial sharing of experience and reflections." [Häring, *FFI*, p. 329.]
- E. Theme of Creation and the Natural Law
- F. Wisdom and the Natural Law as the "Law of Life"
- G. Covenant theme and the Natural Law in Terms of Social Ethics
1. I.e. retrieving an important aspect of theological anthropology (who we really are)
 2. Remember that the natural law has had pride of place in the elaboration of social ethics.

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3. From Moser and Leers, *Moral Theology: Dead Ends and Ways Forward*
4. "As long as morality addressed itself to the personal sphere alone, it remains a micro-morality, incapable of affecting wider structures." p. 89.
5. "The morality of the covenant has at once a personal dimension and a community, social dimension.
6. This does not mean that the social one is the sum total of the wishes of the persons involved; it means that persons acquire status and find their place to the extent that they become part of a people and attuned to a common purpose.
7. As isolated individuals, they remain sterile.
8. This is why one can speak of a 'corporative' personality, in which responsibility falls as much on the community as on individuals. It is impossible for each individual to journey alone within a covenant framework.
9. Salvation is conditional //on adherence to a common purpose. Each person becomes 'someone' only insofar as he or she is affiliated to a family, a clan, a tribe, a people.
10. In this way, we can move beyond both individualism and massification. So the morality of the covenant shows the way forward from the person-society dichotomy.
11. What is kept is a polarity, which can generate energy for both individuals and society; eliminating either pole would leave both inert." pp. 89-90.

H. Sin (The Fall of Humankind) and the Natural Law

1. See here especially Josef Fuch's article: "The <Sin of the World> and Normative Morality." *Gregorianum* 61 (1980): 51-76. Also found as ch. 8, pp. 153-175, of *Personal Responsibility and Christian Morality*, and in Italian in his *Sussidi 1980 per lo studio della teologia morale fondamentale*, "Testo 25," pp. 415-435.
2. "Primary" Natural Law: as existing before the Fall
3. "Secondary" Natural Law: recognition, and adjustment for man's fallen nature: e.g., Thomas's tolerance of private property on these grounds.

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4. Be careful of constructing *two* moral orders: i.e., one "real" and possible, and therefore binding; and one "ideal" and non-binding. It is better to start with *one real* moral order.
 5. Forward "thrust" of the real moral order:
 - a. "It is a better approach to being with the one real moral order, which is concrete and possible and therefore binding,
 - b. bearing in mind that this always includes the thrust towards overcoming the limits of what is possible at a given moment, whether these limitations derive from the «condition of the sinner» or not." p.66.
 6. The "Sin of the World" and Moral Knowledge: How is the latter conditioned by the former?
 - a. Klaus Demmer's Concept of Knowledge as a kind of moral achievement-->
 - b. dependent on a greater or lesser personal willingness to pursue what is right and good:
 - c. "If this willingness is reduced, there may follow an obscuring of moral knowledge and experience." (Fuchs, p.69, [From Demmer's *Deuten und handeln* {Italian, *Interpretare ed agire* }])
 - d. Process of Moral Knowledge: attained within a historical and social process,
 - e. which is "always negatively influenced by concupiscence arising from the «sin of the world» as well as personal sin and sinful attitudes." p.69.
- I. Pauline Understanding of Human Conscience and Natural Law
1. *Romans 2:9-16* for *locus classicus*: especially 2:13-15

For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since

they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

2. Fuchs' interpretation:

- a. "Since the Law does not *establish* the difference between good and evil but rather teaches men about what is already good or evil, St. Paul can say that the good works of the heathen constitute a fulfilment of the demands of the Law." [NL, p. 8] {quoted by Spohn, p. 42.}
- b. "If the Fall had totally eradicated any notion of morality from human beings, then the argument of Romans 1 and 2 would not hold. It is impossible to hold someone morally accountable who is totally depraved and lacks any knowledge of what is right and good." [Spohn, p. 42.]

3. Contrast with Protestant position on theological anthropology:

- a. Must understand a bit of Fuchs' context first: German trying to establish a natural law theology which would also be open to dialogue with both non-Catholic Christians, as well as "secularists," those who profess no specific faith in God.
- b. With his fundamental work, *Natural Law: A Theological Investigation*, he sought to clarify "the theological foundations of natural law in response to the charges of Barth and Emil Brunner that it was unbiblical and divorced from the saving work of Christ." [Spohn, p. 41.]
- c. Different from Protestant notion of being in the image of God:
- d. According to Fuchs, for Protestants "the likeness to God consists only in responsibility and in the fact of being called and in responding.
- e. That is to say that Protestant thought finds our likeness to God in a relation. [NL, p. 63.]//
- f. When that relation is broken, the likeness to God disappears until it is restored by God in Christ.

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- g. Catholic theology, by contrast, holds for a humanity that images God even after the Fall and that cannot be eradicated by sin.
 - h. Humans image God in their reason and freedom; therefore, even sinners have not lost God's image completely." pp. 42-43.
 - 4. Significance also of creation for Biblical natural law:
 - a. Since the New Testament indicates that from the beginning it (creation) was oriented towards the Incarnation of the Word.
 - b. [Cf. Col 1:15-17; Eph 1:9-23; 1 Cor 8:6 {I'd add the first chapter of John's Gospel!}].
- J. Significance of this Fuchs/Rahnerian position for Christian use of the Natural Law:
 - 1. Key Summary Point for Biblical Natural Law: No such thing as human "nature" that is not touched in some way by the grace of God.
 - 2. "By adopting Rahner's position, Fuchs has introduced a new definition of human nature into natural law." p. 47.
 - 3. I.e., a more "open-ended" or developmental notion of human nature in the human person.
 - 4. Change in practical method in a move away from stress on absolute moral principles (based on Thomistic/Aristotlian concept of the "ends" of human nature) to a greater stress on the consequences of our actions.
 - 5. Relevance for Scripture and Ethics:
 - a. "This new notion of human nature will affect the way Scripture is used in ethics.
 - b. Passages expressing the transformation of the agent will obviously be more welcome than those dwelling on specific patterns of conduct." [Spohn, p. 48.]
- K. Struggle between this natural law and the power of sin
 - 1. See especially *Romans 7*

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2. Romans 8
- L. The Law of Christ
1. Distinct from the Mosaic Law
 2. Yet, more than the "natural law" if the latter is understood in the sense of some timeless metaphysical ideal.
 3. Gal 5:14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."
 4. Gal 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
 5. Romans 13:10 Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.
- M. Macquarrie's "Rethinking Natural Law,"
1. in *Readings in Moral Theology*, No. 2, 121-145.
 2. Also found in *Three Issues in Ethics*, 82-110, (1978).
 3. Also found in Curran & McCormick, No. 7.
 4. Natural law as both starting point and bridge concept for Christian ethics:
 5. As starting point: Macquarrie's basic question: "...whether, at least under present circumstances, the most appropriate way of doing Christian ethics is the way that sets out from the nature of man, rather than ways that begin from distinctively Christian concepts." p. 121
 6. Macquarrie's thesis: "Indeed, I believe that a viable account of natural law could make a vital contribution toward solving three major problems:
 - a. the linking of Christian and non-Christian morals,
 - b. the shape of a contemporary Christian ethic,
 - c. and the relation between faith and morals." p. 121.

7. Christocentric approach to the natural law
 - a. Contradiction and fulfillment of true humanity:
 - b. "To put the matter in another way, Christ does not contradict but he fulfills our humanity;
 - c. or, better expressed, he both contradicts it and fulfills it--
 - d. he contradicts our actual condition but fulfills what we have already recognized deep within us as true human personhood." p. 124.

8. Christ as paradigm of self-giving love:

"Can we say that Christ's fullness or perfection is attributed to him because he gave up all other possibilities for the sake of the most distinctly human possibility of all, the one that has the most claim upon all men, namely self-giving love? And can we also say that because this love is the most creative thing in human life (for it brings men to freedom and personhood), then Christ manifests the 'glory of man' by becoming transparent to the ultimate creative self-giving source of all, to God?"

