

THE
ASBURY *Theological*
JOURNAL

PUBLISHED BY THE FACULTY OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

FALL 1999 • VOL. 54, NO. 2

The Asbury Journal

FALL 1999

VOL. 54 • NO. 2



THE
ASBURY THEOLOGICAL
JOURNAL

FALL 1999, VOL. 54, NO. 2

Theistic Ethics: Toward a Christian Solution.....	5
<i>David J. Baggett</i>	
Why the Holiness Movement Is Dead.....	27
<i>Kenneth J. Collins</i>	
Post-Soviet Protestant Theological Education: Come of Age?.....	37
<i>Mark Elliott</i>	
Belonging to God: The Quest for a Communal Spirituality in the Postmodern World	41
<i>Stanley J. Grenz</i>	
Postmodernism on Race and Gender: An Evangelical Response.....	53
<i>Douglas Groothuis</i>	
The X-Factor: Revisioning Biblical Holiness.....	73
<i>Brent A. Strawn</i>	
Book Reviews.....	93
Elizabeth Achtemeier, <i>Preaching Hard Texts of the Old Testament</i> [Dan G. Johnson]	
Tremper Longman III, <i>Making Sense of the Old Testament: Three Crucial Questions</i> [Bill T. Arnold]	
John D. Currid, <i>Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament</i> [Peter Herbert Dongell]	
Andrew E. Hill, <i>Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary</i> [Bill T. Arnold]	
James D.G. Dunn, <i>The Theology of Paul the Apostle</i> [Paul N. Anderson]	
Victor C. Pfitzner, <i>Hebrews</i> [N. Clayton Croy]	



THE
ASBURY THEOLOGICAL
JOURNAL

MAXIE D. DUNNAM

Publisher • President

ROBERT T. BRIDGES

Editor in Chief • Vice President/Seminary Advancement

LAURENCE W. WOOD

Editor • Frank Paul Morris Professor of Systematic Theology

SCOTT R. BURSON

Managing Editor • Executive Director of Communications

Associate Editors

BILL T. ARNOLD, *Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages*

KENNETH J. COLLINS, *Professor of Historical Theology & Wesley Studies*

MICHELE GAITHER SPARKS, *Associate Director of Communications*

BRENT A. STRAWN, *Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies*

JERRY L. WALLS, *Professor of Philosophy of Religion*

Book Review Editor

BILL T. ARNOLD, *Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages*

DANA MOUTZ, *Copy Editor*

Published in April and October by
Asbury Theological Seminary.

Postmaster: Send address changes to:

The Asbury Theological Journal
Asbury Theological Seminary
204 North Lexington Avenue
Wilmore, KY 40390

ISSN 1090-5642

USPS 547-440

Continuing *The Asbury Seminarian*

Printed in the U.S.A.

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

The primary resource for contributions to *The Journal* is the Asbury Seminary faculty who engage in dialogue with both the roots of our religious heritage and contemporary thought. Scholars from other academic disciplines and various backgrounds are invited to submit articles for publication.

The positions espoused in articles in *The Journal* do not necessarily represent the views of the editors or of Asbury Theological Seminary.

Books for review and articles for consideration should be mailed to: Scott R. Burson, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY 40390-1199 (telephone: 606-858-2310, e-mail: Communications_Office@ats.wilmore.ky.us). Manuscripts should be in English and typed double-spaced on white bond paper, 8 1/2 x 11 inches. Send only original copies (not photocopies) with an accompanying computer disk (3.5 inch). Acceptance for publication will be acknowledged and will obligate the author to submit a 100-word abstract; in return, a modest honorarium payment will follow publication. Sermons, poetry, and devotional material are not used. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless a self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage is provided. Queries are welcome, and a style sheet is available upon request. Articles in *The Journal* are indexed in *The Christian Periodical Index* and *Religion Index One: Periodicals (RIO)*; book reviews are indexed in *Index to Book Reviews in Religion (IBRR)*. Both *RIO* and *IBRR* are published by the American Theological Library Association, 5600 South Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637, and are available online through BRS Information Technologies and DIALOG Information Services. Articles, starting with vol. 43, are abstracted in *Religious and Theological Abstracts*. Articles in appropriate categories are also abstracted in *Old Testament Abstracts* and *New Testament Abstracts*.

Volumes in microform of *The Asbury Theological Journal* (vols. 41-) and *The Asbury Seminarian* (vols. 1-40) are available from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Articles and Reviews may be copied for personal or internal use, and permission to reprint all or portions of any of the contents may be granted upon request to the managing editor.

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

One year (2 issues), \$5.00
(outside the U.S., \$8.00)
Two years, \$8.00 (\$14.00)
Three years, \$11.00 (\$20.00)

THEISTIC ETHICS: TOWARD A CHRISTIAN SOLUTION

DAVID J. BAGGETT

Despite the theological and popularly conceived connections between religious devotion and moral living, the difficulties attending theological or religious ethics—the attempt to tie ethics to theology or religion in some important sense—are myriad. Thanks largely to Enlightenment thought, morality has come to be construed as independent of God, so much so that the majority of moral philosophers today would without hesitation affirm that even if God exists, morality can exist apart from God—an ontological critique—and, if the precepts or dictates of morality can be known at all, they can be known apart from religious orthodoxy or theological reflection—an epistemological critique.

Since the Enlightenment, at least, and in particular since Kant's epistemological dualism, questions of religion and "speculative metaphysics" have often been considered beyond the ken of rationality.¹ Kant's motivation, it has been suggested, was to spare religion from the rigorous scrutiny of the emerging science of his day; but the actual result proved to be detrimental to religious conviction, for it began to be portrayed as an inescapably subjective affair. Universal truth claims became harder to reconcile with this kind of epistemology, which is likely the inevitable while paradoxical effect of implicitly putting religion and science at odds. Religious truth claims tend to be increasingly construed as devoid of propositional content and rational evidence and are instead seen as empty faith claims rooted in a person's imagination or a group's collective psyche.

The understanding of science and religion as essentially and historically opposed, incidentally, is largely mistaken. Although it is true that certain theologians and churchmen have historically stood in the way of scientific progress, it is far from true that all of them have, even a majority; and in fact, as Alfred North Whitehead has persuasively argued, the origins of modern science, such as faith in the orderliness of

David J. Baggett is a Ph.D. candidate in philosophy at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.

THE ASBURY THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

FALL 1999 • VOL. 54 • NO. 2

nature and its ability to be apprehended and described rationally, are largely attributable to the Medieval and Scholastic effort to rationalize the divinely ordered creation.² Stanley Jaki goes further in characterizing such foundations of science as the consequence of orthodox Christology. "A truly divine Logos, in Whom the Father created all, so Athanasius insisted time and again, could not produce a partially disordered universe."³

Nonetheless the mistakenly perceived tension between science and religion contributed to their artificial separation. It was long thought that morality could be salvaged from such a fate by being rooted in reason rather than revelation. Indeed, this effort serves as one effective summary of the Enlightenment: to ground ethics in reason rather than religion and thereby retain its authoritative force. However, severed from its ontological foundations, morality has proved notoriously difficult to undergird by reason alone, so much so that the Enlightenment project has recently often been characterized as a failure. One result is that morality, still often perceived to be in religion's vicinity, is increasingly absorbed into Kant's noumenal realm of the unknowable, inscrutable and, for practical purposes, thereby construed as a purely individual affair. This despite the obvious fact that Kant himself was no subjectivist in ethics.

Pre-modern and what is often called post-modern thought have in common their grounding of morality in God, the salient difference being that pre-moderns, generally, believed in God, whereas post-moderns, generally, do not. If morality is rooted in a God who doesn't exist, of course, then morality is largely illusory; and this seems to be an increasingly common view: that morality is either purely conventional, or a way to keep the proletariat in line, or a repression of our best instincts, and the list goes on. No wonder that some have tried to show that traditional conceptions of morality can exist independently of any appeal to theology, and I have a certain sympathy for such efforts. Nonetheless, like many theists, I also have a nagging sense that morality, ultimately, has to be grounded in God. So, in this paper, what I intend to do is, first, identify some of the philosophical problems for religious ethics in general and Christian ethics in particular. Then I will attempt a short defense of a Christian theistic ethic.

RELIGIOUS ETHICS CRITIQUED

To begin with, morality, as religiously construed, is often thought of as either a requirement or result of salvation. As such it is depicted as necessary for, in one sense or another, a relationship with God and entrance into heaven. Conversely, an immoral life is characterized in terms of an absence of a relationship with God and punishable by consignment to hell. As such, a moral life is enjoined by religion, it is suggested, merely, in J. P. Moreland's words, to "cover one's cosmic rear end to avoid getting flames on it."⁴

One criticism of such ethical views is that morality entails a quality of life that ought to be conducted primarily, if not exclusively, out of a desire to do it and not mainly, if at all, out of a motivation to avoid punishment or earn a reward. The latter, which is argued to be the thrust behind religious ethics, would constitute an egoistic approach to ethics, according to which, as seen, moral decisions are made with respect to "what's in it for me."

Moral philosophers, often influenced by Kant, typically bristle, and rightly so, at the suggestion that morality's motivation is one of earning a reward or avoiding a punishment. Divine retribution or reward seems unable to be a legitimate form of moral motivation, yet

this condition often seems at the heart of basing ethics on theology. Seemingly altruistic behaviors, thus motivated, at their root would then reveal self-interested motivations; rather than feeding the poor, clothing the naked, and housing the homeless out of genuine concern for them and their welfare, the ultimate motivation would instead be sheer self-interest.

The power of God to effect his purposes might certainly constitute a *motive* to live morally in such a scenario, albeit an ethically dangerous one, but not a rational *reason* . Any such purely self-interested moral motivations are necessarily infantile, some have argued. For they are roughly akin to the truncated ethical perspective of children, who also, in the earliest stages of moral development, understand morality in terms of avoiding punishments and earning rewards. Drawing on Piaget's research of young children, P. H. Nowell-Smith argues for such a parallel between religious moralists and children in the heteronomous stage of development, since both groups, while lacking in those marks of moral maturity and adulthood such as autonomy and personal responsibility, view moral rules as sacred and authoritatively imposed from the outside.⁵

At the heart of Nowell-Smith's critique of religious ethics is his concern that it tends to be more concerned with adherence to rules rather than the quality of people's lives and a concern for people's welfare for their own sake. Rules, as seen by the morally mature, exist for a purpose and fulfill distinct functions. But the heteronomous child and religious moralist both regard rules as, in essence, ends in themselves, never to be questioned. Even Abraham, the Old Testament patriarch, is shown laudably willing to sacrifice his own son on the altar at the whim of the divine. By thus relinquishing one's moral autonomy to divine control; being excessively concerned, even pathologically preoccupied, about the welfare of one's soul; and making moral determinations based on God's commands, potentially even capricious ones, religious moralists betray childish elements in their ethical philosophy.

Even supposing that God does issue a command to human beings, such as the "most important" command to love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself, another problem immediately arises, one which Kant noticed and contemporary philosopher Richard Taylor elaborates on.⁶ Such an edict can't be issued, for love, as an emotion, can't be commanded. An *ought* requires a *can* ; no sensible command requires of us to do that which we are incapable of doing. The command to love, as a command to assume an emotional disposition toward God or another, treats human emotion as something under direct volitional control. Since it is not—we can't directly generate emotions at will—the command is nonsensical. Duty and love seem incompatible in an ethical system; yet religious ethics conjoin them, another problem with rooting morality in theology. In this connection, Taylor writes the following:

The insight that love, as a feeling, is incompatible with the incentive of duty, is plainly correct. In the light of it one can expunge feelings of love from theoretical ethics, or one can expunge the incentive of duty. Kant took the former course, and I take the latter.⁷

Besides those problems associated with religious ethics, one philosophical problem, more than any other, has been a thorn in the flesh of theologians and religious moral philosophers since the time of Plato, and has been dubbed the Euthyphro Dilemma, aris-

ing as it does in the Socratic dialogue *Euthyphro*. Socrates, Plato's teacher, meets a young man, Euthyphro, going to the courthouse to sue his father. In ancient Greece, the setting for this story, loyalty to family was a highly exalted virtue, so Socrates is naturally shocked at Euthyphro's intention to do this, and remarks that Euthyphro must have a clearly defined sense of justice to undertake such an ambitious course of action. Euthyphro confidently assures Socrates that in fact he does, and proceeds to define justice, or what we might call morality today, in terms of the commands of the gods, according to the Greek conception of a pantheon of gods. When Socrates begins to point out that, according to the mythical accounts of the gods, their commands sometimes conflicted, problems with Euthyphro's account begin to manifest themselves.

The problems attending the attempt to define morality in supernaturalistic terms soon become applicable to monotheism as well, as the famous Dilemma arises a little further along in the dialogue. Socrates asks Euthyphro a pointed question, and one that has plagued moral philosophy ever since. Does, to put this in monotheistic terms, God *define* the good, or merely *report* the good? There is a difference. When you tell another that the sum of two and two is four, you are merely reporting this to be the case, not somehow making or defining it that way of your own volition. The question is whether God reveals to us the contents of morality irrespective of his own commands or nature, in which case he would be merely reporting on morality and not ultimately responsible for its contents after all, or does He actually define morality, conforming its contents to his own will? If we affirm the former option—that God only reports the good—then we have to agree with the thrust of contemporary moral philosophy that has divorced God from morality's ultimate origins. God would be commanding something because it is already good prior to and independent of his command. If we wish to affirm the latter option—that God defines morality (then and only then perhaps reports it)—then we're confronted with a potential problem. For then something is good because God commands it, but suppose that God, tomorrow, were to decree that torturing innocent children for the fun of it is the moral thing to do. If God is the one exclusively responsible for dictating the contents of morality, there is no recourse for anyone else to claim that such a command is morally perverse. By issuing the decree, God has thereby redefined morality. Morality is thus arbitrary, entirely contingent on the capricious will of heaven.

Of course, the history of religious conquest, holy wars, and inquisitions reminds us that cruelty in the name of God, ostensibly in accord with his purposes, is no academic discussion. Measured by its own standards, Christianity has fallen woefully short of ethical greatness, reminding us that belief in God is by no means sufficient for ensuring a mature ethical way of life, as the number of religious adherents who have perpetrated evils in the name of God so clearly attests. Nor is religious adherence even a needed precondition for moral living, it would seem, for many atheists indeed live exemplary lives of moral excellence. Kai Nielsen thus argues that, even if "God is dead," it doesn't matter for ethics. Arguing from features he finds in this world, Nielsen points out that atheists often live altruistically, find meaning in life, express compassion, thereby going to show that God seems unnecessary for ethics.⁸ Ethics can get by just fine without him.