9. Christ as God's Revelation of humanity: Bridge between Christian and non-Christian morals:
 - a. "And if indeed Christ is understood as the revelation of God,
 - b. then this surely strengthens the argument for a basic affinity between Christian and non-Christian morals,
 - c. for what is revealed or made clear in Christ is also implicit in the whole creation.
 - d. "In saying this, I am not 'annexing' the whole creation to Christ
 - e. but rather claiming that what is already present in the whole creation is gathered up in Christ.
 - f. "In other words, I am trying to link Christian and non-Christian moral striving not on the ground of redemption
 - g. but on the ground of a doctrine of creation." p. 125.

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10. Probably a better ground, for not all will accept or even understand a common doctrine of redemption.
 11. Good dialogue approach:
 - a. Seeking a common ground,
 - b. while still respecting and taking seriously one's own tradition,
 - c. all the while being open to another's; doesn't mask differences.
 - d. Not the "Moral Esperanto" or "Lowest Common Denominator" approach.
 12. Natural Law and Christian discipleship
 - a. "The Christian, we have seen, defines mature manhood in terms of Jesus Christ, and especially his self-giving love.
 - b. "But Christ himself is not static figure, nor are Christians called to imitate him as a static model.
 - c. "Christ is an eschatological figure, always before us; and the doctrine of coming again `with glory' implies that there are dimensions of christhood not manifest in the historical Jesus and not yet fully grasped by the disciples.
 - d. "Thus discipleship does not restrict human development to some fixed pattern, but summons into freedoms, the full depth of which is unknown, except that they will always be consonant with self-giving love." p. 142.
- N. Importance of the Natural Law Tradition for Biblical Ethics
1. Advantage of being a "bridge concept" between moral theology and philosophical ethics:
 - a. "Because natural law ethics attempts to settle moral questions on the basis of the humanity that believers have in common with non-believers,

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- b. it tries to speak in natural, human terms rather than theological language." [Spohn, p. 38]
 - 2. "Reality Check" for Biblical Ethics:
 - a. Correspondence to the objective pole of morality
 - b. "How else can we discover what is right and wrong, good or evil, except by measuring actions against our humanity. ...
 - c. Natural law is foundation in the sense that it is objective rather than arbitrary." [Spohn, p. 38.]
 - 3. Relation/correspondence between demands of Biblical ethics and "ordinary" human morality:
 - a. "This [the natural law] can provide a reality test on religious inspirations to action:
 - b. Do they measure up to ordinary human morality?"
 - 4. Check also against ethnocentrism and cultural relativity:
 - a. "The persistent challenge is to determine which practices are truly natural and
 - b. which are so fixed in culture that they are taken to be `natural'." pp. 38-39.
 - 5. Caveat:
 - a. "By bracketing Christian convictions, however,
 - b. natural law ethics can lead to a denigration of a distinctively Christian faith vision." [Spohn, p. 37-38]
- O. Practical Issue on Integration of Scripture with Classic Roman Catholic Natural Law Teaching
 - 1. Important pastoral observation of Archbishop Rembert Weakland, O.S.B.

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- a. From Weakland's "Is the USA Ready for Catholic Social Teaching?" *Priests and People* 6 (1992): 381-385.
 - b. Adapted from the April 1992 Von Hügel Lecture delivered at St. Edmunds College, Cambridge.
 - c. Weakland is archbishop of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was chairman of the US Bishops Committee which drafted the Pastoral Letter on the Economy.
2. "In more recent discussions about Catholic social teaching a new argument that causes uneasiness has arisen.
 3. So many of our people in the USA today have become again a biblical people. ...
 4. For the first time there has grown up a generation of Catholics who now are becoming acquainted with Scripture [*sic*] and expect that homilizing as well as teaching will have such a biblical basis. ...
 5. These same people, however, find that Catholic social teaching is based so much on natural law philosophy and so little on scripture.
 6. This tension was very evident as we worked on the Peace and Economic pastoral letters.
 - a. In the latter, it was decided to keep the natural law and biblical sections separate so that we could appeal to two different audiences, one Christian, one secular.
 - b. Many Catholics wished we had integrated these approaches, since it is how they now think.
 7. To find the biblical roots of Catholic social teaching is not so difficult a task but we are at our infancy in working out the details.
 8. If we do not, I am afraid we will alienate many Catholics from this teaching." p. 383.
 9. Weakland then goes on to offer 7 conclusions, and the first conclusion is "Catholic social teaching will have to integrate its natural law philosophy and

its biblical roots. As yet it has not developed a coherent view that embraces both." p. 385.

XII. NEW TESTAMENT SEXUAL ETHICS

A. Problematic of Biblical Authority for Contemporary Sexual Ethics

1. Statement of the problematic:

- a. In investigating what the Bible has to say about issues in sexual ethics several methodological concerns must be addressed, or at least consciously borne in mind.
- b. Principal among these is the clear recognition of both the resources as well as the limits of what the Bible might offer to a contemporary sexual ethics.

2. Victor Paul Furnish suggests that in appropriating what Paul has to say to the Church today on concrete issues such as marriage and divorce, homosexuality, gender issues, etc. we must steer between two dilemmas, or "non-methods":

a. The "Sacred-Cow" Approach

- (1) This first danger would be to regard the biblical text simplistically as "the written deposit of God's truth,
- (2) mediated through inspired writers in centuries past,
- (3) but valid in both general and specific ways for all times and places.
- (4) This may be called the sacred-cow view of the Bible.
- (5) It leads to the conclusion, when applied to the concrete ethical teachings of Paul, that they are in fact God's commandments and thus eternally and universally binding."
- (6) From Furnish's *The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues*, (2nd ed. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985): 13-14.

- (7) The interpretive ideology connected with this "sacred-cow" approach is obviously very fundamentalistic.
- (8) The potentially problematic texts "are not to be touched, disturbed, or in any sense explained away. They are to be taken at face value." [Furnish, p. 14]

b. "White-Elephant" Approach

- (1) On the other end of the spectrum is our second dilemma, namely to regard whatever the biblical author has to say about concrete moral issues
 - (a) as being so hopelessly time-bound
 - (b) and culturally-conditioned
- (2) that we could never hope to gain any relevant insight into the complexities of our contemporary issues and problems.
- (3) This tactic obviously is what Furnish labels the "white-elephant" approach:
 - (a) "perhaps once useful,
 - (b) but now outmoded, irrelevant,
 - (c) maybe even a little ridiculous." [Furnish, p. 18]

B. Aspect of Pluralism in Society

- 1. We live in a pluralistic society, and as Christians we should acknowledge that for what is authoritative for us, such as the Bible,
- 2. may not have the same claim on other members of our larger community.
- 3. Thus, a biblically-based argumentation alone will not necessarily carry the day.

C. Ecumenical Aspects of the Problematic

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1. Moreover, even among ourselves we would also do well to acknowledge that traditionally various Christian denominations have used the Bible in widely varying ways when it comes to issues in applied ethics, such as sexual morality.
 2. Thus, we need to study and reflect not only on our own confessional approaches to these matters, but also to consider how other Christians have approached these issues theologically in the past, and how they are struggling with them in the present.
 3. One well-known Christian ethicist who has wrestled with this issue is Lisa Cahill.
- D. Cahill's Reflections on a biblically-based sexual ethics.
1. Here I will refer principally to her "Is Catholic Ethics Biblical? The Example of Sex and Gender." *Warren Lecture Series in Catholic Studies* 20 (1992). [Lecture presented at the University of Tulsa on 15 March 1992].
 2. Using the example of sexual ethics, Cahill gives an overview of the traditional approaches of Roman Catholic moral theology,
 3. contrasts these with various Protestant usages of Scripture in ethics,
 4. and then concludes by outlining a revised approach to sexuality and gender issues which would be more sensitive to the creative use of the Bible.
- E. Considerations for a biblically-informed sexual ethics
1. In language reminiscent of Furnish's "Sacred-Cow" and "White-Elephant" dilemma, Cahill holds that what is still "needed in the wake of the undeniable difference between the first century cultural situation and our own
 - a. is a creative way to appropriate the bible as morally normative for practical moral reflection and concrete action,
 - b. while recognizing that the discrepancy of cultural contexts can limit the relevance of specific commands." [Cahill, "Is Catholic Ethics Biblical?" p. 3].