Given such glaring weaknesses and strong critiques of religious ethics, it is not surprising that Derek Parfit is one among others who claims that holding on to outmoded reli-

gious views is an impediment to moral philosophy that had better be jettisoned as soon as possible. Indeed, some have essentially asserted that theistic beliefs, rather than grounding our morality and enabling us to determine the normative contents and metaethical justification for our moral convictions, can actually perform the opposite function of blinding us to morality as rooted in reason or human flourishing or whatever precisely it is that serves as the true foundation for morality. "Belief in God, or in many gods," Parfit writes, "[has] prevented free development of moral reasoning." Parfit is optimistic about the possibility of progress in ethics precisely to the extent we extricate ourselves from superstitious religious beliefs and begin to reason autonomously.⁹

THEISTIC ETHICS DEFENDED

Against such arguments, and contrary to the trend in modern moral philosophy, theistic ethics will nevertheless now be defended, with the aim to show that the case against it has yet to be made. What will be provided here, with no pretense that every relevant question is answered or problem solved, are a few suggestive lines of arguments that show promise in salvaging a meaningful connection between God and morality in the face of such challenges.

This section will make reference to *theistic*, rather than religious or theological, ethics to denote the fact that the type of connection between God and morality that will be defended, though it will possess numerous practical implications, will generally be at a higher level of abstraction than the plane on which this topic is usually discussed. It will be more ontological than epistemological and more metaethical than normative. Too often, it seems, theistic ethics have to account for the failings of religionists to live morally, or the successes of atheists in attaining moral excellence, while such phenomena, reflection shows, do little to discount the possibility that God himself is the Author of morality irrespective of what is done by some of his alleged followers or detractors.

No doubt it is particularly a concern the way religious adherents have too often failed to live up to even minimal moral standards, but the attempted defense of theistic ethics provided here will have little difficulty accommodating such empirical sociological realities. Religious affiliation or mere propositional assent is often a poor indicator of genuine religious life and spiritual devotion anyway, it is to be remembered. "The Old Testament prophets bear eloquent witness to this, reserving some of their fiercest denunciation for those who delight in solemn assemblies and external ritual," William Abraham reminds us.¹⁰ Jesus himself issued his most damning indictments to the religious leaders of his day.¹¹

MORAL FACTS

So to begin this defense, it is observed that typically socialized human beings have rather clear moral intuitions about what is right and wrong, or morally exemplary or hideous, which are more than just hunches or prereflective expressions of moral attitudes. As Geisler and Moreland write,

While philosophers differ over a precise definition of intuitions, a common usage defines an intuition as an immediate, direct awareness or acquaintance with something. An intuition is a mode of awareness—sensory, intellectual, or otherwise—in which something seems or appears to be directly present to one's consciousness.¹²

Ethicists like Alasdair MacIntyre and R. M. Hare think ethicists have gone wrong whenever an appeal to intuitions is necessary; but I rather agree with Saul Kripke's view: that it is difficult to see what could be said more strongly for a view than that it squares with one's basic, reflective intuitions. Philosophy ought to be largely in the business of spelling out in more rigorous ways what can be intuitively grasped by nearly anyone. Such intuitive appeals seem both unavoidable and epistemologically significant. Though not infallible, they are at least *prima facie* justified.

The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, in an effort to argue for his existentialist ethics, uses examples like a young soldier deciding whether to go to war or to stay home and be his mother's consolation.¹³ Sartre employs such examples to show the difficulty of making certain ethical determinations, and writings like his in conjunction with the widespread use of what Christina Hoff-Sommers has called "dilemma ethics"—moral dialogue focused on trying to decide the "hard cases"—have contributed to the notion that the whole field of ethics is colored grey. The old certainties are gone; ambiguity wins the day. Everything is up for grabs when it comes to questions of morality.

Despite the common nature of such views, most decisions in ethics are not fraught with ambiguity and tensions between commensurate competing commitments. As is obvious from clear examples of moral behavior, the vast majority of people's moral intuitions remain intact and quite strong. Perhaps ethics are too often thought about in terms of the peripheral dilemmas and occasional ambiguities, overlooking and thereby skewing our perception of the vast intuitive area of agreement that actually obtains both across diverse cultures and throughout the centuries of human history. Perhaps morality has to be seen at its best, or at its worst, for it is then our intuitions are felt the strongest and the distinctive features of moral facts most clearly apprehended, with no ambiguities or heart-wrenching dilemmas to cloud our vision. Eventually those dilemmas have to be accounted for as well, but the suggestion here is that they are not the proper place to begin. One doesn't learn subtle tennis strategy when he first must learn how to hit a groundstroke.

To elicit such common sensical moral intuitions, consider the following scenario, asking yourself whether you can affirm the moral propriety of such an action:

They brought the boy out of the guardroom. It was a bleak, foggy, raw day—an ideal day for hunting. The General ordered the boy stripped naked. The boy [who while playing had inadvertently injured the General's dog] was shivering. He seemed paralyzed with fear. He didn't dare utter a sound. 'Off with him now, chase him!' 'Hey, you, run, run!' a flunkey yelled, and the boy started to run. 'Sic 'im!' the General roared. The whole pack was set on the boy and the hounds tore him to pieces before his mother's eyes.¹⁴

Those chilling lines from Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* sicken readers, filling them with moral indignation. Common sense moral intuitions declare such an act to be heinous and barbaric. Sartre's point would have been lost had he begun not with a genuine moral dilemma, but with an appeal to people's moral intuitions, such as by asking whether the General should have acted in this way. The answer is clear. Something incongruous is readily discernible about the General's actions, quite irrespective of

whether the General derived pleasure from the act, perhaps accounting for the characterization of such behavior as inhuman.

Just as there is an unfittingness about the General's action, there is an obvious fittingness and congruity about morally good behavior generally and morally excellent behavior particularly, resulting in what has been called the "satisfactions of morality." "Moral people have long testified as to the strength and value of such satisfactions, often claiming that they are the most agreeable satisfactions we can attain."¹⁵

Behaviors characterized as morally exemplary are typically those which, if an agent performs them, she is said to be morally praiseworthy, whereas, if the agent fails to perform them, she isn't blameworthy. Such behaviors are thought of as going beyond what is expected of the moral agent, such as a selfless life of service to the sick, or a sacrifice of a lucrative medical career to serve the needs of a destitute village. Philosophers call such actions supererogatory, and sometimes debate whether such behaviors can even be accommodated according to normative ethical theory. Utilitarianism, for instance, doesn't merely suggest maximizing utility, but renders the maximization of utility one's moral *obligation*, thus raising the question of whether there ever really is anything like optional praiseworthy moral action.¹⁶

The aspect of supererogatory actions that will be stressed for this discussion, though, is different. Irrespective of the relative obligation one thinks attaches to such actions, the less arguable and most obvious element of supererogatory actions is their laudable selfless nature that resonates with our, in James Q. Wilson's phrase, "moral sense." Witnessing such behavior gives us, we suspect, a portrait of humanity at its best, a glimpse into life as it was meant to be lived, and perhaps one day will be.

Consulting our intuitions, what can we say about the nature of morality and of moral facts? If moral facts exist, they would seem to be, *prima facie*, ontologically rather odd entities as far as most facts go. Moral facts, in addition to conveying a description of nature, are also ineliminably prescriptive, normatively involving an appeal to what ought or ought not to be done. Moral facts thereby direct us to action, confer obligation, in a way that no merely descriptive fact characterizing some state of affairs can do without being conjoined with at least implicitly prescriptive ones.

Morality is thought to confer obligations and provide evaluative constraints not just on particular acts or ways of life, but even on our motivations. Saving a drowning child in the hope of earning a reward, though resulting in a good consequence, is still generally thought of as less than morally exemplary behavior. Moral motivations, as earlier discussed, need to largely transcend the hope of a reward or the effort to avoid a punishment to include genuine concern for the welfare of others, sincere desire to alleviate suffering, etc.

Morality, in its dominant tradition in western culture, involves rights and duties, rights to which people are entitled and obligations conferred upon people, sometimes at great personal sacrifice. Morality involves the ascription of moral praise and blame, either for actions performed or actions failed to be performed. The moral conferring of obligation and the assigning of blame, it is thought, are not contingent on the satisfaction of the moral agent's personal interest or advantage, but seem to possess a kind of authority irrespective of such considerations. That morality seems to provide intrinsic motives to virtue without at the same time always providing instrumental advantages based on prudence

has been long thought to be one of the great ethical difficulties left unsolved.¹⁷

The oddness of moral facts is obviously in part attributable to this prescriptive feature of theirs which, perhaps, is what motivated G. E. Moore to conclude that no naturalistic proposal for constructing a definition of "good" could suffice.¹⁸ Moore characterized the misguided attempt to define "good" by reducing it to any natural property—such as the maximization of pleasure or the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people—by the term "naturalistic fallacy." No merely naturalistic property seems able to accommodate this prescriptively binding force characterizing morality traditionally understood.

Thought of in terms of this tricky prescriptive element that enjoins a certain kind of behavior, Moore's point can be construed along the lines of David Hume's writing from two centuries before, in which he criticized the attempt to derive an *ought* from an *is*. Such a derivation has been described in various ways, such as going from a *description* to a *prescription*, from a *fact* to a *norm* or *value*, or from an *indicative* to an *imperative*. The same idea would appear later in Kant's insistence that the dictates and imperatives of the moral law can't be derived from any set of propositions about human happiness or the will of God.¹⁹

Rather than discussing Moore's or Hume's point at great length, which has been done elsewhere by numerous writers, here the discussion will instead focus on what constitutes the best explanation of such ontologically odd entities as moral facts, if indeed they exist at all. Rather than morality, given its distinct features, needing to be divorced from God's nature or will, the opposite conclusion has often been drawn, even by no less a thinker than the influential twentieth-century atheist J. L. Mackie. "Moral properties," the late philosopher wrote, "constitute so odd a cluster of properties and relations that they are most unlikely to have arisen in the ordinary course of events without an all-powerful god to create them."²⁰

That is, according to Mackie, moral facts—entities ascribing praise and blame for actions committed or omitted; conferring duties irrespective of the moral agent's cares and interests; calling for sacrifice of self-interest and, quite independent of outcomes, a purity of moral motivation—have for their best explanation, assuming they exist, a theistic premise. Unless God somehow caused such strange facts to come into existence, they are otherwise most unlikely to have developed naturalistically.

As an atheist, Mackie was dubious about the existence of such moral facts; but his sentiment—expressible in terms of the counterfactual conditional "If moral facts exist, then God probably created them"—could not be more eloquently echoed by any theist. Since God's nonexistence or irrelevance would negate the consequent of Mackie's conditional, it is not surprising that he and numerous other atheists before and after him have concluded that their worldview entails a rejection or loss of morality as traditionally understood. Sartre, for instance, expressed such a sentiment:

Towards 1880, when the French professors endeavored to formulate a secular morality, they said something like this: God is a useless hypothesis, so we will do without it. However, if we are to have morality, a society and a law-abiding world, it is essential that certain values should be taken seriously; they must have an *a priori* existence ascribed to them. It must be considered obligatory *a priori* to be honest, not to lie, not to beat one's wife, to bring up children and so forth; so we are going to do a little work on the subject, which will enable us to show that these values exist all

the same, inscribed in an intelligent heaven although, of course, there is no God. In other words...nothing will be changed if God does not exist; we shall discover the same norms of honesty, progress and humanity, and we shall have disposed of God as an out-of-date hypothesis which will die away quietly of itself. The existentialist, on the contrary, finds it extremely embarrassing that God does not exist, for there disappears with him all possibility of finding values in an intelligible heaven. There can no longer be any good *a priori*, since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it. It is nowhere written that "the good" exists, that one must be honest or must not lie, since we are now upon the plane where there are only men.²¹

Likewise, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche confidently proclaimed that the "death of God" should have for one of its practical outcomes a Copernican revolution in the way we think of ethics. Traditionally exalted moral virtues such as humility, altruism, and compassion, now seen as expressions of abject weakness, should be eclipsed with the strong virtues of selfishness, ruthlessness, and pride. In Nietzsche's case, then, upholding traditional morality after the death of God wasn't even a concern; it was his agenda to effect his transvaluation of values, according to which good might be called evil, and evil good.²²

Irrespective of one's views of Nietzsche and his legacy, his is one more example of atheists themselves recognizing the vital link between God and traditionally understood moral values, between theism and ethics. The violence potentially done to morality by its divorce from God is not a warning issued only by theists. A number of thoughtful philosophers, both theists and atheists, have drawn the conclusion that, if God does not exist, then morality, understood as something more than convention or conditioning alone, lacks a firm foundation or, to use Paul Taylor's word, "grounding."

W. T. Stace, attributing the emergence of moral relativism to the social, intellectual, and psychological conditions of our time, diagnoses the situation as follows:

We have abandoned, perhaps with good reason, the oracles of the past. Every age, of course, does this. But in our case it seems that none of us knows any more whither to turn. We do not know what to put in the place of that which has gone. What ought we, supposedly civilized peoples, to aim at? What are to be our ideals? What is right? What is wrong? What is beautiful? What is ugly? No man knows. We drift helplessly in this direction and that. We know not where we stand nor whither we are going.²³

Many atheists and secularists, however, wish to salvage a meaningful morality from the unpalatable implications of their worldview, as even Sartre and Nietzsche attempted. Philosophers thus attempt to defend and account for the existence of moral facts without any appeal to God, thereby also accounting for why we ought to live moral lives and for why moral obligations sometimes apply even when they conflict with one's personal welfare. Kurt Baier, for instance, tries this by arguing that morality really is in one's interest after all, thereby accounting for why we ought to live morally. Richard Brandt, as well, acknowledging that duty sometimes violates personal preferences, first concludes that whether such a duty ought to be carried through "may vary from one person to another. It depends on what kind of person one is, what one cares about." But he then proceeds

to write, "It is, of course, no defense of one's failure to do one's duty, before others or society, to say that doing so is not 'reasonable' for one in this sense."²⁴

George Mavrodes responds to such arguments effectively, in my view. In terms of Brandt's point, he writes

And this is just to bring the queer element back in. It is to suppose that besides 'the kind of person' I am and my particular pattern of 'cares' and interests there is something else, my duty, which may go against these and in any case properly overrides them. And one feels that there must be some sense of 'reasonable' in which one can ask whether a world in which that is true is a reasonable world, whether such a world makes any sense.²⁵

In response to Brandt's argument that (a) it is in *everyone's* best interest to act morally and, therefore, (b) it is in *my* best interest to act morally as well, Mavrodes asks whether (a) is to be understood collectively or distributively. If the former, then (b) doesn't follow from it, for it may not be in my best interest for everyone to act morally, even if it is in the best interest of the group as a whole, for the interest of the group as a whole may be advanced by the sacrificing of my interest. If (a) is understood in the distributive sense, Mavrodes notes that another objection arises, namely, that it seems obvious that personal self-interest, at least in the short run, will be further advanced in a situation in which everyone else acts morally but I act immorally, at least in selected cases, than it will in case everyone, including me, acts morally.²⁶

It is no doubt to each person's benefit that *others* act morally, and undoubtedly it is to each person's benefit that he or she *at times* act morally. But clearly there are many occasions when acting *immorally* appears to be in an individual's self-interest (or at least when acting morally is not in the agent's best interest). It was for this reason that Rene Descartes expressed the view that

Since in this life there are often more rewards for vices than for virtues, few would prefer what is right to what is useful, if they neither feared God nor hoped for an after-life.²⁷

Even Philippa Foot's efforts to argue that morality always gives people *some* reason to act leaves unanswered the question of why people ought to live morally when doing otherwise would go undetected. Such a failure to account for a reason to be moral in such a situation has a significance beyond merely the conclusion that what can be motivated are not particular acts so much as a general commitment to rules or a moral disposition. Rather, it goes to show that, even if a non-theistic account motivates altruistic *behavior*, it is still deficient to motivate effectively and justify intellectually an altruistic *character*—a further aspect of morality, captured by the virtue tradition in ethics, and related to the earlier mention of motives.²⁸ In Gregory Kavka's attempt to construct a reconciliation of morality and self-interest, for instance, his project concerns rules of action or ways of life rather than motives or reasons for action.

Even if Kavka's reconciliation project—which makes reference to internal sanctions like

conscience and the satisfactions of morality—succeeds, of course (and I suspect to a large degree it does), that provides no good reason to think that morality's binding force resides in its prudential advantages—the practical or pragmatic benefits for those performing the actions. For such benefits might well be the result of doing what is intrinsically right. Take the case of feeding the poor. Kavka rightly shows that potential prudential benefits accrue to the action of feeding the poor, such as a stronger economy, less risk of rebellion, and greater numbers of competent workers. But clearly the binding prescriptive component of morality, Kavka himself would probably agree, is not located in such social advantages of feeding the poor. Morality dictates the intrinsically right action to be feeding the poor, even if no such social benefits were to result. That they in fact *do* result does not make *them* the grounding of morality, especially in the mind of one like Kavka, it would seem, who retains such a strong set of traditional moral convictions.

Besides accounts like those to make sense of morality apart from appeals to the divine, there is always possible an appeal to brute fact, the theory of metaphysical intuitionism or, perhaps, Platonic realism. Perhaps moral facts, including obligations at times to sacrifice self-interest, are just emergent facts in this world, synthetic necessary truths knowable *a priori* by a moral intuition, with no explanation possible in terms of naturalistic parts. Here the theist is often confronted with a surprisingly formidable opponent. But the theist is not obligated to show that a theistic universe is the *only possible* explanation, but merely the *best* explanation. (To show that it's merely a good and coherent explanation would be an accomplishment in many of philosophy's contemporary quarters!) And many atheists, confronted with the option of this theory of brute facts, on the one hand, and something like a naturalist's account of the strength of moral intuitions in terms of either deeply held, habitually conditioned social mores or in terms of moral facts somehow supervening on natural facts, on the other, have found the latter to be the considerably more rational option. Objective naturalism, in other words, seems the considerably more formidable challenge to theistic ethics than intuitionism; and a fuller explication of theistic ethics would have to confront this challenge more directly. Fruitful lines of inquiry might highlight such challenges naturalism faces in accounting for a sufficiently meaningful free will to undergird morality, how moral prescriptions can be invested with the kind of qualitative force we think they deserve, or how the quest for reproductive advantage can explain moral advantage.

It might be suggested that we ought to believe in moral facts for the same reason we ought to believe in brute epistemological facts—such as the propriety of the principle of abduction: the principle of inference to the best explanation that is being used in this very essay to argue for theistic ethics. Or construe the suggestion like this: the line of argument sketched so far might be applied equally well to epistemology as to morality and thereby shown unsound. Morality and epistemology do, as a matter of fact, seem to be on a par in critical respects; alleged facts in each arena contain both descriptive and prescriptive components, for instance. However, obligations and sacrifices of self-interest are not nearly as involved in epistemology as in ethics; and violations of epistemological principles, even at their most egregious, simply don't *begin* to raise people's ire to the degree that the General's actions do, nor should they. Nor do the most brilliant applications of the principle of inference to the best explanation inspire people (with the possible exception of a

few analytic philosophers) to the degree of seeing a truly selfless act of love or heroism. So if we don't view it as odd, morality retains distinctive features which afford it a unique capacity to inform our understanding of the world.

Of course, some see moral facts as just irredeemably odd, and thus are not convinced of their reality at all. The very epistemological sort of evidence adduced here in support of ontological issues about ethics leads certain anti-realists in ethics to deny that such facts exist apart from the seemingly necessary education of human sensibilities. (These philosophers are not to be confused with those "realists" who would cite only social ontology.) However bedrock our moral intuitions may appear, the argument goes, they are not hard-wired into human nature. What better proof of this is there, a friend writes, than "the casual, even delighted manner in which small children tear the wings off flies and otherwise torture insects and torment pets? Children need to learn what cruelty is, and what counts as cruelty." This point is worthy of much attention, but for now just three brief points will be made. First, to show that a process of socialization is *necessary* for healthy moral development is not to show it is thereby *sufficient* to account for moral intuitions and their corresponding contents. Second, Christianity in particular, with its communal theology of the human condition and its teachings about original sin, seems uniquely capable of accounting for both the necessity of socialization and the cruelty in men (and boys). Third, it's not pretended here that the admittedly rudimentary comments to follow are enough to persuade any committed anti-realist in ethics who would reject even the best explanation of moral facts as inadequate to justify belief in moral facts. But then again, philosophical argument may sometimes be the least effective means of reaching philosophers.

A THEISTIC ACCOUNT

The odd features of alleged moral facts strike many philosophers as strange, leading them to doubt their existence, as we have seen. What these philosophers do, in denying moral facts, is conform their understanding of the world to their picture of the way the world ought to look like. Since they can't make sense of moral facts in a determined world with no God, no libertarian freedom, no essential human nature, no room for genuine moral responsibility or retributive justice, it is only intellectually honest that many of them deny the existence of moral facts altogether, chalking moral convictions up to upbringing and/or society and nothing more.

What will be done here, though, is different: The seeming existence and apparent nature of moral facts will be used to shape our understanding of the world. Why try to hammer morality into categories that really presuppose that we already know what the world is like, all the while turning a deaf ear to morality's instructive nature? Maybe morality should instead be allowed to affect our view of the world, changing *it* to include such entities as moral facts and to accord them epistemic value in our effort at understanding life and its meaning.

If a non-theistic universe fails to provide the best account for the existence of moral facts, what does? Since morality's existence and prescriptive force seem strong, the best explanation of such a state of affairs is, I submit, theism. To put it in Stace's terms, our dismissal of the "oracles of the past" may have been too hasty. The distinctive features of moral facts make them more at home, less odd, in a theistic universe than in an atheistic

one, perhaps making God's obituary premature. Morality in its various features—including its entailment of genuine obligation, libertarian freedom, retributive justice, and sacrifice of self-interest (at least in the short run), with love and relationship as paramount—has for its best explanation a creative God who has in some sense inscribed his own loving and relational nature into the world, fashioning human beings in his image and according to his intentions, and imbuing them with moral intuitions which, if properly socially mediated, provide reliable insight into the ethical nature of God, themselves, and the world.

The details of such a theistic account do not pretend to have been derived through sheer rationality here, out of whole cloth, but are admittedly the salient moral attributes of God as understood in the great monotheistic traditions, and particularly Christianity. That said, most all of what is presented here is also fully consistent with an Anselmian conception of deity as the possessor of the maximally compossible conjunction of the various "omni"-qualities. The suggestive argument here is that a theistic account of the universe and its creation provides the best available explanation of our intuitions of morality as possessing an objective existence and binding prescriptive force. Such an argument, if made more fully, would obviously have to additionally defend theism against pantheism and other religious views that differ radically from Christianity. Potential help here might be found in specifically Christian doctrine about a personal and immanent God offering transforming grace to enable us to cross the "moral gap," to use John Hare's phrase, and live the kind of life to which he calls us.

Whether God exists, of course, is no small debate; it's not a question about whether one more thing exists in the inventory of reality. "It is a question about the ultimate context for everything else," Morris writes. "The theist and the atheist should see *everything* differently."²⁹ Little wonder that Nielsen's arguments, cited earlier, examined features of this world, with the assumption that God doesn't exist, and concluded that morality can escape unscathed without him. It is also little wonder that those committed to believing in God's existence and who find theistic ethics somehow compelling are often unconvinced by such arguments, thinking them hollow and somehow missing the point. Perhaps Dostoevsky was right: if God doesn't exist then everything is permitted. But the theist is only conjecturing in such a case, for he argues that God *does* exist, as creator of theists and atheists alike; and therefore not everything is permitted, negatively, and moral truth penetrates the surface of this universe to its core, positively.

Reconsider moral intuitions in light of this. Morality, as traditionally understood, entails not just rights and duties, but also points toward a whole new set of categories that make a discussion of rights and duties, at best, an emaciated caricature of this new set of realities. Philosopher Eleonore Stump writes that, as C. S. Lewis maintained in *The Pilgrim's Regress*, the vision of certain sorts of beauty fills us with an acute if inchoate longing for something—the source of the beauty perhaps—and a painful sense that we don't possess it, aren't part of it, now.³⁰ Perhaps morality, in certain of its practical exemplifications, is one of those kinds of beauty, like in the sacrifice of Christ, and its privation or perversion a form of ugliness, like the General's treachery.

George Mavrodes, perhaps sensing this same longing, writes

I come more and more to think that morality, while a fact, is a twisted and distorted fact. Or perhaps better, that it is a barely recognizable version of another fact, a ver-

sion adapted to a twisted and distorted world. It is something like, I suppose, the way in which the pine that grows at timberline, wind blasted and twisted low against the rock, is a version of the tall and symmetrical tree that grows lower on the slopes. I think it may be that the related notions of sacrifice and gift represent (or come close to representing) the fact, that is, the pattern of life, whose distorted version we know here as morality. Imagine a situation, an "economy" if you will, in which no one ever buys or trades for or seizes any good thing. But whatever good he enjoys it is either one which he himself has created or else one which he received as a free and unconditional gift. And as soon as he has tasted it and seen that it is good he stands ready to give it away in his turn as soon as the opportunity arises. In such a place, if one were to speak either of his rights or his duties, his remark might be met with puzzled laughter as his hearers struggled to recall an ancient world in which those terms referred to something important.

We have, of course, even now some occasions that tend in this direction. Within some families perhaps, or even in a regiment in desperate battle, people may for a time pass largely beyond morality and live lives of gift and sacrifice. On those occasions nothing would be lost if the moral concepts and the moral language were to disappear. But it is probably not possible that such situations and occasions should be more than rare exceptions in the daily life of the present world. Christianity, however, which tells us that the present world is "fallen" and hence leads us to expect a distortion in its important features, also tells us that one day the redemption of the world will be complete and that then all things shall be made new.³¹

Such an account enables an understanding of love in a far less superficial way than any account whose ultimate components are matter and energy. Jerry Walls writes

Our desire for love and our belief in its importance is supported by the doctrine of the Trinity, which maintains that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit always existed in a relationship of perfect love, even before the world was created. So love and relationship are not relative newcomers in the history of the world, which emerged accidentally from the blind forces of matter. Rather, love and relationship 'go all the way down' in the structure of reality.³²

To put the same point negatively, a theistic ethic adds a qualitatively different and morally relevant flavor to blameworthy actions, according to which we don't merely offend people, but God himself. Now it is even clearer, by the way, why the study of ethics eclipses epistemology in terms of insight into the nature of the universe: God is rational, but more importantly God is love. It is into this reality that supererogatory actions, particularly, provide a window.

Love, as God's nature and morality's pinnacle, while containing an ineliminable affective constituent, transcends mere feeling to encompass attitude, action, and character, a view actually much closer to Kant's meaning (than Taylor's earlier suggestion) when he said that love as a duty *can* be commanded. In this way, love, understood as a duty, can be coherently commanded after all: not as a mere feeling, but as a practical way of life, a

tangible means of treating others.³³ God, aware of our inconstant emotional dispositions, by commanding love for himself and others confers on us the responsibility to exert what control we can—over our actions—with the intent being that the appropriate feelings and proper motivations—character—will eventually be formed within us. As Pascal realized, again in the words of Morris,

Action creates emotion. How we behave can influence, over the long run and sometimes even on the spot, what attitudes and emotions are operative in our lives. And these in turn can open our eyes or blind us to aspects of our objective environment. They can affect deeply our ability to see the world aright.³⁴

Think of husbands who claim to have “fallen out of love” with their wives, and the fact that it is often most obvious that they are not justified to forsake the relationship. Emotions are notoriously fickle, and can fluctuate too easily with the ups and downs of life. An important question for such an individual to ask himself before placing too much stock in his emotions is what actions has he performed or failed to perform which have contributed to this loss of feeling? Action and inaction create emotions, as well as vice versa. That emotions drive actions is well known and not denied here, but that a largely symmetric and reciprocal relation holds between actions and emotions is less recognized.

It should be obvious that none of this is to trivialize feeling, incidentally. Jonathan Edwards issued a warning against such a mistake, depicting it a wicked act

to propagate and establish a persuasion that all affections and sensible emotions of the mind, in things of religion, are nothing at all to be regarded, but are rather to be avoided and carefully guarded against, as things of a pernicious tendency. This [will] bring all religion to a mere lifeless formality, and effectively shut out the power of godliness, and everything which is spiritual and to have all true Christianity turned out of doors.

As there is no true religion where there is nothing else but affection, so there is no true religion where there is no religious affection.... If the great things of religion are rightly understood, they will affect the heart.... This manner of slighting all religious affections is the way exceedingly to harden the hearts of men, and to encourage them in their stupidity and senselessness, and to keep them in a state of spiritual death as long as they live and bring them at last to death eternal.³⁵

Love as understood as encompassing both feeling and behavior is indeed commanded in the New Testament, with the doxastic recognition that the latter can cultivate the former and the former can impassion the latter.