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2. "A first and essential point about a genuinely biblical ethics is that the refinement of *moral prohibitions* would never be its bottom line, as was the case in recent Catholic tradition." p. 3.
3. This last point is important to bear in mind, especially in light of the *whole* gospel message, both in terms of content, tone, and trajectory.
4. Critiquing traditional Roman Catholic moral theology's presentation of sexual ethics, Cahill notes that the "bible's own approach to morality is strikingly different from that embodied in traditional Catholic moral theology.
5. "What is fundamental in the bible is the standing of the person in community before God.
 - a. "Conversion, repentance and faith come *before* descriptions of behavior as consistent or not with Christian identity.
 - b. "Behavioral guides are developed out of the faith experience,
 - c. and never become either a focus of interest in their own right nor a systematic edifice of laws." p. 4.
6. Different methodologies and concerns addressed to the Scriptures will obviously yield different results;
 - a. thus, "While the ethicist or moral theologian tends to bring to the bible an agenda shaped around particular moral questions and rules,
 - b. the biblical scholar tends to seek first the basic biblical message about discipleship, and then to develop ethical implications as a subsidiary concern.
 - c. Certainly the latter perspective is closer to that of the biblical authors." p. 4.
 - d. "It is the commitment to discipleship which controls, not detailed specification of natural and unnatural acts." p. 5.
7. Stating somewhat the same point in another way, we could say that our understanding of what the discipline of Christian ethics is in itself will have

a great bearing in how we approach issues such as the formulation of principles and rules.

8. A biblically-informed ethics will not be first and foremost a systematic exposition and analysis of such principles and rules,
9. but rather will stress more "community-formation as the Body of Christ, and formation of Christian moral identity as practical membership within that community." [Cahill, p. 5.]

F. Cahill discusses two basic strategies for realizing a more biblically-informed sexual ethics:

1. "The first strategy, common in Protestant ethical writings,
 - a. but certainly not foreign to Catholic ones,
 - b. is to move away from specific biblical 'rules',
 - c. recognizing their cultural dependency on, for instance, ancient Greek assumptions about homosexual practice, or Greco-Roman and Israelite institutions of patriarchal marriage.
 - d. Realizing the impossibility of transposing such rules from biblical times to our own, interpreters look for larger themes, values, or ideals which can // inform moral reflection without determining specific practices in advance.
 - e. These ideals and values can be primarily religious in character, with moral implications,
 - f. or they can speak directly to moral qualities and attitudes.
 - g. Examples are the religious themes of Kingdom of God, repentance, and Cross; and the moral ones of mercy, forgiveness, love, and stewardship.
 - h. Such themes can suggest patterns of behavior without specifying what form moral obligation will take in any concrete situation.
 - i. As James Gustafson has pointed out, the key problem here is indeterminacy, a notorious shortcoming of Protestant 'situation eth-

ics', in which the only moral absolute is to do the loving thing."
[Cahill, "Is Catholic Ethics Biblical? pp. 5-6.]

2. However, Cahill notes that a second strategy would be typical of Roman Catholic sexual ethics:
 - a. "The typical Catholic strategy is somewhat different, given the shaping of this tradition by the natural law.
 - b. "While the Protestant ethicist is likely to be most concerned to redefine *biblical authority* convincingly for Christians today,
 - c. the Catholic moral theologian looks for ways to preserve the autonomy of *natural law* ethics while making biblical themes more central." [Cahill, "Is Catholic Ethics Biblical?" p. 6].
3. Contemporary examples of this Roman Catholic "biblical-natural law" approach:
 - a. "Often the result is what is still essentially a revised *natural law* position, with biblical values having their primary impact at the pastoral rather than at the normative level." [Cahill, *Is Catholic Ethics Biblical?* p. 6.]
 - b. "Another example of the Catholic attempt to biblically reinvigorate natural law teaching on sex is John Paul II's writings on contraception." [Cahill, *Is Catholic Ethics Biblical?* p. 7].
 - c. "Here Scripture is not allowed to challenge, but is used to underwrite, cultural views of sex and gender." [Cahill, *Is Catholic Ethics Biblical?* p. 7].

G. Cahill's proposal of a "Third Strategy"

1. "A first point is that biblical texts having to do specifically with gender, sex, or marriage,
 - a. should be read as much as possible on their own terms and in their own context,
 - b. not simply as reinforcements for Catholic moral tradition and canon law." [Cahill, *Is Catholic Ethics Biblical?* p. 10].

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2. "Enlightening though such an open-ended review of texts can be, it is necessary to keep in mind the point that a genuinely biblical ethics will not rely solely on specific texts about a set of practical issues,
 3. but will seek out the larger contours of the impact of discipleship on the moral life, as presented through the New Testament communities and their writings." [[Cahill, *Is Catholic Ethics Biblical?* p. 11].
- H. Perceived advantages of such an approach:
1. "A key part of the relevance of 'the bible' for ethics today then becomes the nature of this social and moral challenge,
 2. *not* necessarily the specific practices or behaviors which were seen as embodying or betraying the Christian challenge in the first century." [Cahill, *Is Catholic Ethics Biblical?* p. 11].
 3. "It also is able to retain the relevance of the bible in ethics, even though specific commandments or rules or moral characterizations may be obsolete in terms of twentieth century culture." [[Cahill, *Is Catholic Ethics Biblical?* p. 11].
- I. Cahill gives an example drawn from the *haustafeln*
1. May well be considered as irrelevant based on historical and cultural conditions,
 2. "Nevertheless, these codes can provide an instructive model for Christian ethics.
 3. "In the first place, they attest to the necessity of working out practical morality within changing concrete contexts, in a necessarily open-ended and risky way.
 4. "Secondly, they demonstrate that Christian community not only adopts but challenges and transforms cultural practices.
 5. "The household codes accomplish this by introducing reciprocity into the superordinate-subordinate equation:
 - a. Here Cahill quotes Eph 5:24-25,

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- (1) Eph 5:24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.
 - (2) Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (NIV)
- b. But it might be good to allow Paul to finish his sentence, if not his argument:
- (1) Eph 5:26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,
 - (2) Eph 5:27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.
 - (3) Eph 5:28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.
 - (4) Eph 5:29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--
 - (5) Eph 5:30 for we are members of his body.
 - (6) Eph 5:31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."
 - (7) Eph 5:32 This is a profound mystery-- but I am talking about Christ and the church.
 - (8) Eph 5:33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (NIV)
6. "Thirdly, they demonstrate, by negative example, that Christian communal practice often needs to challenge basic cultural institutions as well as particular relationships within them." [Cahill, *Is Catholic Ethics Biblical?* p. 12].

J. Cahill's Conclusion

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1. "To be genuinely biblical, then, Christian morality has to proceed from the Spirit-filled reality of discipleship community.
2. The absence of such community has been perhaps the glaring flaw of Roman Catholic ethics.
 - a. The biblical challenge to Roman Catholic (sexual) ethics is not merely to revise selected oppressive rules.
 - b. It is to re-envision the beginning point of Christian morality as discipleship--
 - c. and especially to place moral acts and specific areas of morality in the perspective of a full moral life, as also a religiously converted and committed life." [Cahill, *Is Catholic Ethics Biblical?* p. 14].

XIII. HOMOSEXUALITY AS A TEST-CASE FOR BIBLICAL ETHICS

- A. Question of the importance for the Bible in this area.
 1. According to one study cited by Victor Paul Furnish, Scripture was named more than any other source for contributing the most to Protestant's present attitudes and opinions on homosexuality Cf. Furnish's "Homosexuality." Chapter 3 in idem. *The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues*, p. 52.
 2. Certainly the Bible also is involved as a pre-rational "authority" for cultural taboos.
 3. In this line, L. William Countryman's book is helpful, *Dirt, Greed and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988
 4. Recognize the strong emotions connected with this issue.
- B. Limitations on what Scripture addresses and/or can offer
 1. Homosexuality is *not* a central biblical theme
 2. Nor of crucial relevance to salvation.