That behavior can affect sentiments and shape character provides a compelling reason why, at some stage of moral development, we as human beings are in need of guidelines and moral rules to establish parameters within which behavior is allowable. Such a recognition enables a defense against Nowell-Smith's charge that obedience of God's commands is necessarily infantile. Eventually adherence to such guidelines can enable the kind of mature moral life envisioned by Nowell-Smith, though with a different understanding

of moral freedom. Moral freedom, according to Christian teaching, is not the autonomy to *make up* what is right and what is wrong, but the capacity to *choose to do* what is good over what is evil. The morally and spiritually free, therefore, are not those who exert autonomy irrespective of the objective constraints on what is right and wrong, but who freely choose to do that which is right and good.

This understanding of freedom is what may provide a way out of the Euthyphro Dilemma. Recall that one of the horns of the dilemma, when morality was rooted in God, entailed the scary prospect of God issuing an immoral command, thereby making it right.¹⁶ At least a partial solution to this problem is to call into question God's ability to sin; if God could never issue such a command, the problem never arises. The problem with such a solution is that it doesn't seem a logical impossibility to consider God issuing such a command, despite Aquinas's attempt to portray it as such. Nevertheless theists like Robert Adams wish to assert that it remains necessarily the case that God would not, and in some sense could not, issue such a command. But how can such a limit be placed on the activities of a God who, in the Anselmian sense, is omnipotent, able to do anything logically possible?

Such contemporary questions presuppose an understanding of freedom as the freedom from the constraints of standard rules or the impositions of others, the autonomy to do whatever you want. But that construal of freedom is itself rather morally infantile, more germane to our contemporary political context than to the moral and spiritual realm. A deeper understanding of freedom construes it as the freedom *not* to actualize certain possibilities. Stories abound of people who, in their expressions of personal autonomy, become enslaved to their vices. Genuine freedom is not just freedom *to*, but freedom *from*. God is free not to sin, and therefore free not to issue an immoral command.

However, if the statement "God is good" is understood as synthetic and substantive, and not merely analytic and a function of language, then its denial can't be self-contradictory and therefore remains a broadly logical possibility. So how, you might ask, can an event (like God issuing an immoral command) which is in *some* sense a possibility nevertheless not be actually possible, and a proposition affirming the occurrence of such an event be necessarily false? Because God is the delimitter of possibilities, so that some states of affairs are conceivable, or epistemically possible, but not really metaphysically possible. In this connection Morris writes

For the Anselmian holds that God exemplifies necessarily the properties of omnipotence, omniscience, and goodness. Because of this, God has the unique ontological role of being a delimitter of possibility. To put it simply, some maximal groupings of propositions which, if *per impossible*, God did not exist would constitute possible worlds, do not count as genuinely possible worlds due to the constraints placed on possibility by the nature of the creator. Certain worlds can be described with full consistency in first order logic but are such that, for example, their moral qualities preclude their even possibly being actualized or allowed by an Anselmian God.¹⁷

That love and such freedom are the ultimate product of morality thus understood liberates morality from a mere emphasis on rules and regulations. An understanding of morality emancipated from slavish dependence on laws and guidelines makes sense of

the inevitable grey areas that can invariably be found in dilemma ethics. In the realm of rules and duties and such, relativities and exceptions to the rule exist; but that is more tolerable in a system ruled not by an impersonal Kantian law to which human beings need to be unswervingly committed, but rather a personal God. Not an arbitrary God, exacerbating the Euthyphro Dilemma, but one who always acts in love and keeps his promises, not out of compulsion, but out of His unchanging nature of love.

The point, again, is not that God isn't free to do otherwise, but that He's free not to. Preoccupation with whether God is free to do what is evil is a function of what we can call the Minimalist Strategy: talk of morality just in terms of rules and rights and duties, a strategy that is sometimes essential, often important, but never ultimate.³⁸ Morality as construed by theistic ethics points beyond what is penultimate and minimalist to that which our acute if inchoate longing apprehends. It points to that place of morality on the other side of rights and duties, where there shall be no occasion for any prohibition, envisioned by Mavrodes, quoted earlier, where "if one were to speak either of his rights or his duties, his remark might be met with puzzled laughter as his hearers struggled to recall an ancient world in which those terms referred to something important."³⁹

Morality is not the deepest thing...it is provisional and transitory...due to serve its use and then to pass away in favor of something richer and deeper.⁴⁰

REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

Such idealizations are well and good, but perhaps recall for us the last challenge to theistic ethics that will be briefly treated here: Isn't religious adherence just disguised egoism to get into heaven and avoid hell? As Alasdair MacIntyre writes,

If I am liable to be sent to hell for not doing what God commands, I am thereby provided with a corrupting, because totally self-interested, motive for pursuing the good. When self-interest is made as central as this, other motives are likely to dwindle in importance and a religious morality becomes self-defeating, at least insofar as it was originally designed to condemn pure self-interest.⁴¹

This type of objection, Jerry Walls notes, has the most force when the sufferings of hell are seen more as an externally imposed punishment, bearing no necessary relation to the nature of the moral action involved. But the objection loses some of its momentum when the anguish of hell is seen as a function of a life of evil. (To some extent, a similar point may apply to the joy of heaven being a function of choosing good, though the grace of God that enables heaven goes far beyond any merely natural consequences.) This point too is vulnerable to a Kantian-styled objection that criticizes moral motivation to avoid evil simply to avoid the anguish that is typically a natural consequence of such actions and attitudes in a moral world. To the Kantian must be conceded some ground at this point; heaven and hell do, at some level, appeal to self-interest.⁴²

But not all self-interest is selfish, and proper self-interest is a legitimate part of genuine moral motivation.⁴³ This is particularly the case when the self-interested motivation takes for its normative form the *renunciation* of self-absorption and indulgence. Further, an

action that is in one's self-interest may have been sufficiently motivated by something other than self-interest to qualify as something for which to be praised.⁴⁴ And even Kant himself insisted that practical rationality demands the postulate of a God who will ensure, ultimately, that the virtuous are the happy. Mavrodes writes that "what we have in Kant is the recognition that there cannot be, in any 'reasonable' way, a moral demand upon me, unless reality itself is committed to morality in some deep way."⁴⁵ Theistic ethics, it has been argued, is the best explanation of how reality itself is thus committed, thus providing a liberation from a Stoic commitment to morality without the psychologically vital confidence that reality itself is ultimately concerned about the best interests of moral persons.

Lest this defensive maneuver designed to salvage the connection between God and morality against Kant's objection lose sight of an important point, it should be remembered that what the theological stance is being criticized for here is the "vice" of solving a heretofore intractable moral dilemma. That dilemma resides in attempting to reconcile morality as concurrently requiring *sacrifice* of self-interest and *protection* of self-interest. What has been presented are some steps in the direction of accounting for a meaningful, coherent, and consistent way to retain both of these moral intuitions in synergistic balance, by distinguishing between short-term and long-term interest and pointing to the nature of the ethical acts performed in a moral world.

Heaven and hell, thus understood within a matrix of orthodox religious beliefs—according to which salvation is not earned but received through faith in Christ's sacrifice, involving both orthodoxy and orthopraxy—can at least potentially offer substantive motivation to live morally, and perhaps even endure sacrifice of personal interest or even persecution. Since it is often agreed that the proper contents of ethics, generally speaking, are not what is up for grabs so much as any sufficiently motivating factors to do what is right, the doctrines of heaven and hell may well provide some hard and needed motivation to live the kind of moral life that makes best sense when understood within a larger context than this life alone.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, then, theistic ethics, following some of the suggestions in this paper, retains the potential of being shown to account for moral facts better than secular ethics and to provide a strong account of moral motivation. Such an ethic need not, and properly understood does not, entail a simplistic correlation between doctrinal belief or religious affiliation and moral practice, nor does it of necessity contain elements that are essentially infantile. To the contrary, it affirms that all human beings, having been created in God's *imago dei*, are capable of intuitively grasping and rationally understanding the moral order which, given its salient features, has for its best explanation a theistic premise, providing the best available account of love understood in more than a superficial way. Love thus understood as more than mere emotion indeed can be commanded and thereby facilitate the process of moral maturity by the reciprocal relationship that obtains between emotion and action, according to a notion of freedom which also makes possible God's willful inability to issue immoral commands.⁴⁶

NOTES

1. Here is one rudimentary critique of Kant's argument against the importation of theology into the science of metaphysics. Strawson points out that Kant was as motivated to exclude negative theological claims as positive ones from his cognitive classification. Denying God's existence, on this view, is as much beyond our ken as affirming that God *does* exist. That being the case, clearly the philosopher Berkeley's affirmation of his central tenet of the sustaining sovereignty of God qualifies as a theological claim, and thus resides outside our cognitive capabilities according to Kant's exclusion of propositions of speculative metaphysics from the realm of legitimate metaphysical inquiry. But then it follows that the denial of such a proposition, or a proposition that has the denial of Berkeley's theological claim as its entailment, would equally qualify as a theological—an atheological—proposition bearing the same relation to Kant's cognitive map as Berkeley's affirmation does. So assuming that the gloss on what constitutes a substance is Kantian that defines it as that which is capable of existence apart from anyone's perception of it, then Kant is contradicting himself. For he would be affirming the cognitive import of a proposition that clearly entails the negation of Berkeley's favored theological tenet. It would seem, then, that either Kant contradicts himself in this respect or this gloss on Kantian substances is mistaken.
2. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), pp. 1-18.
3. Stanley Jaki, "Christology and the Birth of Science," *Asbury Theological Journal*, vol. 45, no. 2, p. 68.
4. J. P. Moreland and Kai Nielsen, *Does God Exist? The Debate Between Theists and Atheists* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1993), p. 119.
5. Cited in William J. Abraham, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1985), p. 136.
6. Richard Taylor, *Good and Evil: A New Direction* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1984), pp. 247-49.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 248.
8. See Kai Nielsen, *Ethics Without God* (New York: Pemberon Books, 1973).
9. Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 454.
10. Abraham, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
11. Matt. 23:23-28.
12. Geisler, Norman L. and J. P. Moreland, "Ethical Theories and Ethical Decision-Making," in Francis J. Beckwith, *Do the Right Thing: A Philosophical Dialogue on the Moral and Social Issues of Our Time* (Boston: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 1996), p. 39.
13. *Classic Philosophical Questions*, James Gould, ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), p. 180.
14. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), p. 292.
15. Gregory Kavka, "A Reconciliation Project," in *Ethical Theory: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, Louis Pojman, ed. (New York: Wadsworth, 1995), p. 559.
16. It is generally agreed among ethicists that rule-utilitarianism and deontology probably have a much easier time accounting for supererogatory actions than act-utilitarianism.
17. Paul Taylor calls this the "ultimate question."
18. See G. E. Moore's classic *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge, 1903), the book that really initiated the major discussion of metaethics this century.
19. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study of Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 56.
20. J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 115. Mackie further argues no moral truths exist on the grounds that they involve an "ought," meaning we have sufficient (or categorical) reason to do something irrespective of our desires. But then he says we're obligated to do nothing other than what we're motivated to do. Therefore, there is no ought and no moral truth.

21. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existential Ethics," in Gould, op. cit., pp. 178-79.
22. For a concise sample of Nietzsche's thought, see "The Relativity of Morality" in Borchert et al., op. cit., pp. 322-39.
23. W. T. Stace, "Ethics Are Not Relative," in Gould, op. cit., p. 114.
24. Cited by Mavrodes in Pojman, op. cit., p. 587.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, p. 586.
27. Thomas V. Morris, *Making Sense of It All: Pascal and the Meaning of Life* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1992), p. 24.
28. See Jerry L. Walls, "Heaven, Hell, and Moral Foundations," unpublished.
29. Morris, op. cit., p. 25.
30. Eleonore Stump, "The Mirror of Evil," in *God and the Philosophers*, op. cit., p. 246.
31. Pojman, op. cit., p. 588.
32. Jerry Walls, "On Keeping the Faith," in *God and the Philosophers*, op. cit., p. 110.
33. Robert Adams, borrowing terminology from Paul Tillich, distinguishes a Christian ethic's *theonomy* from either *heteronomy* or *autonomy*. For an insightful, short discussion of this, the reader is encouraged to examine "Autonomy and Theological Ethics," in *The Virtue of Faith and Other Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 123-27.
34. Morris, *Making Sense of It All*, op. cit., p. 125.
35. See *The Religious Affections* (Carlisle, Pa.: The Banner of Truth Trust, reprint 1984), p. 29.
36. The Euthyphro Dilemma is also exacerbated by certain strongly voluntarist versions of the Ockham-divine command theory, which move into noncognitivism. Generally what is assumed here instead is more of a personalist view, according to which God's unchanging nature has been expressed in the created order, the essence of which can be intuitively grasped and rationally understood. Another important distinction that helps handle the Dilemma is that between control and causal dependence. The latter relation bearing between God and morality does not entail the former.
37. Thomas V. Morris, *Anselmian Explorations: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Notre Dame Press, 1987), p. 184. Beyond this, we see that God is the source of those standards to which we appeal when characterizing God as maximally moral, contrary to Nielsen's charge that an affirmation of the proposition "God is good" as synthetic necessarily appeals to standards external to God. Let me also use this note as an opportunity to point out that recent work in the philosophy of language, such as that of Kripke's and Putnam's, has distinguished between necessary truths and analyticity.
- For an alternative view against Morris, see T. Jackson, "Is God Just?," *Faith and Philosophy* (July 1995). As long as one grants that were the possibility of God issuing an unkind command to be realized, Jackson argues, one might grant that such a contingency is not just a *logical* possibility but a *practical* one as well. This would of course essentially entail God's self-destruction—ceasing to be himself—and thus the end of ethics. The suggestion is that it is the ultimate expression of the unity of God's goodness and power that God could do this, but freely does not do so.
38. It is interestingly relevant that certain recent feminist moral philosophers have also offered a critique of morality construed just in terms of rights and duties.
39. Mavrodes, in Pojman, op. cit., p. 588.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 113.
42. Jerry L. Walls, *Hell: The Logic of Damnation* (Notre Dame Press, 1992), p. 155.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Walls, "Moral Foundations," op. cit.
45. Mavrodes, in Pojman, op. cit., p. 587.
46. Finally, it should be noted that a weakly voluntaristic theistic account, or what Morris

might call "theistic activism," such as what has been presented here in broad strokes, if successful, by integrating and synthesizing insights from both moral objectivists and subjectivists, would be similar to a successful rapprochement between Platonism and theism in philosophical theology that would provide "a view which both retains the commitment of realism concerning objective existence and status of abstract entities and modal truths, while at the same time capturing the conviction of anti-realists and conventionalists that such items must be in some sense mind-dependent." See Morris, *Anselmian Explorations*, op. cit., p. 178.

My thanks to Paul Hughes, Sloan Lee, and Jerry Walls for suggestions on earlier drafts of this paper.