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- C. Recognize that our cultural understanding of homosexuality is vastly different from that of the biblical world
1. "First, not only the terms, but also the concepts 'homosexual' and 'homosexuality' were unknown in Paul's day.
 2. These terms, like the terms 'heterosexual', 'heterosexuality', 'bisexual', and 'bisexuality', presume an understanding of human sexuality that was possibly only with the advent of modern psychological and sociological analysis." [Victor Paul Furnish, "Homosexuality," in *The Moral Teaching of Paul*, p. 65].
- D. Textual Interpretation *must* be done in light of a careful understanding of the cultural milieu of the relevant biblical texts.
1. "Moreover, both writers [Paul and Dio Chrysostom] presumed, with their contemporaries, that one could by force of will *control* these appetites and conform oneself to the sexual behavior dictated by reason or 'the law of nature'." [Furnish, *Homosexuality*, p. 65.]
 2. "Second, then, the critics of homosexual behavior invariably associated it with insatiable lust and avarice." [Furnish, p. 65].
 3. "Finally, the writers of this period who were concerned about homosexual behavior seemed convinced that it necessarily involved one person's exploitation of another.
 4. "Stoicism, especially, maintained that one's life must be conducted in accord with the immutable law of nature and in ways appropriate to the created order." [Furnish, p. 66].
 5. "The physiological complementarity of male and female
 - a. and the obvious necessity of heterosexual intercourse for the purposes of procreation
 - b. would have seemed to many adequate proof that intercourse between persons of the same sex was 'unnatural',
 - c. a violation of 'the law of nature'." [Furnish, p. 66].
- E. Listing of the biblical texts themselves

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1. Hebrew Scriptures

- a. Gn 19 (Sodom and Gomorrah)
- b. Lv 18:22
- c. Lv 20:13
- d. Dt 23:17
- e. Jg 19:22ff
- f. 1 Kg 14:24
- g. 1 Kg 15:12
- h. 1 Kg 22:46
- i. 2 Kg 23:7
- j. Ezek 16:47

2. New Testament

- a. Rm 1:26-27
- b. 1 Cor 6:9
- c. 1 Tm 1:10
- d. 2 Pt 2:4-8
- e. Jude v.6-7

F. Exegesis of the texts from the Hebrew Scriptures

1. Violations of Hospitality

- a. Gen 19:1 The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. (NIV)

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- (1) Gen 19:4 Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom-- both young and old-- surrounded the house. (NIV)
 - (2) Gen 19:5 They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them." (NIV)
 - (3) Gen 19:6 Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him (NIV)
 - (4) Gen 19:7 and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. (NIV)
 - (5) Gen 19:8 Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof." (NIV)
- b. Jg 19:21 So he took him into his house and fed his donkeys. After they had washed their feet, they had something to eat and drink. (NIV)
- (1) Jg 19:22 While they were enjoying themselves, some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house. Pounding on the door, they shouted to the old man who owned the house, "Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him." (NIV)
 - (2) Jg 19:23 The owner of the house went outside and said to them, "No, my friends, don't be so vile. Since this man is my guest, don't do this disgraceful thing. (NIV)
 - (3) Jg 19:24 Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. I will bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do to them whatever you wish. But to this man, don't do such a disgraceful thing." (NIV)
 - (4) Jg 19:25 But the men would not listen to him. So the man took his concubine and sent her outside to them, and they raped her and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go. (NIV)

2. Leviticus Holiness Code Texts

- a. Lv 18:22 "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable. (NIV)
- b. Lv 20:13 "If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads. (NIV)
- c. Part of the Holiness Code
- d. "In all of these ways the people of Israel were required to maintain their identity and integrity as the people of the one true God.
- e. "The prohibition of males lying with males, like many of the other laws in this code, sought to identify practices that had been, and ought always to remain, essentially foreign to Israel's life." [Furnish, *Homosexuality*, p. 64].

3. Texts which show concern over temple prostitution

- a. Dt 23:17 No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute. (NIV)
- b. 1 King 14:22 Judah did evil in the eyes of the LORD. By the sins they committed they stirred up his jealous anger more than their fathers had done. (NIV)
 - (1) 1 King 14:23 They also set up for themselves high places, sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. (NIV)
 - (2) 1 King 14:24 There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land; the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. (NIV)
- c. 1 King 15:11 Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done. (NIV)
 - (1) 1 King 15:12 He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his fathers had made. (NIV)

- d. 1 King 22:45 As for the other events of Jehoshaphat's reign, the things he achieved and his military exploits, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? (NIV)
 - (1) 1 King 22:46 He rid the land of the rest of the male shrine prostitutes who remained there even after the reign of his father Asa. (NIV)
 - e. 2 King 23:4 The king ordered Hilkiah the high priest, the priests next in rank and the doorkeepers to remove from the temple of the LORD all the articles made for Baal and Asherah and all the starry hosts. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron Valley and took the ashes to Bethel. (NIV)
 - (1) 2 King 23:5 He did away with the pagan priests appointed by the kings of Judah to burn incense on the high places of the towns of Judah and on those around Jerusalem-- those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and moon, to the constellations and to all the starry hosts. (NIV)
 - (2) 2 King 23:6 He took the Asherah pole from the temple of the LORD to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem and burned it there. He ground it to powder and scattered the dust over the graves of the common people. (NIV)
 - (3) 2 King 23:7 He also tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes, which were in the temple of the LORD and where women did weaving for Asherah. (NIV)
4. Metaphorical Use of Sodom and Gomorrah as labels for sinfulness
- a. Ezek 16:46 Your older sister was Samaria, who lived to the north of you with her daughters; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you with her daughters, was Sodom. (NIV)
 - b. Ezek 16:47 You not only walked in their ways and copied their detestable practices, but in all your ways you soon became more depraved than they. (NIV)
 - c. Ezek 16:48 As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, your sister Sodom and her daughters never did what you and your daughters have done. (NIV)

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- d. Ezek 16:49 "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. (NIV)
- e. Note that the text from Ezekial indicates that the "sin" of Sodom and Gomorrah was the sin of pride, and lack of concern for the poor.
- f. Thus, the primary sinfulness was not "sexual perversion" as such.

G. Exegesis of the New Testament texts

1. Romans

- a. Rom 1:25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-- who is forever praised. Amen. (NIV)
- b. Rom 1:26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. (NIV)
- c. Rom 1:27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. (NIV)
- d. Rom 1:28 Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. (NIV)
- e. Rom 1:29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, (NIV)
- f. Rom 1:30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; (NIV)
- g. Rom 1:31 they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. (NIV)
- h. Rom 1:32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. (NIV)

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2. I Corinthians

- a. 1 Cor 6:9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders (NIV)
- b. 1 Cor 6:10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (NIV)

3. 1 Timothy

- a. 1 Tim 1:9 We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, (NIV)
- b. 1 Tim 1:10 for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers-- and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine (NIV)
- c. 1 Tim 1:11 that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. (NIV)

4. 2 Peter

- a. 2 Pet 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; (NIV)
- b. 2 Pet 2:5 if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; (NIV)
- c. 2 Pet 2:6 if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; (NIV)
- d. 2 Pet 2:7 and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (NIV)

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- e. 2 Pet 2:8 (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)-- (NIV)
- f. 2 Pet 2:9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. (NIV)

5. Jude

- a. Jude 1:6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home-- these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. (NIV)
- b. Jude 1:7 In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire. (NIV)
- c. Jude 1:8 In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings. (NIV)

H. Overall conclusions

1. Furnish's four conclusions about the Pauline texts

- a. "1. *Since Paul offered no direct teaching to his own churches on the subject of homosexual conduct, his letters certainly cannot yield any specific answers to the questions being faced in the modern church.*"
p. 78
- b. "2. *Paul, in common with the traditions by which he was influenced and in accord with the wisdom of his day, saw the wickedness of homosexual practice to inhere in its lust and its perversion of the natural order.*

(1)" In this connection, however, we must remember that it was the more degraded and exploitative forms of pederasty that the Apostle and his contemporaries had in view when they condemned homosexual practice.

- (2) "Paul, like many of his contemporaries, doubtless regarded such behavior as a matter of deliberate choice born // of an insatiable sexual appetite.
 - (3) "The moral legacy Paul had received from Hellenistic Judaism certainly left no doubt in his mind that pederasty was a specifically Gentile vice and one of the numerous signs of pagan idolatry." pp. 78-79.
- c. "3. *Paul's fundamental concerns about homosexual practice (as he understood it) are as valid in the twentieth century as they were in the first.*" p. 80.
- (1) i.e., "where there has been no acknowledgment that life is God's gift and that one's existence stands always under God's claim.
 - (2) "To Paul it [homosexuality] represented a rebellion against the Creator and his creation,
 - (3) a surrender to one's own lusts,
 - (4) the debasement of one's own true identity
 - (5) and the exploitation of another's.
 - (6) "It is no longer possible to share Paul's belief that homosexual conduct always and necessarily involves all these things.
 - (7) "But it can be said with certainty that whenever a homosexual *or* heterosexual relationship does involve one or more of these, it stands under the judgment of scripture." p. 80.
- d. "4. *Paul's remarks about homosexual behavior must not be isolated from the wider theological context in which they stand.*
- (1) "One must remember the function of Romans 1:18-32 in the letter as a whole.
 - (2) "Paul repeats the standard Jewish accusations against the Gentiles in order to be able to say, respecting the Jews, 'they are no better',

- (3) and to emphasize that all stand in need of God's grace (2:1--3:20)." p. 80.
- (4) "One must also remember that homosexual practice is mentioned in this context as just one of numerous vices that // are symptomatic of sin." pp. 80-81.
- (5) "And finally, one must remember that 1:18--3:20 is itself prefatory to the good news about the reality of God's grace, which is expounded in the rest of Romans.
- (6) "Romans 5:6-11 is one classic summary of Paul's gospel: While we were still `weak', still `sinners', and still `enemies' of God, he reconciled us to himself through the love revealed and made real for us in Christ's death." [Furnish, "Homosexuality," p. 81].

XIV. PAUL ON APOSTOLIC CELIBACY: A KEY FOR CHRISTIAN SEXUAL ETHICS

- A. From William C. Spohn's "St. Paul on Apostolic Celibacy and the Body of Christ." *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits* 17 (January 1985)
- B. Introduction: Imagery and Understanding [p.1]
 1. Paul in 1 Corinthians, "claims that the community of Christ's Body is the place where human sexuality is redeemed. Sexuality is no private matter for Paul because both marriage and celibacy become fruitful only through loving and serving the community of faith. He values celibacy not simply because it makes him more available for ministry but even more because it is a life-giving love that gives birth to the community. Apostolic celibacy leads to a special intimacy and `generativity' between the apostle and those Christians he has brought to live in Christ." p. 2.
 2. "When he writes on sexuality, Paul does not merely state the law to the congregation; rather, he tries to educate his readers to take a fresh look at themselves. He appeals to their imaginations by using images and metaphors so that they can literally re-image their sexuality as part of their Christian life together. Conversion of behavior is rooted in a conversion of the imagination because a new sense of identity will lead to renewed moral practice." p. 3.

3. "We may experience a collision between images of sexuality as apostolic and communal and our own culture's individualistic approach. Is sexuality a private possession or a gift for the community? The New Testament considers all issues, including sexual lifestyles, as community issues first and foremost. This stance may appear as foreign to us as it did to Paul's audience. Religious often seem to share our culture's presumption that sexuality is a private matter. If our private behavior contradicts our public profession, we may be acting out of the conviction that our psychosexual development is strictly our own business." p. 3.

C. Body Theology

1. "For better or worse, the body expresses to the world who we are. Personal meaning must get embodied in language, gesture, and action so that we ourselves can recognize our truth." p. 4.
2. "For a culture indifferent to an afterlife, the body takes on enormous value. Health becomes the secular equivalent of salvation, and so people pursue fitness with religious intensity or else despair of 'our bodies, ourselves'." p. 4.

D. Paul's Communal Understanding [p. 4]

1. "In contrast to this individualism, Paul offers a radically communal understanding of the body. He describes it as the person at the point of commitment, the whole person as defined by the ties which that person has made with others. Body is not one part of us that contrasts with our spirit or soul; it expresses the entire self as it stands towards its // commitments. As body, I am ambiguous until my allegiances become clear." pp. 4-5.
2. "In Paul's view, we are defined by the community to which we choose to belong. We are either in communion with egocentric humanity or with humanity enlivened by Christ. Our behavior will express our solidarity with one or other group. Body is not the metaphor of private individuality because it expresses a mode of belonging. Instead of asking 'Who am I?' we should better ask 'To whom do I belong?' We associate with those who are like us, who share our values and aspirations, and who in turn reinforce those values. For Paul, belonging to Christ means belonging to the people that extends his reality into specific locations. God calls this people to embody the healing life of Christ in the world through their life together and the service that flows from that life." p. 5.

E. Community, Body, and Sexuality in Corinth [p. 7]

1. Strict and Lax Corinthians [p. 7]

- a. "The married serve the Body of Christ by belonging bodily to each other. Belonging to Christ cannot negate their belonging to the spouse. Paul himself serves the community through the charism of celibacy because God called him to that state. Celibacy is not a mandate for all Christians, as some of the ascetics think (7:7). The more universal principle is 'Use your gift to build up the whole community'.
- b. "The libertines, on the contrary, forget that sexual intercourse creates a bond to the other person. It cannot be separated from a psychological and moral belonging to the other. Ironically, both the severe and the lax make the same mistake: they want to disembodify their commitments, separate sexual expression from their connection to Christ." p. 8.

2. Paul's Position [p. 9]

- a. "Now we can appreciate the Christian meaning of sexual intercourse by applying this notion of bodily belonging. Already our body-ourselves belong to the Lord in the community, and that union will culminate in the resurrection. Christians have embodied their union with Christ by becoming members--an organ, a limb, a cell--of the community of belief. Therefore, whatever the Christian does is an extension of the community. It is simply absurd to consort with prostitutes." p. 9.
- b. "Thus, the image of body connects sexuality, the resurrection, union with Christ, membership in the Church, marriage, and the holiness of the Spirit. Each of these expresses a different way in which we belong to God, a belonging that becomes part of our personal identity and should guide our behavior." p. 10.
- c. [follows immediately]: "Finally, Paul invokes another basic Christian image to underscore the personal bond between the Christian and God. The Christian has been redeemed, // that is, ransomed from slavery and brought into the family of God. The sufferings of Jesus were the cost of that ransoming from bondage. Paul concludes, 'You are not your own. You have been purchased, and at a price!

So glorify God in your body' (6:19-20). Let the beauty and goodness of God be reflected in your entire selves and in all your commitments and relationships. Like the other basic Pauline metaphors for Christian conversion (justification, sanctification, adoption), redemption connotes a social transfer from one society to another, from the solidarity of frustrated humanity into the solidarity of those who are alive in Christ. Redemption also connotes healing and integration. Our human desires and capacities are not extinguished but transformed." pp. 10-11.

F. Integrated Sexual Maturity [p. 11]

1. "When human sexuality matures, it normally moves beyond a quest for intimacy to the life-giving task of parenting." p. 13.
2. According to Erik Erikson, an adult "needs extension of his or her life, lest he suffer the mental deformation of self-absorption, in which he becomes his own infant and pet'." p. 13.
3. "Most Christians come to spiritual maturity through the countless acts of love demanded by raising their children." p. 13.
4. "Is there a comparable challenge for the apostolic celibate who brings others to new life in the Spirit?" p. 13.
5. "However, we do form unique relationships with those we have helped to life in Christ. We can discover an extended family in our alumni and parishioners, in our spiritual directees and those who have made retreats with us, and in the families whose children we baptize and marry. These bonds result from a generative celibacy that takes responsibility for the life of the next generation in multiple ways." p. 15.

G. Three Other Images of Celibacy [p. 16]: "*Discipleship, living in the end times, and athletic training* have traditionally supported a celibate spirituality." p. 16.

1. Discipleship [p. 16]
 - a. "Jesus did not undergo the cross for his own benefit but for our sakes. That same radical gift of self to others ought to inform every Christian's life. Celibacy is a gift for me only if it benefits the community by enabling me to place the needs of others ahead of my own (Phil 2:1-11). (No denigration of legitimate self-love is intended

here; the mutuality of love in the Body of Christ affirms the value of each person.) Discipleship and service take our focus off our own perfection." p. 18.