WHY THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT IS DEAD



KENNETH J. COLLINS

In an important article a few years ago, Keith Drury, a denominational official in The Wesleyan Church, maintained that the holiness movement, as a movement, is dead.¹ He offered eight causes for this unfortunate development:

1. We wanted to be respectable
2. We have plunged into the evangelical mainstream
3. We failed to convince the younger generation
4. We quit making holiness the main issue
5. We lost the lay people
6. We over-reacted against the abuses of the past
7. We adopted a "church growth" thinking without theological thinking
8. We did not notice when the battle line moved.²

Now Drury does not deny that a holiness infrastructure of churches, boards, and academic institutions is in place, nor that there are many pious souls within them, but what he does dispute is that the vitality and evangelistic power of the holiness movement, along with an attentiveness to holiness in preaching, and personal life, remain to any significant degree. Instead, he conjures up the image of a corpse in an upstairs room that we visit from time to time and with which we have little chats as if the body were alive.³ In other words, the days of talking about a pulsing, soul-winning, energetic *movement* are clearly gone.

More recently, Richard S. Taylor, noted Nazarene scholar, entered the fray and offered a similar jeremiad with respect to the holiness movement. Among other things, he listed the following evidences of decline and demise:

Kenneth J. Collins is a professor of historical theology and Wesley studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.

1. The intense focus which originally created a movement has been dissipated by the diffusion of aims and the influx of a pagan, TV-generated culture.
2. Many—perhaps most—in holiness churches no longer really believe that there is an instantaneous, supernatural, second work of divine grace.
3. The message of “full salvation” is inherently counter to sinful human nature.
4. There was an inevitable reaction to the excesses of the holiness movement.
5. A shabby demonstration of holiness was offered on the part of many of its professors.
6. When counseling moved in, rugged and radical holiness preaching gradually was displaced by what pastors thought was more germane to the real everyday needs of their people.
7. The church growth movement displaced concern for holiness.
8. Holiness folk failed to read holiness literature.
9. Liberal ideas about the Bible and doctrine, acceded to by a younger generation of scholars, undermined effective holiness teaching.⁴

As someone who works in the fields of Wesley studies, Methodist theology, and American religion, I would like to add my own voice to these painful laments, these eulogies, offered by both Drury and Taylor. And though I will consider some different reasons than either of these two important church leaders has offered, I sense that we are all united in believing that the “pretense” that all is well in the holiness “movement” must at the very least be dispelled. Acknowledging the painful reality of our situation, in an honest and forthright way, as well as calling for greater self-knowledge and humility, will be important first steps so that we may then be empowered, once again, to carry out our historic mission, namely, to spread scriptural holiness across the lands.

Before I get much further in this essay, let me first of all note my different background and “social location” from some holiness folk. I did not, for instance, grow up in a holiness church (such as The Wesleyan Church or the Church of the Nazarene), nor did I ever witness some of the more flagrant abuses and misunderstandings of John Wesley’s teaching on sanctification in general and on Christian perfection in particular. On the contrary, I was raised in the Roman Catholic Church until the age of twenty and witnessed a whole different set of issues and abuses, some of which those holiness folk who think that the grass is always greener on the other more “catholic” side of things will eventually have to face. Today, I am an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church, a communion of faith which I deeply love, and I am passionately committed to the Methodist standard of holiness, to the importance and cruciality of holy love in the warp and woof of life. With this brief background in place, I offer the following considerations as to why the holiness movement is “dead.”

THE AWAKENING HAS RUN ITS COURSE

First of all, there is a natural life cycle to revival movements as William McLoughlin has so ably argued.⁵ The awakening and insights of the earlier generation, along with its vitality and enthusiasm, eventually become institutionalized in rituals, practices, mores, and doctrines. This is not to suggest, however, that rituals, practices, mores, and doctrines are

problematic in and of themselves; they are indeed vital, a necessary part of any movement. But in time, all that unfortunately remains for subsequent generations is the *form* of religion without its inner *power*. Some scholars contend that the upper length of this cycle is forty years; others argue for a figure considerably less. We are, therefore, well into the "institutional phase" of things.

ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION IS DOUBTED

Second, in a way roughly analogous to Puritan New England, several of the sons and daughters (as well as the grandsons and granddaughters) of the holiness movement were no longer able—for all sorts of reasons—to make the same profession of perfect love as did their ancestors. The repetition of the altar call, then, a liturgical form employed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as an invitation to Christian perfection, soon became an annoyance, the reopening of a wound, a painful reminder that the favor of God so graciously received by the elders of another generation had apparently not been received by the next.

Given this new setting, which was informed by various levels of unbelief as to what the enabling grace of God can do, professions of Christian perfection were now looked upon as graphic examples of "self-delusion." That is, on the one hand, a sincere testimony of perfect love was often met with incredulity even when there was no significant evidence to the contrary. On the other hand, the unbelieving observer of such a profession of grace sometimes took great delight, even joy, in noting any contrary evidence, as if he or she had found "great spoils" in detecting sin in the life of the professor. This is truly a wretched state of unbelief and is referred to by the Germans as *Schadenfreude*, taking odd delight in the evil of others, rejoicing and taking comfort in the very presence of sin. Sadly some of these melancholic spirits fill pulpits on Sunday mornings.

For their part, the New England Puritans addressed their particular problem of malaise (which was somewhat different from the holiness one) through the "Half-Way Covenant." In this compromise, the unconverted could have their children baptized though they themselves were barred from the sacraments. The heirs of the holiness movement, on the other hand, took a much different approach, and one that was far more radical: that is, instead of reaffirming the necessity, indeed, the cruciality of holiness for all believers, several leading scholars now maintained that entire sanctification was not really a possibility for *any* believer, anyone who enjoyed the graces of justification and regeneration, but only for older folk, those advanced in age, thus confusing the high standard of this grace with mature, adult Christian states. But the evidence from Wesley's own writings belies such teaching on many levels as I have demonstrated in my recent dialog with Randy Maddox at the 1999 meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society. In fact, John Wesley attested to the entire sanctification of both a four-year-old girl as well as a twelve-year-old girl.⁶

THE LIBERTY OF THE NEW BIRTH IS REPUDIATED

Third, the substance of the preceding observations suggests that the sons and daughters of the holiness movement are far more pessimistic, soteriologically speaking, than their parents and grandparents ever were. Put another way, an optimism of grace has been subtly replaced by what is trumpeted as a more "realistic" and "honest" assessment

of the human condition. Here depth psychology and subtle forms of deterministic philosophies have played an important corrosive role. In particular, attention to the subtle, nebulous affects of the subconscious is now supposed to preclude even the basic kind of liberty that Wesley had affirmed for the children of God in his sermons, "The Great Privilege of Those that are Born of God," and "The Marks of the New Birth," namely, that they may be free from the *power* or *dominion* of sin. Indeed, "even babes in Christ," Wesley proclaimed, "are in such a sense perfect, or 'born of God'...as, first, not to commit sin."⁷ Wesley, of course, could be forgiven his error due to the psychological naivete of his age, but modern people could not.

Other factors to be considered on this head include the cultural predominance of Calvinism in the United States, especially among Evangelicals. Accordingly, the phrase "we sin in thought, word, and deed every day" flows much too easily from the lips not only of Calvinists, who regrettably attempt to provide sophisticated theological support for such notions, but also from the lips of holiness folk who are a part of a tradition which has taught them otherwise. Granted Calvinists and Wesleyans have different conceptions of sin which must be factored in (and several Calvinists are indeed living holy lives) but even after this is done, the broader soteriological effects of the cultural predominance of Calvinism remain much the same: many American Evangelicals, and now some Holiness folk as well, assume that they can *remain* in the graces of the new birth and regeneration, despite the *ongoing* and enslaving presence of sin. Consequently, professions of the liberty entailed even in the new birth, of *actual* freedom from the *power* of sin (glorifying Christ for the work that he has done) are now treated as quaint at best; hypocritical at worst. And silence on these matters is deemed the highest sanctity of all.

THE PROBLEMS OF PAST ABUSE

Fourth, holiness folk have, perhaps, overreacted to some very real problems and abuses within the tradition such that they are now, "throwing out the holiness baby with the modern bath water," as Douglas Strong has so articulately expressed it in his March 1999 Wesleyan Theological Society presidential address. Reacting to the tradition of the "jump and stir" of revivalism, and to the "instantaneousness" and decisiveness of altar calls, some holiness scholars have championed gradualist soteriologies where the Christian life is viewed almost exclusively as a *process* of incremental changes without any crucial events, and where John Wesley's intricate balance of process and instantaneousness has been regrettably lost. In particular, justification, regeneration, and entire sanctification have all been redefined and incrementalized (all changes are ones of degree) such that the cruciality of such lofty graces is often misprized, at times even repudiated. Moreover, when a gradualist, processive, reading is brought to bear on Christian perfection, itself, it can only emerge, once again, as maturity, as an adult Christian state, and not at all as a present possibility for the very young among us. In short, there are some theologies currently in place which *may* result in the loss of the next generation for holiness. Indeed, some of the more theologically astute among us have already begun to realize that gradualist soteriologies are actually incapable of carrying all of the theological meaning enjoyed in traditional holiness life and thought.

Interestingly enough, some of the most vocal champions of gradualist readings of

Wesley's soteriology have been equally vocal in deprecating conversion and the role that it plays in Christian life. During the 1980s and 1990s, for example, wave after wave of debunkers passed through Wesley studies, first deconstructing Aldersgate (it was referred to as a "non-event" by Theodore Jennings, for example)⁸ and then, not content with this, they proceeded to deconstruct the reality of conversion itself. Indeed, theologically speaking, things are in such a regrettable state in United Methodism (which contains many holiness folk) right now that my own and subsequent generations might have lost even the wherewithal to articulate a theology of conversion. And we wonder why the holiness movement is dead?

A CLIMATE HOSTILE TO TESTIMONY

Fifth, there is some very odd theological reasoning found among younger holiness scholars, and it is actually inimical to the reception of genuine heart-felt testimonies. To illustrate, almost any lofty witness to what the empowering grace of God can do is judged to be an instance of spiritual pride, a lack of humility, as if the perversions of such a witness in the past must now ever constitute its current expressions. Given this sort of reasoning, what is far more preferred in some holiness circles is not a bold witness to the liberating powers of the gospel or to the graces of entire sanctification, but rather a detailed chronicle of descent into sin along with a rendering of existential, participatory knowledge of the lingering effects of subtle, but no less real, bondages. Such honesty (which is, of course, always valuable) is mistakenly considered true Christian humility and is judged to be an instance of "real sanctity." Like the mental patients in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* it is not wise to tell the psychiatrist something so bold as that you are healed, but only that you're making progress, that you're a little bit better today than you were yesterday.

The problem with this theological reasoning is that it fails to recognize that there are two kinds of humility, not one. The first is associated with sin and repentance, and it must be carefully distinguished from the second which alone is called true Christian humility, as Harald Lindstrom correctly points out.⁹ That is, the former disposition of the heart occurs in the context of conviction and accusation and is often marked by fear of God, regret over past sins, and guilt. The latter disposition of true Christian humility, however, which takes rise *after* (or concomitant with) justification and the new birth, grows out of a sense of "being loved and reconciled by God."¹⁰ Simply put, the one grows out of consciousness of sin; the other out of a consciousness of love. And it is precisely this latter humility, so deep and rich, which forms the basis for unabashed testimony as what the grace of God can do. Here Christ, not the self, is glorified by means of this bold and faithful witness. But some, however, are apparently no longer willing to hear such witness or to add their voices to such praise.

Moreover, some leaders, oddly enough, have actually grown tired of the testimony that Christ has set believers free from the guilt, power and being of sin, and they erroneously contend that much "more" is being said if believers would *simply* focus on the love of God in their witness. Granted the liberties of the gospel can be discussed in both a negative and a positive fashion, as freedom *from* sin and freedom *to* love, but this last expression by itself does not, as is mistakenly supposed, say "*more*" than the first. Indeed, to be free from the guilt, power and being of sin *is* to be entirely sanctified, to be washed

and renewed, and to be in a proper *relation* with the Most High. Put another way, such language is simply another way of affirming that one does not commit sins either of *omission* or commission, that one loves the Lord with all of one's heart, mind, soul, and strength and one's neighbor as oneself. Again, if sin is a "missing of the mark," then freedom from sin, from all that separates us from the holy love of God, is the very actualization of our high calling and purpose in Jesus Christ. Therefore, to focus exclusively, or nearly so, on freedom to love, without also considering what believers are free *from*, is to remove the normative context of the moral law (which illuminates what freedom from sin means) from consideration. Such love, then, may in the end be informed not by the gracious liberty of the gospel, but by mere sentimentality and wishful thinking. As there is "cheap grace," so is there "cheap love."

INTELLECTUAL DISSIPATION

Sixth, the holiness movement is dead because its children have "come of age," not only because they have studied at some of the "finest" educational institutions in the world, receiving impressive terminal degrees and doing significant postdoctoral work, but also because they are now very much a part of the intellectual cultural establishment and there is much at stake. For some, the setting of the academy, with its emphasis on objectivity and professional distance, is far more congenial than that of the church. While education is clearly valuable, a tremendous resource which the church so badly needs, and while I would be one of the last people to develop an anti-intellectualist thesis, I must nevertheless go on to observe that *some* key leaders in holiness denominations have, in reality, substituted the thought of some particular philosopher or theological guru for divine revelation itself. Here, in other words, human creativity, the intricate projects of the human imagination, are given as much if not more weight than the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Here humble, holy, sacrificial love (emphasis on relation) most often suffers, a love which was at the very heart of the holiness movement.

ACCOMMODATION AND COMPROMISE

Seventh, some liberal Protestant theologians at the beginning of the twentieth century offered greater legitimacy for their work (at least in the judgment of the secular cultural elites to whom they were appealing) by trimming the Christian faith of "superstition," the supernatural, and personal (read "individualistic") piety. Part of the concern here among these modern theologians was to continue to be relevant and therefore to enjoy, at least in some measure, a cultural power that they rightly sensed was already slipping away. What remained after this process of modernization or demythologization was a core of social ethics that looked remarkably similar to the ethics, and political judgments, of the elites to whom the original appeal had been made. Here the gospel was defined (or redefined) almost exclusively in terms of social ethics such that the purpose, indeed the telos, of the ministry of Jesus, himself, as well as that of the church were deemed to be, for the most part, the betterment of the *social* conditions of the disadvantaged.