2. The End of the World [p. 18] [Prophetic Sign of the relationships in the Kingdom in which there is no marriage, etc.]
 3. The Athlete in Training [p. 19]
 - a. "Paul's analogy, however, can be deceptive if we think that the Christian seeks individual victory over others. Paul is not driven by a competitive pursuit of perfection. He runs towards a person, because the 'finish line' is union with Christ (see Phil 3:12-14; 2 Tim 4:7-8)." p. 20.
- H. Summary: We Do Not Belong to Ourselves [p. 21]
1. See ourselves in light of the Cross and Resurrection [p. 21]
 2. See ourselves as Primarily Social, Secondarily Individual [p. 23]
 - a. "If this exchange of life occurs at such a profound level between members of the Body of Christ, then we should perhaps consider Christian life as primarily social and only secondarily individual. Each member gives life to the others and receives life from them in turn. The doctrine of the communion of saints is not just an afterthought in the Apostle's Creed; rather our salvation occurs primarily in solidarity with others. The old saying that the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians reflects this saving solidarity. It follows that Christian ethics merely articulates the behavior that should embody this exchange of life. It commands love only because loving service and reconciliation are the most natural expression of this shared existence. Since Christ did not live for himself, those who are animated by his Spirit should find self-centered living unnatural. Nor should they be surprised that this exchange of life can be very difficult at times once they recognize that it came to them only through the dying of Jesus." p. 23.
 - b. "Paul takes part in the dying and rising of Christ precisely in living out his charism as an apostle. Each charism reflects some part of the ministry of Christ: prophet, consoler, proclaimer, healer, servant of the poor. As the individual lives out his or her charism and calling,

the deeper experience of Christ's life and death works itself out in their histories." p. 23.

- c. "Every charism, therefore, gives life in this same fashion; it gives life to those we serve with our gifts. And the struggle that every charism brings with it is integrally related to that gift of life to others. No doubt those with the charism of apostolic celibacy are tempted to ask, 'What am I getting out of this? What is it doing for me?' Although the question is understandable, it may be unanswerable because we are not meant to be the beneficiaries of our own gifts. On the other hand, when we experience that celibate life is a struggle, this may not mean that we lack the charism. It may mean that we are not the ones who are benefitting from our struggle, any more than Paul was the beneficiary of his shipwrecks, floggings, and rejection by his own people." p. 24.
- d. "I do not claim that the apostolic life is one of compulsive altruism. We are not called to live for others in a way that turns us into exhausted workaholics. If we respect the needs of others, we ought to respect our own needs for companionship, leisure, play, and renewal. The Christian should know that he or she is valued not because of productivity but simply out of the unconditional acceptance of God that cannot be earned or repaid. A legitimate sense of self-worth grows out of ministry as we begin to appreciate who we are. The ministry also brings affirmation from others who see more good in us than we often care to acknowledge. We learn to acknowledge our personal worth through the love they have for us, receiving their gifts as they have received ours. The exchange of life in community is possible only because all have something to contribute and because no one is self-sufficient. Therefore, celibacy that is apostolic must also be receptive of the affection and caring of others. The celibate must be able to name specific people when the question is asked, 'To who do I belong?'" p. 24.

3. Community and Ministry [p. 26]

- a. "The 'works of the flesh' are objectionable because they fragment the solidarity where salvation should be found. The opposite of *agape*, therefore, is not hate (as one might expect) but greed. Greed isolates me from others in community since they become my rivals for coveted resources. Greed seeks its security in self-sufficiency rather than in the exchange of life that animates the Body of Christ. When

we view sexual infidelity as a form of greed, we begin to grasp its communal significance. Both the repressed and the sexually irresponsible are using body language to tell the rest of the community, 'I want to have, not to give. I don't belong to you; you have no claim on me'. Apostolic celibacy gives life away, but its breakdowns are forms of hoarding and self-reliance." p. 26.

- I. Spohn's treatment I think is a good model of how to use Scripture in ethics: thematic, integrative, ethical.

XV. SCRIPTURE, LITURGY, PRAYER, AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

A. Greater tie-in with the Liturgical and Sacramental life of the Church

- 1. Therefore, necessary to develop better this aspect of moral theology
 - a. Neglected for too long, due to concentration on casuistry and the philosophical elements of moral action
 - b. We see here once again the importance of the interplay between one's definition of moral theology, and how Scripture then might (or might not) fit in.
 - c. I will merely "touch down" upon these following areas, in an attempt to indicate lines for further reflection, development and integration.
- 2. Liturgy
 - a. The place where lectio continua is actually practiced
 - b. Preaching is making a moral argument
 - c. The Word of God as a two-edged sword: liturgical example of preaching as moral argument
 - (1) Taken from the readings for the Saturday of the First Week of Ordinary Time, Year I.
 - (2) First reading: Hebrews 4: 12-13

"God's word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates and divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart. Nothing is concealed from him; all lies bare and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account. ..."

- (3) Responsorial psalm: Ps. 19,
 - (a) with refrain from Jn 6:64, "Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.
 - (b) The Law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul,...
 - (c) The command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye.
- (4) Gospel: Call of Levi, Mk 2:13-17
 - (a) Call of Levi (and response)
 - (b) Eating with sinners
 - (c) Grumbling of the Pharisees, "Why does he eat with such as these?"
 - (d) Response of Jesus, which goes beyond human moral "wisdom": "I have come to call sinners, not the self-righteous."

d. Homily focus

- (1) Speculative knowledge vs. evaluative knowledge
- (2) Speculative knowledge is scientific, and might be identified with meta-ethics ala Bruno Schüller (without the biblical crutch)
- (3) Evaluative knowledge though lets the Word of God cut and penetrate.
- (4) This is not easy, and it is often painful.

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- (5) As a corollary, sometimes this word of God is most efficacious when we feel most vulnerable.
- (6) Somewhat like Caravaggio's rendition of the Call of Levi.
- (7) It is very hard, if not impossible, to "reason" one's way to such a call.
- (8) In fact, such a process is not the standard discipleship account.
- (9) Rather, it is *Jesus* who calls us, and then we are the ones who must respond or not.
- (10) So, in terms of the this course, the penetrating Word of God is not really seen best in terms of the "Use of Scripture in Moral Theology"
- (11) But rather, in terms of doing moral theology in a way that is *animated* by Scripture, letting Scripture be its soul, and primary nutrient.

3. Sacraments

a. Philip Rosato,

- (1) "Linee fondamentali e sistematiche per una teologia etica del culto." Capitolo Primo in Corso di Morale: Volume 5, Liturgia (Etica della religiosità), 11-70. A cura di Tullio Goffi e Giannino Piana. Brescia: Queriniana, 1986.
- (2) Rosato, who is a dogmatic theologian, describes a theology of sacraments
- (3) emphasizing the connection between liturgy and practice,
- (4) and proposes the anamnestic, epiclectic, and prophetic dimensions to the moral life of the Christians.

b. Bernard Häring:

- (1) "The sacraments do not monopolize the signs of God's gracious presence and his call to adoration.
- (2) "Rather, as privileged signs, they lead us to discover the countless ways in which God comes into our life
- (3) and calls us to honour him by a right ordering of our relationships and by participation in the ongoing work of creation and redemption." p. 482.

4. Prayer

- a. Frankly, this fundamental aspect of moral theology is given rather short shrift by most moral theologians.
- b. Hopefully, our prayer would at least change our moral vision, and therefore prayer would be key to the moral life.

B. Role of Adoration of God in Moral Theology

1. Insights of Häring
2. "God's disclosure of himself is more than a bare intellectual instruction on the divine magnificence;
3. it is the dynamic manifestation of the hidden mystery which fills the people with holy // awe and reverence,
4. and is an impelling invitation to adore him in all their life." pp. 473-374.
5. "God glorifies himself precisely in bringing salvation to humankind;
6. and this constitutes the most compelling commandment written into the human heart to seek salvation wholly and only in the adoration of God.
7. So we come to salvation and freedom only in the measure that we adore the all-holy God and dedicate our existence to him in response to the revelation of his glory." p. 474.
8. "The spirit of adoration is not only an essential note of faith, hope and love; it also gives shape, direction and strength to all moral life.

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9. As Thomas Aquinas expresses it, «The virtue of religion commands all other virtues» [S.Th. II II, q. 81, a. 4 ad 1].
10. For Thomas, moral life can be virtuous in the full sense only if it receives its final form and strength from the spirit of adoration." p. 478.

C. Role of the Holy Spirit in Christian Ethics

1. Function within the Trinity
2. Life in the Spirit
 - a. Häring
 - b. "By sending us the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of glory, Christ takes us into his mission of glorification which is fulfilled if we live in the freedom to love as Christ did." p. 476.
 - c. See also the work of L. Gregory Jones, Transformed Judgement: Toward a Trinitarian Account of the Moral Life, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).
 - (1) Argues that the most superior form of moral judgement is one grounded in and lived in the presence of the mystery of the Triune God.
 - (2) Jones avers that the primary friendship a person should have is with God.
 - (3) Discusses and critiques the work of Alasdair MacIntyre, Stanley Hauerwas, and others.
 - (4) Jones studied under Stanley Hauerwas at Notre Dame, and currently teaches theology at Loyola College in Baltimore.
 - (5) I'd say that his trinitarian theology, while interesting, is a bit impoverished from the point of view of dogmatic theology.
 - (6) I question too, whether "friendship" (as understood in our contemporary ethos) is really the best concept to express the trinitarian moral life.

3. Discernment

- a. James Gustafson, "Moral Discernment in the Christian Life." In Norm and Context in Christian Ethics, 17-36. Edited by Gene H. Outka and Paul Ramsey. London: SCM Press, 1968.
- (1) Also found in "Moral Discernment in the Christian Life." Ch. 5 in Theology and Christian Ethics. Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1974. [same article as in Outka and Ramsey]
 - (2) Gustafson suggests that we hold in abeyance "the practical moral question of what ought or are to do..."
 - (3) [and instead claims] that it would be more fruitful to look more carefully at how we *discern* what we ought to do, or are to do." p. 17.
 - (4) "Discernment of what one ought to do...involves a perception of what is morally fitting in the place of time and action." p. 23.
 - (5) Persons discern: "and persons have histories that affect their discernment." p. 24.
 - (6) Their character too affects their discernment [and their vision: cf. St Ignatius in his own life]
 - (7) Gustafson uses the term/image of becoming a moral virtuoso:
 - (8) "Moral sensitivity seems to contribute in the "discerning" moral man an intuitive element that leads to accuracy in moral aim, judiciousness in evaluation, and compelling authenticity in deed." p. 26.
 - (9) The biblically informed Christian perspective will affect our concrete discernment.
 - (10) "Moral discernment always takes place within communities; the moral discernment of Christians takes place within the Christian community.

- (11) The community is in part the present gathering of Christians, in a congregation or some other group, that engages in the moral discourse that informs the conscientiousness of its members through participation in moral deliberation." p. 34.
- b. Insights from William C. Spohn, S.J.
- (1) "The Reasoning Heart: An American Approach to Christian Discernment." Theological Studies 44 (1983): 30-52.
 - (2) Also found in The Reasoning Heart, ed. by Frank M. Oppenheim, S.J., (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1986): 51-72.
 - (3) Approach to Christian discernment based on the thinking of some American theologians
 - (4) which stresses the normative contribution of biblical symbols and distinctive Christian affectivity in guiding moral evaluation.
 - (5) "Thus, William Spohn, building on Edwards and Niebuhr, emphasizes the role of the religious affections in discernment.
 - (6) Discernment is deeper than choice. It is affective attunement.
 - (7) To learn God's will, or in Whitehead's terminology, to discern the divine ideals,
 - (8) it is necessary to let one's deepest tendencies be transmuted by meditation on the gospel and to allow one's personality to be refigured in the image of Christ.
 - (9) In other words, discernment involves contemplation of and growing attachment to the person of Christ." p. 16.
 - (10) From Drew Christiansen's introductory essay in The Reasoning Heart:
- c. In this whole context the presence and work of the Holy Spirit is obviously an important factor.

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- d. Recall the role of the Paraclete to "recall" what we've forgotten, and "teach" us what we could not earlier bear.
- e. Therefore, meditation on Scripture is key for the moral life of both the individual and the community.
- f. Plus the importance of moral dialogue, to see where the wind (the Spirit) is blowing in other communities.

XVI. EVALUATION OF THE USE OF SCRIPTURE IN MORAL THEOLOGY

A. Why is There Variety among Theologians Using Scripture?

- 1. Spohn's Answer: cf. p. 129
- 2. Wealth and variety of the canonical texts
- 3. Differences in methods used by theologians

B. Three Components of any Moral Theological Method: Spohn

- 1. Role of Christ
- 2. Type of ethics preferred
- 3. Theologian's understanding of the Bible and Revelation

C. Relation of Christology to Scriptural Ethics

- 1. Who Jesus Christ is affects our ethics:
 - a. "Jesus' provocative question to the disciples can also be posed to the theologian.
 - b. Who Christ is will modify the ethics that is employed because the adjective 'Christian' modifies the noun 'ethics'.
- 2. AND our ethics affects our Christology:
 - a. "These lines of influence also travel in the opposite direction

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- b. since the type of ethics preferred by the theologian may determine what role Christ plays in moral experience.
3. Christ as Critique:
 - a. "What Bonhoeffer wrote applies to every formulation of Christian ethics,
 - b. namely that the person of Jesus Christ stands between the disciple and the command.
 - c. Christology interprets the moral command." [Spohn, p. 130.]
4. Christ as Proclaimer of an Event, not a Moral Message:
 - a. "Jesus did not, however, proclaim simply a moral message;
 - b. rather, he announced an event, the breaking in of the reign of God.
5. Therefore, a "Revealed Reality":
 - a. The "Two-edged Sword" of the Word of God (Hebrews 4: 12) in its "effectiveness" for *us*.
 - b. Remember that Revelation is for us, therefore, this testimony from Hebrews is not ultimately praising God's omniscience in some abstract manner that does not intimately involve *us*.
 - c. Most theologians would agree with James Gustafson that Scripture does not present a revealed morality but a revealed reality.
 - d. The theologian must find ways of describing that reality so that moral insight can be gained for responding to God's action. [Spohn, p. 135]
6. Bernard Häring's Christocentric moral theology, as expressed in the key themes of his Free and Faithful in Christ:
 - a. Creativity
 - b. Liberty
 - c. Fidelity

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- d. Parenthetically, I would say that Häring has done the best job in letting Scripture be the animating force for his vision of moral theology.
7. "A Christocentric moral theology tries to synthesize theocentrism and Christian anthropocentrism.
8. The very origin, countenance and goal of freedom is love;
9. and we cannot understand // the fullness of love revealed in Jesus Christ unless we see it as given
 - a. in total freedom,
 - b. total fidelity,
 - c. and with its specific quality of creativity." pp. 5-6.
10. What moral theology is and isn't for Häring:
 - a. "Moral theology, as I understand it, is not concerned first with decision-making or with discrete acts.
 - b. Its basic task and purpose is to gain the right vision,
 - c. to assess the main perspectives,
 - d. and to present those truths and values which should bear upon decisions to be made before God." p. 6.
 - e. "We can gain the necessary vision of wholeness only by listening to the word of God
 - f. and, in the light of his word, searching the signs of the times." p. 6.
 - g. Therefore, for Häring, biblical ethics offers this vision of wholeness.
11. Experiential insight of Timothy O'Connell
 - a. Based on his teaching of his manual Principles for a Catholic Morality. Revised edition, San Francisco: Harper and Row, (1976), 1990.

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- b. In the revised edition O'Connell changed the chapter originally entitled "Elements of a Biblical Morality" to "Jesus and Moral Living."
- c. In an explanatory footnote, O'Connell notes that he "would often ask students to address themselves to the question: 'What is the relationship of Christ to morality?'" p. 261 [Note #1]
- d. He expected them to base their answers on the chapter entitled "Christ and Morality."
- e. Instead, O'Connell discovered that invariably the students would respond by changing the question a bit.
- f. The response would begin with the words, "The place of Jesus in my moral life is..."
- g. O'Connell realized that the distinction was more than a mere semantic alteration.
- h. Rather, "the move from Christ to Jesus and the move from morality to *my* moral life" ... indicates a both a move from "'high' ontological Christology to 'low' historical Christology"
- i. but also (and perhaps more importantly) "a move from systematic theology to spirituality."