Though the amelioration of the plight of the poor clearly is a part of the gospel, what was lost in this modernizing process was the "embarrassing" (read "supernatural") depth dimension of the Christian faith, that faith in Jesus Christ radically transforms within such that the

dispositions of the heart become remarkably and decisively holy and new. In this latter context, which was in danger of being lost, the motivation as well as the goals of ministry were viewed not so much in terms of abstract notions of ideology or justice, but in terms of fostering holy love, which includes, of course, justice and proper relations, among persons as well as within the broader society. Indeed, it was John Wesley himself who more than two centuries ago pointed out the error of thinking that the very purpose of the Christian faith was merely or largely social betterment. Accordingly, in a letter to Mrs. Bishop on June 17, 1774, Wesley pointed out that "the regulation of social life is the one end of religion, is a strange position indeed. I never imagined any but a Deist would affirm this."¹¹

Later in the twentieth century, some of the same intellectuals of the holiness movement who had come of age and who had experienced repeated frustration, even alienation, earlier in holiness churches now looked to the cultural and theological accommodations made by liberalism with renewed appreciation. And so a second, less extensive, phase of legitimization and accommodation set in, this time within the holiness movement itself. This change appears to have been largely a second order phenomenon in the sense that an accommodation was made to an already existing accommodation, and to a dying one at that.

Though some of these holiness historians and theologians (well placed in holiness institutions by the way) were reluctant to classify themselves as "liberal," they nevertheless developed themes congenial to theological liberals and tended to be embarrassed, at least in some circles, about their more humble holiness roots, both socially and intellectually. The irony of all of this was not lost on some observers who realized the contradiction entailed as scholars on the one hand deprecated the cruciality of inward religion (or at least downplayed it) and championed the rights of the marginalized—sometimes in some very strident ways—while on the other hand they became increasingly embarrassed, both personally and professionally, when reminded about their own more modest holiness heritage. Indeed, the holiness tradition has been, for the most part, a lower to lower-middle class phenomenon, invigorated by waves of revivalism, and determined to emphasize the importance of social reform out of and informed by nothing less than the gracious transformation, the conversion, which occurs in Christ by means of the Spirit, the very beginning of holy love. But what was held together by the fathers and mothers of an earlier generation was soon dropped by sons and daughters of a later one.

PROGRAMMATIC ISSUES

Eighth, though it may seem, at first glance, as if the death of the holiness movement in North America was brought about simply by theological or spiritual malaise, other programmatic, more structural, elements need to be considered as well.

For one thing, the way many holiness folk coalesced and began to form separate, discreet denominations (whether they "came out" or were "pushed out") during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ironically enough, planted the seeds of subsequent demise. In my reckoning, the holiness movement thrived precisely when it was "persecuted," when it remained within larger bodies to which it bore painful, and at times, annoying witness. Remove that larger, more "catholic" context and you have a prescription for insularity, provincialism, and, unfortunately, decline.

Though my next observation may at first sight seem to be a theological and not a programmatic one, it is actually the latter. Here I am not initially concerned with the *content* of theology (though this is clearly important as well), but with how that theology is structured or “packaged” so that it can communicate the truths of the tradition. Thus, teaching about sanctification, the inculcation of holy love, is often presented simply as “holiness.” People then begin to identify as “holiness” folk; zealous pastors preach “holiness” sermons, and energetic theologians write books on “holiness,” from biblical, historical, and theological points of view. And in their late-night thoughts some theologians even begin to wax eloquently and to imagine that holiness is the very “substance” of God. The problem here, though it is often subtle, is that holiness may in time be considered apart from the *love* of God.

Though Wesley, himself, often used the simple term “holiness” he always meant by it, certainly after 1725, nothing less than the *holy love* of God. Indeed, apart from its “tension” with love, holiness quickly (and almost inevitably) devolves into sociological and subcultural components, that is, into the stuff of a very human-made religion. Moreover, with its heightened emphasis on separation from the “other,” holiness religion may end up glorifying a particular social and cultural ethos—which is actually the reflection of its own social location. Soon the taboos are trotted out, disciplines are packed with strictures, and legalism continues apace. In this phase, some folk may even begin to conclude that they are “holy” precisely because all the taboos are kept. In the worst cases, some unfortunates will begin to enjoy, even to relish, the spiritual distance between them and their neighbors, those for whom Christ died.

In light of this dynamic, holiness folk must agree from the outset, in preaching, teaching, and discipline, *never* to consider holiness apart from the love of God or to consider the love of God apart from holiness (the error of “sentimental” liberalism). This is a structural, programmatic failure. Simply put, the tracks down which theology and life will move are distorted from the very start.

LACK OF LEADERSHIP AND VISION

Ninth, during the nineteenth century the holiness movement enjoyed the capable and steady leadership of Daniel Steele, Phoebe Palmer and Asa Mahan. In the twentieth century, Dennis Kinlaw, Melvin Dieter, Timothy Smith, William Greathouse, and Mildred Wynkoop as well as others provided both clear direction and an engaging vision for holiness people. But when one surveys the current generation of holiness leadership, those in their forties and fifties (with but very few exceptions), one cannot help but be less optimistic—even fearful—about the future. Indeed, things are in such an unfortunate state right now that many holiness leaders no longer see even the need for a distinct holiness witness as revealed in such comments as “there are just as many sinners in the holiness churches as in Lutheran churches” (or in any other denomination for that matter). Now while there are surely saints and sinners in all Christian denominations, and while some people live better than their theologies allow, holiness folk *should* enjoy a more gracious liberty, and one that they are, therefore, eagerly willing to proclaim to the broader church.

But if it is indeed true that there is little difference between members of mainline denominations and holiness folk in terms of sanctity, as some leaders suppose, then it must surely be asked what is the point of the holiness movement in the first place and

what has become of the *mission* of spreading "scriptural holiness across the land? Unfortunately, here we have lost not only our vision, but also our purpose, the very reason God had raised us up in the first place. John Wesley once said, "Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven upon earth."¹² Can we find a hundred such preachers among us? Can we find even fifty?

A RAY OF HOPE

Despite such a gloomy prognosis, there are actually some signs of hope. Some minority voices, theologically speaking, that have been marginalized, ridiculed and stereotyped in the past, are now being heard and taken seriously in the Wesleyan Theological Society and in the Wesley studies section of the American Academy of Religion as well as in various organs of publication, including journals and publishing houses. Indeed, the *pretense* that all is well in holiness circles is effectively being dispelled. What will be the outcome of all of this remains to be seen. What is clear at this point is that the holiness movement constitutes a precious legacy. The problem, though, is that it must become more than a legacy. That is, it must once again become a vital, pulsing movement, transforming both the church and the unchurched alike, and inviting all to enjoy the very highest graces, nothing less than the wonder and beauty of holy love.

NOTES

1. Keith Drury, "The Holiness Movement is Dead," *Holiness Digest* 8, no. 1 (Winter 1994), pp. 13-15.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 13.
4. Richard S. Taylor, "Why the Holiness Movement Died," *God's Revivalist and Bible Advocate* 111, no. 2 (March 1999), pp. 6-27.
5. Cf. William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 1-23.
6. Cf. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, *The Works of John Wesley, Bicentennial ed.*, vol. 20: Journals and Diaries III (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), p. 39, and Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of Rev. John Wesley*, 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1829-1831), reprinted Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978, 12:333.
7. Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 1-4. *The Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 2:105.
8. Cf. Theodore W. Jennings Jr., "John Wesley Against Aldersgate," *Quarterly Review* 8 (Fall 1988): 3-22.
9. Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Wilmore, Ky.: Francis Asbury Publishing Co.), p. 114.
10. Ibid. Appropriately, Lindstrom explores these issues of humility and true Christian humility (and repentance after justification) under the broader heading of the "stages" in the Christian life.
11. Jackson, *Works* 13:29.
12. John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 6:272.

Vertical line on the right side of the page.

Horizontal line at the bottom of the page.

POST-SOVIET PROTESTANT THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: COME OF AGE?

MARK ELLIOTT

From not a single Evangelical seminary in the Soviet Union in 1986 to over 100 on its former territory today, and from no residential students to some 3,000 today—this has to rank as one of the more dramatic developments in leadership training in the history of Protestantism. The opportunity for a fresh appraisal of this phenomenon came with a conference of Protestant theological educators, held near Kyiv, Ukraine, 9-12 September 1996. Ninety-four delegates (64 from the former Soviet Union and 30 from the West) celebrated the graduation of nine seminarians from the first-ever Russian M.A. program in Protestant theological studies, a joint effort of Odessa Theological Seminary, St. Petersburg Christian University, and Donetsk Christian University. (See the *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 4 (Fall 1996), p. 14, for the names of candidates and titles of theses.) Delegates also witnessed substantive theological discussion, growing indigenous leadership, and the launching of a Protestant theological accrediting association with a wide-ranging, ambitious agenda.

Among indigenous conference participants, the average number of years of involvement in theological education was three—a startling illustration of the infancy of the movement. Nevertheless, Western observers who had attended the first such gathering in February 1993 in Moscow and the second in October 1994 in Oradea, Romania, commented on the rapid maturation and growing sophistication of the indigenous leadership.¹

One theme that seminary representatives frequently voiced was the need for close ties to the church. Peter Penner of St. Petersburg Christian University (SPCU), in his "Current Analysis of Theological Education," stated,

Seminaries need to work with the church. The question is how closely. At first, St. Petersburg Christian University did not emphasize church relations. Then we

Mark Elliott is director of global studies at the Beeson Center, Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama.

THE ASBURY THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

FALL 1999 • VOL. 54 • NO. 2

came to understand that we exist for the church; the church does not exist for the seminary. Now, the president of the Evangelical Christian-Baptist Union of Russia is on the SPCU board. Now we emphasize student work in churches and church recommendations for students. SPCU has had conferences for the pastors of its students and has asked pastors how SPCU can help students not to become arrogant.

Aleksei Melnichuk, Donetsk Christian University, made similar points in his review of "Issues in Church/School Relationships," as did Anatoly Prokopchuk of Kyiv Evangelical Christian Baptist (ECB) Seminary: "Be close to the church. It doesn't matter what the level of education of the school. Independent schools produce graduates 'who are on the street' with no church to go to. ECB churches may not accept these graduates."

As the present massive level of Western assistance subsides over time, the new seminaries will become ever more aware of their need for close ties with local churches, not only for reasons of placement, but for financial support. At present, however, church contributions to theological education in the former Soviet Union are quite limited. As Aleksei Melnichuk noted, many churches are in building programs that are stretching their capacities to the limit. In addition, a lack of a tradition of stewardship and current chaotic economic conditions spell limited financial support from believers for local churches, much less for more distant seminaries. At present, for example, the vast majority of Evangelical churches do not support full-time ministers. All but six of 75 ECB pastors in the Odessa region have secular employment. Gregori Kommendant, president of the Ukrainian ECB, hopes half of the churches under his charge will support their own pastors by the year 2000. Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries sponsored a first-ever Protestant conference on stewardship in Moscow, 24-26 October 1996, but more such efforts will be needed.

Peter Penner noted that "Many schools live just one day at a time. Many administrators just settle immediate crises." One of these crises that received attention at the Kyiv consultation concerned enrollment. Pressure is mounting to enlarge student bodies, not to increase revenue from quite modest tuition, but at least partly to justify each school's existence in the eyes of Western benefactors. As a result, schools increasingly are competing for students. Two Western doctoral candidates currently researching post-Soviet Protestant theological education have shared with this reporter that academic standards have suffered in the process. Peter Konovalchik, president of the Russian ECB federation, contended, quite justifiably, that the need now is not to start more schools, but to strengthen existing ones.

In a debriefing session for Western participants, Jack Graves, Director of Research for Overseas Council for Theological Education, observed that "schools need quickly to move from dependency to financial independence for there to be true independence." Indigenous speakers in general sessions made the same argument. Anatoly Prokopchuk, for example, urged self-sufficiency: "We thank our brothers from the West for help. But now we need to think of supporting ourselves. And our Western brothers will rejoice, too."

One reason Protestant leaders in the former Soviet Union fear the present overwhelming Western influence upon theological education, quietly if not publicly, is theological. Although the issue did not emerge in plenary sessions, they do consider a minority of Western instructors to be liberal. Especially troubling to them are those guest professors

who they feel question the authority of Scripture. Also, Protestant leaders recognize that a majority of Western instructors are Calvinists, which is not to their liking. Anatoly Prokopchuk put it bluntly: "We have a problem with liberalism and Calvinism." Aleksei Melnichuk explained it this way:

Seminary graduates often criticize [Russian and Ukrainian] Baptist traditions. Western teachers are seen as the source of much of this criticism. Students will ask a Western professor about eternal security and students will accept the Western professor's eternal security teaching over their home pastors' freewill position that is not argued in an educated manner.

It should be noted that the majority of Western Evangelicals active in post-Soviet ministry are Calvinists, although most do not emphasize the fact and many incorrectly presume, consciously or unconsciously, that *Evangelical* and *Reformed* are synonyms. That Wesleyan-Arminian and Pentecostal interpretations may equally be deemed Evangelical often does not occur to Calvinists in the West. For their part, a majority of Slavic Evangelicals, Baptists as well as Pentecostals, are Arminian, although they typically do not use this term. Naturally, this difference gives rise to considerable tension, and nowhere more quickly than in Western assistance to post-Soviet seminaries.

Slavic Protestant leaders contend not only with Western theological influences that they consider harmful, but they also contend in their own ranks with strong anti-intellectual currents that view all theological education with suspicion. Pavel Damiani, a Christian publisher from St. Petersburg, noted that many pastors still feel that the only book their congregations need to read is the Bible. Sergei Rybikov of the Christian Missionary Union in south Russia reiterated the "negative view of education" in many churches. Peter Penner shared that he had written ninety pages defending the spiritual value of instruction and study. In contrast, the opening address of the conference by a Baptist elder statesman launched a thinly-veiled attack on study in the West, modern Bible translations, and "intellectualism" in general. While one might be disappointed with this lack of understanding of the life of the mind in the service of Christendom, it is sensible to be wary of Western theological education for Slavic seminarians en masse, and it is sensible to be wary of unwarranted prestige that can lead believers to prefer professors over pastors. Dallas Seminary professor Mark Young noted, "If [seminary] teachers have little contact with churches and pastors, then most students will want to be professors, not pastors." One Western doctoral candidate surveying post-Soviet seminarians has already documented an alarmingly widespread preference among Slavic seminarians for teaching over preaching.

Yet concern over Western influences in seminaries is not only theological; it also is political. Some leaders fear the loss of control as Western notions of democratic procedure and freedom of speech seep into the consciousness of newly-educated pastors. One delegate at the conference, fearing that church members might contract false notions from various new publications, asked the head of Ukrainian Evangelical Christians-Baptists, "Is it possible to control the literature we are printing?" When Rev. Kommandant responded that today it is impossible, applause followed. He continued, "What fruit is sweet? What is prohibited? Some books should be burned, but we cannot do that.

Freedom is freedom." At the same time, Russian ECB president Konovalchik volunteered a more traditional attitude: "We need some control. For example, I saw a Pentecostal book in a Baptist kiosk. We cannot trust all publishing houses."

Konovalchik's negative reference to Pentecostals leads to a shortcoming of a conference billed as interdenominational: 76.5 percent of participants were Evangelical Christians-Baptists but Pentecostals, arguably as large as the ECB in the former Soviet Union, accounted for only five percent. On the one hand, conference sponsors, Overseas Council for Theological Education and Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, sincerely desired broad representation from all Evangelical denominations and all Pentecostal seminaries and Bible institutes received invitations. On the other hand, the indigenous organizing committee for the conference and the program itself included no Pentecostals. This reporter learned after the conference, Pentecostals perceived the function to be a Baptist undertaking and most apparently declined to participate as a result. While many Western observers at the conference were pained by various critical comments from Baptists about Pentecostals—not to mention about Calvinists—it must be noted, sadly, that Pentecostal disdain for non-Pentecostals in the former Soviet Union is at least as intense.

On a more positive note, after considerable discussion, the conference voted to establish a Protestant accrediting association that will be interdenominational rather than exclusively Baptist. In addition, lest the organizing committee be all ECB, Genadi Sergienko, a young professor from the Moscow ECB Seminary trained at Dallas Seminary, nominated Pentecostal Anatoly Gloukhovsky, who was duly included. Others named to the organizing committee were Aleksei Brinza, R. Kheibulin, Nikolai Kornilov, Aleksei Melnichuk, Fyodor Mogan, Peter Penner, Anatoly Prokopchuk, Vladimir Rialuzov, Sergei Rybikov, and Sergei Sannikov. The new Protestant theological association will seek affiliation with the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICEETE).

NOTES

1. The present report is a continuation of the author's study of the history of and current developments in Russian Protestant theological education: Mark Elliott, "Protestant Education in the Former Soviet Union," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 18 (January 1994): 14-22; and Mark Elliott, "Theological Education After Communism: The Mixed Blessing of Western Assistance," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 50 (Spring 1995): 67-73. For a Russian reprint, see: "Bogoslovskoe obrazovanie v postkommunisticheskiĭ period: polozhitel'nye i otritsatel'nye storony zapadnoi pomoshchi." *Put' bogopoznania*, no. 1 (1996): 17-25.

BELONGING TO GOD: THE QUEST FOR A COMMUNAL SPIRITUALITY IN THE POSTMODERN WORLD

STANLEY J. GRENZ

Need a job? Looking for a lover? Feng shui can help! boasted the advertisement in a New York paper. Through the ancient principles of feng shui (Chinese for "wind" and "water"), the ad promised, "you can change your environment and change your life." How? Nancy SantoPietro, the psychotherapist turned feng shui specialist who placed the ad, offered one example. She counsels people who are plagued by interpersonal problems to "hang a pink shui crystal on a nine-inch red string in your relationship corner."¹

THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT: PEOPLE ON A QUEST

Relationships... This topic routinely tops the list of concerns people voice today. Why? Perhaps because relationships have increasingly come to be viewed as the one antidote for a deeper longing, namely, the craving for a sense of purpose or meaning in a seemingly purposeless world. Especially today's younger adults (those whom Douglas Coupland has dubbed "Generation X") look to relationships to dispel what GenX writer Tom Beaudoin calls his peers' "intense sense of aloneness" nursed by their profound "anxiety about a lack of meaning in their lives"² and the "significant emptiness...silence, and...darkness" they feel.³ Indeed, people of various ages—albeit in somewhat differing ways—are embarking on a quest to attain this elusive dream. As the headline on the cover of a recent issue of Canada's leading news magazine, *Maclean's*, put it, "Mainstream North America searches for meaning in life."⁴

A Confused Quest. Where should we turn in the midst of our anxiety? Today people are plagued by uncertainty as to what they are in fact seeking, let alone where the goal of this search can be found. This uncertainty is evidenced in Alanis Morissette's award-winning song "All I Really Want" (1996). In the dishevelled lyrics, Morissette sifts through the competing desires she finds present within and around

Stanley J. Grenz is the Pioneer McDonald Professor of Theology and Ethics at Carey Theological College and Regent College.

THE ASBURY THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

FALL 1999 • VOL. 54 • NO. 2

her. Yet between the lines of seemingly disconnected and hopelessly superficial preferences is evidence that her genuine desires lie deeper. Living in a world of picky people, what Morissette really wants is patience and peace. Feeling herself knocked down and strung out, she longs for deliverance and some means "to calm the angry voice." Alone and frustrated by the apathy and flippancy of others, she desperately yearns for a soul-mate, a kindred spirit, someone who truly understands.

Equally confusing is the plethora of proposed remedies for our malaise. Driven by the consumer mentality indicative of contemporary society with its smorgasbord of options, dazzling array of proposals and chorus of discordant voices calling from every conceivable direction, today's seekers move en masse from fad to fad, following the crowd in a never-ending attempt to keep up with the latest "rage." Thus, North Americans gobble up the "how to" books pushed on Oprah's show and sign up for the latest therapy conferences that claim to provide the pathway to the realization of their vaguely formed hopes.

A *"Postmodern" Quest*. The new shape of the human quest is indicative of the demise of the modern world, constructed as it was upon the foundation of a deified science worshiped as the final arbiter of truth and the attendant elevation of the material as the sole dimension of existence. The twilight of modernism has given rise to a new outlook, the so-called postmodern ethos.

One subplot of an early episode of *Star Trek: Voyager* finds Kathryn Janeway musing to her second officer, Chakotay, how she senses an intense burden as the commander of a ship lost in space. Later her dutiful confidant offered a solution. Chakotay invited Janeway to join in an ancient ceremony that would put the captain in touch with her animal guide. The mantra he recited during the ritual expressed hope that "out there" might be "one powerful being" who could give the captain "the answers she seeks."

A *"Spiritual" Quest*. This cultural artifact illustrates one intriguing aspect of the postmodern situation. In a manner unprecedented in the late modern era, contemporary North Americans appear to be open to the spiritual dimension of life.⁵ People seem to have grown dissatisfied with what they consider to be the truncated, materialist focus indicative of the modern world. And as a result they are increasingly ready to search for answers beyond the realm of the material.

"Spirituality" is "in," however, precisely at the time when participation in traditional organized religion has nose-dived. Eight out of ten adult Canadians say they believe in God, eighty-two percent consider themselves to be "somewhat" or "very spiritual," and about half report that their lives have become more spiritual in the last several years.⁶ Nevertheless, less than 25% attend church regularly. The students in David Batstone's religion classes at the University of San Francisco offered a similar portrait. Although 80% claim that they are "not religious," the same percentage think of themselves as "spiritual."⁷ Tom Beaudoin puts a face on this statistic. "By the late 1980s," he reminisces about his late teenage years, "I was... alienated from official religion. Despite all this, I still considered myself unmistakably spiritual."⁸ He later explains the broader generational tendency he typified: "Xers take symbols, values, and rituals from various religious traditions and combine them into their personal 'spirituality.' They see this spirituality as being far removed from 'religion,' which they frequently equate with a religious institution."⁹

Spirituality is indeed "in." Words like "values," "soul" and "spiritual" are common par-

lance today, even among persons who care little about Christianity. This mood is evident in Joan Osborne's mid-1990s hit song, "One of Us." Picturing humankind as lost passengers on a bus headed nowhere, the lyrics raise the question as to whether God might be a co-traveller trying to find his way "back home" just as we are. But Osborne then asks if all this requires that we believe "in Jesus, the saints and all the prophets."

This, then, is the context in which we live. Ours is a "spiritual" age. The interest in the spiritual and the search for spirituality that has emerged as so important to the contemporary ethos has far-reaching implications for us as we seek to point those to whom God has called us to minister to the true well-spring of spiritual life. And it offers a hopeful context for thinking through what lies at the heart of Christian spirituality.

THE SPIRITUAL QUEST AS THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

In one sense, the current interest in spirituality is the contemporary, postmodern embodiment of the age-old human search for personal identity.

A successful professional in her late 30s, Mary had taken a leave of absence to attend seminary where she expected to find answers to the gnawing questions that kept emerging within her. At one point in her struggle, she requested an appointment with me. Thirty minutes into the session she blurted out, desperately attempting to hold back the tears: "I no longer know who I really am. And I am afraid that if I find out, there won't be a place for me."

Contemplating the vastness and majesty of the universe, the Hebrew psalmist declared in amazement, "what are mere mortals that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?" (Ps. 8:4). As the Psalm suggests, the quest for personal identity is an ancient one. Yet it is taking on a somewhat different form today. We are witnessing a shift in the focal point of the search. This shift involves a rethinking of what constitutes the human person.

The Modern Self. Whereas the Psalmist placed humans within the context of creation, in the modern era the human person was pried loose from creation, now understood as "nature." And in contrast to the Psalmist who viewed human identity in connection with our "home" within the created order, the modern response to the question of human identity came in the form of the construction of the self.

In the wake of the Enlightenment, many philosophers declared that lying at the core of what it means to be human is reason or rationality. Further, in their opinion rationality entailed being endowed with the ability to disengage from one's natural environment and social context, so as to be able to objectify the world. Disengagement from the objectified world formed the foundation for the modernist ideal: individual autonomy, understood as the ability to choose one's own purposes from within oneself apart from the controlling influence of natural and social forces.¹⁰ In this manner, the paradigmatic human became the "scientist," the one who observes, categorizes and tests hypotheses about the world,¹¹ together with the technician, the one who refashions the world to create a "home."

The elevation of individual autonomy led to an atomistic understanding of the social realm. This approach viewed society as a collection of autonomous, independent selves, each of whom pursues his (and sometimes her) own personally chosen ends. In short, the modern self is self-created and self-sufficient, the highly centered, "true inner person" per-

sisting through time and standing above the vacillations and shifting relationships that characterize day-to-day living.

The Postmodern Demise of the Self. Whatever else it may be, the postmodern ethos is marked by the rejection of—or even more strongly stated, the deconstruction of—the modern self. Postmoderns realize that rather than the disengaged, isolated observer who exists prior to the construction of society and thus forms the primary building block for the purely contractual social order, the human self is in some sense constituted by social relationships.

Postmodern thinkers routinely picture this engaged human self as a position in a vast web, a nexus, a point of intersection. The postmodern self is a bundle of fluctuating relationships and momentary preferences. In a fast-changing world, this image leads to a highly unstable, impermanent self. As the French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard observed, “each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before.”¹² Consequently, the postmodern condition entails the loss of the stability and consistency that characterized the self of the modern ideal. The modern self has given place to the decentered, fleeting self constructed in each moment of existence. Hence, the postmodern condition may be characterized as “psychic fragmentation”—to cite Fredric Jameson’s designation.¹³ And this splintering of the self into multiple subjectivities gives birth to what Johann Roten calls the “chaotic self,”¹⁴ which “attempts to absorb ‘alterity’ in all its forms to overcome separation and isolation, only to find itself in the end in a state of spiritual chaos.”¹⁵

The Postmodern Quest for a Self. The chaos of identity marks the contemporary spiritual quest. Viewed from this perspective, postmodern spirituality entails the chaotic self that emerged from the deconstruction of the autonomous, self-positing, centered self of modernity seeking some semblance of identity beyond the ever fleeting “now” of existence. As a nexus, a bundle of relationships, the postmodern self looks to relationships for identity.¹⁶ And this relationally based identity has a narrative character. To cite Lyotard again, “Even before he is born, if only by virtue of the name he is given, the human child is already positioned as the referent in the story recounted by those around him, in relation to which he will inevitably chart his course.”¹⁷

Communitarians theorize that we view ourselves, others and the world from a specific perspective. At the heart of this perspective is a set of basic categories, beliefs or fundamental ways of speaking, which together comprise what we may call our “interpretive framework.” Through this interpretive framework we experience, make sense of, and speak about ourselves and the world we inhabit. This interpretive framework is especially crucial to personal identity formation, for it provides the categories through which we “tell our story” and thereby organize the diverse aspects of our lives into what we see as a meaningful whole. But the plot line by means of which we organize the isolated events of our lived history is the borrowed plot—the paradigmatic narrative—we derive from the social group (or community of reference) in which we participate.¹⁸ In short, my sense of who I am is determined to a great extent by the group of which I am a member.¹⁹ My acceptance of this community narrative marks my participation in the social group and forms the basis of my sense of personal identity as a member of the community, which in turn provides me with at least a fleeting sense of “home.”

Modern sociologists suggest that religion often plays a crucial role in this process. Writing in 1966, Thomas O'Dea, for example, declared,

Individuals, by their acceptance of the values involved in religion and the beliefs about human nature and destiny associated with them, develop important aspects of their own self-understanding and self-definition. Also, by their participation in religious ritual and worship, they act out significant elements of their own identity. In these ways, religion affects individuals' understanding of *who they are* and *what they are*.²⁰

Similarly, Kingsley Davis noted two decades earlier that a religious community facilitates identity formation by connecting the individual with something transcendent: "religion gives the individual a sense of identity with the distant past and the limitless future. It expands his ego by making his spirit significant for the universe and the universe significant for him."²¹ More recently, thinkers such as Peter Berger have argued that all transcendent visions lying at the foundation of human societies are in a sense religious.²²

On the basis of insights such as these, we can affirm the tendency of people today to understand their search for identity as a spiritual quest. In seeking some reference point beyond their own fleeting selves from which to find meaning for their lives they are "religious," even though they may at the same time shun organized religion. In short, postmodern spirituality is the chaotic postmodern self seeking an identity in relationships with others as co-participants in a social group that is the bearer of a paradigmatic narrative.

But the question remains, What—if anything—can provide the *telos* of the spiritual quest of the postmodern self? What community narrative—if any—offers the answer to the often unacknowledged desire for a semblance of permanency the postmodern self seeks? More specific to our purpose, How can Christian faith best respond to the postmodern self and the contemporary focus on spirituality?

THE GOAL OF THE HUMAN QUEST: BELONGING TO GOD

For the first piece of this puzzle, we turn to the fifth-century church theologian Augustine. Augustine spoke for the entire Christian tradition when he concluded from his own spiritual odyssey, "Thou hast made us for thyself. Therefore, our hearts are restless until they find rest in thee, O God."²³ Christians believe that God is the *telos* of the human quest. But how can we unpack this conviction within the contemporary context?