D. Types of Ethics

- 1. What is *my* definition of ethics?
- 2. What role (and relative importance) do I assign to the various components in my definition?
- 3. Via negativa: what is Christian ethics NOT?
 - a. e.g. "Discovering the Law"
 - b. and then "laying it down!"
- 4. Various approaches by other moral theologians

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- a. Deontologist, teleological, mixed, etc.
 - b. Böckle, Fuchs, Schüller, McCormick
 - c. McDonagh, MacNamara
 - d. Caffarra, Grisez
 - e. Häring
- E. Notion of Revelation
1. Sacred Claim of Scripture
 2. According to Spohn:
 - a. "Most theologians who employ the Bible today consider it to be the normative statement of Christian identity.
 - b. Whatever additional moral insight we derive from ethics or the social sciences must be tested against the portrait of God and of Christ found in Scripture." p. 135.
 3. Additional Insight of JTB
 - a. We have several stories with a sacred claim
 - b. Important to recognize this fact if we hope to utilize and influence our cultural ethos
 - c. Invite the Scripture, with the primary sacred claim, to critique our other stories.
 4. Progressive Understanding of Revelation
 5. Necessity for Interpretation
- F. The Bible and Normative Ethics
1. Is scripturally based ethics relativistic?
 2. The "Normativeness" of Biblical ethics

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- a. Dependent on one's understanding of moral norms and Christian ethics:
 - b. E.g. Häring's statement in Chapter 1 of Free and Faithful, vol. 1:
 - (1) "Those who understand moral theology merely as `normative ethics',
 - (2) in the limited sense of prohibitive norms,
 - (3) will scarcely appreciate the importance of these biblical dimensions and perspectives." p. 23.
 - c. Critique of Böckle's Fundamentalmoral and his skewed use of Scripture.
3. Positive Understanding of Normative Biblical ethics:
- a. Häring's Ch. 1 of Free and Faithful, vol. 1:
 - b. "A moral theology of creative liberty and fidelity finds its distinctively Christian quality in the light of the dynamic dimensions and perspectives which we find in the Bible.
 - c. "Their normative value is quite different from any kind of norms fitting external controls.
 - d. "They are, however, binding--and at the same time liberating--guide-lines, norms in a very broad but real sense.
 - e. "They depend thoroughly on faith and thus are // distinctively Christian.
 - f. "This does not exclude that generous people not professing Christian faith might, in one way or the other, be guided by the same dynamics-." pp. 23-24.
- G. Provisional nature of scripturally informed Christian ethics
1. Lust for certitude and permanence (the Fundamentalist temptation)
 2. Critique given by Fowl & Jones:

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- a. Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life.
Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991.
 - b. "Our interpretations can take on pretensions of permanence.
 - c. "When our communities fall prey to this greatest of interpretive temptations, it is often only the voice of outsiders that can set us right.
 - d. "If we have not taken the time to cultivate the skills, habits and dispositions that allow us to hear the voices of outsiders,
 - e. we will fall into a situation of interpretive arrogance.
 - (1) "That is, we will deceive ourselves into thinking that our words are God's word.
 - (2) "The exercise of power and coercion will characterize our communities.
 - (3) "Conformity rather than faithfulness will be the standard used to judge our lives." p. 110.
 - f. "To allow Scripture to be an outsider is to recognize that this side of the Kingdom our interpretations are provisional, always open to revision." p. 112.
3. I might add here, that submitting our interpretations to other ethical *approaches*, such as the natural law, might be another way of "testing" our conclusions.
 4. Recall, believe in, and practice the gift of the Spirit.
 5. Discernment presumes a certain provisory character to *Christian* ethics.
- H. The Specificity of Christian Ethics
1. Is there a distinctive Christian ethics?
 2. No, in the sense that the natural law, "normatively human" etc. is *essentially* different for Christians and non-Christians.

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3. Yes, at least in the sense I will delineate.
4. What makes Christian ethics *distinctive*?
5. Points (following) according to Bernard Häring:
6. Anthropology in the light of Jesus Christ
 - a. Some further insights from JTB:
 - b. Christian uniqueness of the individual person
 - c. Which person is graced,
 - d. and through which grace and faith (in the Resurrection)
 - e. That person, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, may well consider certain "obligations" *discerned* through a stance of prayer, to be binding, even if not "universalizable" in a meta-ethical sense.
 - (1) Fuchs' language of "Christian intentionality"
 - (2) or Schüller's relegation of such a conviction to the shadowy realm of "simple paranesis"
 - (3) I ultimately find to be neither helpful nor convincing
7. Priority of faith over and above works
8. Fecundity of faith, bearing fruit in love and justice
9. Emphasis on eschatological virtues and the understanding of the *kairos*
10. History seen in terms of salvation
 - a. I.e., Salvation history
 - b. However, ala Niebuhr, do not separate "salvation history" from "secular history"
11. Specifically Christian understanding of creative liberty and fidelity

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- I. Scripture as a Checkpoint for Christian Ethics
 1. Themes neglected in philosophical ethics
 - a. Kingdom
 - b. Lordship of Jesus
 - c. Eschatology
 - d. Sin and Reconciliation
 - e. Discipleship Community
 2. Kingdom of God
 - a. Not a place, like the United Kingdom
 - b. But a reign, letting God have sway over us.
 3. The Lordship of Jesus
 - a. Häring's Chapter 1 of Free and Faithful, vol. 1:
 - b. "The Lordship of Jesus Christ is an important theme and perspective in a distinctively Christian ethics.
 - c. "It exposes all the enslaving cosmic powers, the «authorities and potentates of this dark world» (Eph 6:12).
 - d. "Jesus, the Lord who becomes Servant, teaches us the right use of authority and points the way to healthy authority structures in the Church and in the world." p. 21.
 4. Eschatology
 - a. Häring's Chapter 1 of Free and Faithful, vol. 1:
 - b. "The basic virtues or character of the disciples of Christ cannot easily be expressed by the four cardinal virtues of Hellenistic philosophy.

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- c. "It is, rather, the eschatological virtues that characterize the patterns of his disciples.
- d. "It is ongoing thanksgiving for what the Lord has done, and joyful anticipation of the final fulfilment in vigilance and readiness for the present opportunities." p. 19.

5. Sin and Reconciliation

- a. Ways of looking at sin
- b. Häring's Sin-solidarity
- c. Positive points
 - (1) All are sinners, all in need of redemption,
 - (2) therefore avoids creating a "graced" elite--those not touched by sin, which seems to be a natural human tendency,
 - (3) i.e., to justify one's own self and/or "group" while condemning others.
- d. Negative points
 - (1) Fatalistic
 - (2) Sin seen just in social terms alone
 - (3) Blunts efforts at individual conversion, etc.
- e. Biblical models and metaphors for sin
- f. Call and vocation to reconciliation

6. Discipleship Community

- a. Following of Christ as *Imitation*
- b. Mission of the Church for the World

J. Dialogue

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1. Overall importance of Dialogue
 - a. Common search for truth
 - b. Part of evangelization
 - c. Methodology of dialogue
 - d. "Such conversations can actually be crucial to the way Christians interpret and perform Scripture." [Fowl & Jones, p. 118].
2. Dialogue with those who are "Outsiders in Our Midst"
 - a. Term borrowed from Fowl & Jones
 - b. E.g. groups marginalized within our Christian community
 - c. Perhaps marginalized also in tension over a reading/interpretation of Scripture, e.g. homosexuals
3. Dialogue with "Outsiders Bearing a Family Resemblance"
 - a. E.g. with *all* other Christians,
 - (1) Christian Unity Octave
 - (2) Common Book and Common Resource
 - b. and Jews
4. Dialogue with "Outsiders Who Are Complete Strangers"
 - a. Believers of other religions
 - b. Non-Believers
5. These "Dialogues" reflect the various Vatican Congregations and Councils, as well as the Ecumenical movement as modeled by the World Council of Churches.