The Postmodern Quest for God. Douglas Coupland, the best-selling writer who coined the designation "Generation X," perhaps inadvertently provided a contemporary reformulation of Augustine's conclusion. In his intriguing, postmodern novel *Life After God*, the author capsulizes the pilgrimage of the first generation raised "after God"—those who have grown up this side of the demise of the cultural dominance of Christianity and yet find themselves yearning for some sense of the presence of God. Coupland's literary journey comes to a climax with the author baring his own soul. For one brief moment he has found an openness of heart that he doubts he will ever achieve again. Speaking from the depth of his soul he voices an unexpected confession:

My secret is that I need God—that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need

God to help me give, because I no longer seem to be capable of giving; to help me be kind, as I no longer seem capable of kindness; to help me love, as I seem beyond being able to love.²⁴

Coupland's confession finds echo in Tom Beaudoin's observation. He looks at the pervasiveness of sexuality found in pop culture, for example, and concludes, "How deeply GenX desires God!"²⁵

The postmodern interest in God is often sparked as well by experiences of the miraculous, that is, by events that defy explanation—a category formerly ruled out of court by the scientism of modernity. The widely followed TV series, *The X-Files*, which boasts a faithful audience of 20 million viewers has repeatedly broached this theme. One episode featured Fox Mulder and Dana Scully investigating reports of persons who supposedly carried the stigmata (or Christ's crucifixion wounds) in their bodies. The claimants turned out to be hoaxes, except for a boy whose life Scully, the scientific skeptic of the duo, saved through a series of seemingly coincidental events. Shaken by this, the lapsed Catholic visited the confessional booth and confided to the priest that this experience had awakened in her a fear. "I am afraid that God is speaking," she poignantly declared, "but no one is listening."

From the perspective of Christian theology, the contemporary quest for spirituality, reflecting as it does the desire for personal identity together with the valuing of relationships, is ultimately the search for God. As Augustine and Beaudoin concluded, and pop culture icons like Coupland and Scully evidence, we long for an identity that only God can give through a relationship that only God can fulfill. We are searching for our true identity, which according to the New Testament is God's gracious gift, freely given to us through an unimaginable relationship—becoming God's own children. In short, the goal of our quest for spirituality is a "homecoming," a coming home to God, wherein lies our true identity.

This observation suggests that one of the key theological tasks in the postmodern context is to think through what it means to proclaim that the God of the Bible is the *telos* of our human desire for spirituality. Our challenge is to articulate and to live out the belief that life in relationship with God constitutes "true spirituality," to borrow Francis Schaeffer's descriptor.²⁶

God as the Goal of Christian Spirituality. At the heart of the Bible is the narrative of God acting to bring humans into the fullness of relationship—the true spirituality—that is the goal of our existence. Christians are convinced that coming home to God is the lasting source of personal identity, the answer to the quest of the postmodern self.

Occupying center stage in the personal identity-conferring aspect of the biblical salvation drama is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the one who authors new, spiritual life in us and in this manner brings us through Jesus Christ into relationship with the one whom Jesus called "Father" (John 14:16-23). The New Testament writers refer to this Spirit-led process as "regeneration" (Titus 3:5), a word that carries the metaphorical idea of being "born anew" or "born again" (John 3:1-16). As the agent of a spiritual birth the Spirit mediates to us a special relationship with God. Through the Spirit we become God's spiritual offspring—God's children (John 1:12-13). This new status allows us to enjoy the most intimate fellowship possible. In fact, according to Paul, the indwelling Spirit brings us to address God with the same name of endearment that Jesus himself spoke—"Abba" (Rom.

8:15; Gal. 4:6). Consequently, in causing us to be born into God's family, the Spirit brings us to share in the relationship Jesus enjoyed with the one he called "Father." That is, we participate in Jesus' own sonship, for we are co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

The Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner has argued convincingly that the interplay of the three trinitarian persons in salvation history offers us a window into the eternal divine life. "Rahner's rule"—the principle that "the economic trinity is the immanent trinity"—suggests that the basis of the dynamic evident in our salvation (our participation in Jesus' relationship with his heavenly Father) lies in the eternal dynamic of the triune God. Our salvation is the outworking of the perichoretic dance of the trinitarian persons.

Since the patristic era, theologians have taught that at the heart of this eternal dynamic is the relationship between the first and second trinitarian persons. Throughout all eternity, the Father loves the Son, and the Son reciprocates the Father's love. Actually, this is the theological meaning of the language "Father" and "Son," for in ancient cultures, the son was the heir, the one upon whom the father lavishes all his wealth.

The entire drama of creation, in turn, flows out of—or is the overflowing of—the eternal relationship the Father shares with the Son. More specifically, as is suggested by Jesus' remark in what is called his "high priestly prayer," God's purpose in creating the world arises out of the Son's desire that others see—that is, know experientially—"the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world" (John 17:24). The Son desires co-inheritors of the wealth his Father bestows on him eternally.

This provides the clue as to why the new birth brings us to participate in the divine love relationship in the position of the Son. Like the Son who eternally receives the Father's love, we too are the recipients of the unbounded love of God the Father. As a result, we are enabled to love God in return, after the pattern of the Son's reciprocating the divine love that has its genesis in the Father's love. As John the Apostle put it, "We love...because [God] first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

We must take this a step farther, however. As Augustine noted, the love the Father shares with the Son is concretized in the Spirit, the third trinitarian person who "proceeds" eternally from the Father and the Son, or perhaps better stated, proceeds from the Father *through* the Son. The love binding the Father and the Son eternally, the divine Spirit, in turn, is sent into the world to complete the divine plan. The Spirit's goal is to bring us to share in the fellowship the Son enjoys with the Father. To this end, the Spirit places us "in Christ," to cite Paul's favorite designation for our new status as believers (e.g., Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1:30; 2 Cor. 1:21; 5:17-19; 12:19; Eph. 1:13). As those who are "in Christ" (and hence "in the Son") we come "home" to the divine life the Father intends for us in the Son, for in Christ, we are the recipients of the eternal love the Father pours out on the Son. In short, the Spirit is God at work, guiding us to our home within the divine life the Father freely shares with us in the Son.

The indwelling Spirit is able to bring us to participate in the eternal relationship the Son enjoys with the Father, because this relationship is who the Spirit in fact is. The Spirit is the personal concretization of the love the Father showers on the Son and the Son reciprocates to the Father. For this reason, when the Spirit indwells us—when we participate in the Spirit—we participate through the Spirit in the relationship the Son enjoys with the Father, as the co-heirs with the Son of the Father's love for the Son. Because we partici-

pate in the divine life in the place of the eternal Son, we truly are the beloved children of our heavenly Father. This identity—being God’s beloved children and being named by God (Rev. 2:17; 3:12)—that God freely bestows on us in the Son by the Spirit marks the fulfillment of our deepest longings and provides the *telos* of our quest for “home.”

While this is the central aspect of the story, it is not the entire story.

THE FOCUS OF THE HUMAN QUEST: BELONGING TO THE COMMUNITY

One of the most popular TV programs of the 1990s, the sit-com *Friends*, centers on a small group of GenXers who share two apartments across the hall from each other. Through thick and thin, good times and bad, these friends laugh with each other, hurt for each other and support one another. But above all the friendship they share gives meaning to their lives. The central message of the series is captured in program’s theme song, “I’ll Be There for You,” which expresses candidly the GenX experience, namely, that the reality of life is a far cry from our anticipations. What the GenXer is experiencing is a joke of a job, a hopeless financial situation and a love life that’s DOA. The chorus, however, expresses the antidote for the aloneness, suffering and brokenness of life. Each member of the little circle of friends promises always to be “there” for the other, because—to cite the last line of the song—“you’re there for me, too.”

In this way, the sitcom offers a GenX response to what Tom Beaudoin sees as the most fundamental question of his generation: “Will you be there for me?” According to Beaudoin, this query touches all aspects of life: “We ask this of our selves, bodies, parents, friends, partners, society, religions, leaders, nation, and even God.” Why? In his words, “The frailty that we perceive threatening all of these relationships continually provokes us to ask this question.”²⁷

Identity in Relationships. The popularity of *Friends* takes us back once again to the insight that we are fundamentally social creatures. In our quest to discover what we really want, we eventually turn away from things to people. Ultimately, we hope to find what can satisfy the deep yearning within us—the yearning to find the place where we can belong, and we hope to discover it in relationships with others. And this leads us to seek out friendships that we hope can provide us with the sense of “belonging” we crave.

Viewed from a Christian perspective, this “turn to relationships” is not misguided. In contrast to the popular misconception that reigned in late modernity, the emptiness—the “homelessness” we feel inside us—can never be filled by the abundance of our possessions, but only in relationships. Indeed, relationships create “place” or “home.” People go astray, however, in the poor relationship choices they make. They often look for belonging in the wrong places. They mess up their lives by getting hooked up with the “wrong crowd”; they enter into relationships that promise a sense of belonging, but in the end only deepened the feeling of isolation. This, however, is not the main problem. Even the most delightful human relationships bring us up short, for as we noted already the ultimate goal of our quest is relationship with God. Because of our finitude and failure we simply cannot create ultimate “place” for each other; we cannot confer fullness of identity.

Once again, we are led to the conclusion that the ultimate source of genuine belonging is God, that our human quest for spirituality is ultimately the search for relationship with God. Yet, there is more to the story. Although we belong to God personally, we do

not receive divine grace and personal identity alone. Rather, belonging to God is closely linked to participation in community, more specifically, in the fellowship of Christ's disciples—the church.

Unfortunately, many people today—boomers and Xers alike—sense a great distance from the church. This situation was vividly portrayed in a series of installments of the comic strip "Betty." Out of curiosity, the couple's teenage son had begun to read the old family Bible. And as a result, he told his parents that he wanted to be baptized. Having no religious background whatever, the parents arbitrarily chose a church from the Yellow Pages. In the pre-baptism interview, the pastor informed them that for the sake of this event they should choose a godparent for their son. Faced with this daunting task, Betty realized that they knew no one who was even remotely religious. In fact, the only acquaintance Betty could recall who wore a cross was her husband's free-wheeling brother.

This widespread sense of disconnectedness is in part the result of the mistaken ideas about the church. One prevalent misconception is closely tied to the individualistic character of our society. Many people—including church people—mistake the church for an organization that a person can join at will, like a civil group or a country club. This is, in fact, a modernist understanding of the church. It treats the faith community as a conglomerate of self-contained individuals, an aggregate of modern selves.

Christ's Fellowship as our Community of Reference. Rather than a voluntary organization, the church is the specifically Christian community of reference. As such it plays a crucial role in the fulfillment of our quest for identity. In fact, it is with one another that we find our identity in God.

Belonging to God entails reinterpreting our personal narrative in accordance with a new plot line. Although the details vary from Christian to Christian, the basic plot of every Christian narrative is the same. Our stories speak about past failure and the reception of God's salvation through Jesus Christ. In these narratives we employ the biblical language of the "old life" and "the new" in keeping with Paul's statement, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor. 5:17). Hence, Christians resonate with the experience of hymn writer John Newton, who wrote the lyrics from images found in the New Testament: "I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see."

In the spiritual transformation we earlier referred to with the Johannine term "new birth," therefore, we come to see ourselves from a new vantage point—from the vista of the biblical narrative of God's grace in Christ, a vantage point we share together as participants in Christ's community. By reinterpreting our story in this manner we are accepting the story of the Christian fellowship. And as a consequence we have in fact become a part of this particular people.

The Church as a Community of Belonging. The church, then, functions as a "community of belonging." Its gospel message provides us with a new framework for viewing ourselves and the world. In addition, the Christian message embodies a new set of values, especially the values Jesus exemplified (e.g., peace, justice, patience but above all love), which we now desire to live out in our attitudes and actions. This purpose not only marks each of us individually as a disciple of Jesus, it unites us with each other as the community of disciples who share the same values and the same desire to live according to them.

Belonging to God also marks a loyalty to God in Christ. Loyalties, however, are never purely personal; an allegiance always links us with those who share it. By pledging our fidelity to Jesus, we become a part of a new community, the fellowship of all who declare "Jesus is Lord." Although this new allegiance is "vertical"—it binds us to God—it also inaugurates a "horizontal" bond. Allegiance to Christ unites all who share the same fundamental loyalty. But this bond is more than merely the sense of oneness that arises when we realize that we all "love Jesus" in our own way. Rather, our common love for God and our shared allegiance to Jesus forge in us a deep commitment to each other as well. We come to pledge, I will indeed "be there for you," knowing that you are "there for me too."

Ultimately forging us into a people in relationship is the Spirit's doing. Indeed, the Spirit is the one who brings us into relationship with God as our heavenly Father through Christ. But this relationship is not a private matter; it is not something we possess as isolated persons. Instead, because through the Spirit each of us is a child of God, we are related to each other. We are sisters and brothers—a family—a people in relationship. Further, we belong to God because the Spirit draws us out of our alienation into a reconciled relationship with God. However, the biblical writers clearly teach that our sinful estrangement from God taints our relationships on the human level as well. Reconciliation with God, therefore, sets in motion the Spirit's work in bringing about the healing of these relationships as well. In this process, the Spirit transforms us from a collection of individuals into a people or "one body," to use Paul's favorite language to refer to our corporate identity. Hence, the church is far more than an aggregate of "saved" individuals. Rather, we are a people committed to God and to one another. We are a community, a people among whom we find true belonging.

But we have not yet mentioned the most foundational dimension of the relationship between the faith community and our identity. As the Triune One, God is love. God's goal for us, in turn, is that we be the image of God, i.e., that we reflect the divine nature (love). According to the New Testament, the focus of this image-bearing function is humans-in-relationship and more specifically, the church as the foretaste of the new humanity. God wills that the church be a people who in the midst of the fallenness of the present show what God is like. God desires that in our relationships with each other we reflect God's own character and thus shine as the *imago dei*. And effecting the *imago dei* among us is the Spirit's work.

The attempt to understand this dynamic takes us back to the conclusion of the previous section. In the great mystery of belonging to God, the Spirit brings us as God's children to share in the relationship the Son enjoys with the Father. In this manner, we participate in the love that lies at the very heart of the triune God. Participation in God's eternal love, however, is not ours as individuals in isolation; it is a privilege we share. The Spirit's goal, in fact, is to mold us together into one people who participate jointly in the love of God and by our loving relationships show God's great love to all.

Consequently, in contrast to the partial expressions of community we find in TV sitcoms, the family formed by the Spirit is not merely a group of friends who happen to share common experiences or even who happen to speak a common language. Despite all its faults, the church remains a community of believers who, because they participate together in the Holy Spirit, share together in the eternal communion between the Father

and the Son. Ultimately this is why God calls us to be a people committed to each other. We are to be a community of divine love, a people bound together by the love present among us through God's Spirit. And as a result we find in relationship with each other true belonging, for together we belong to God in Christ our Lord through the Spirit who is among us.

In this sense, then, John Fawcett's old hymn expresses well the essence of the communal spirituality Christians enjoy together:

Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.²⁸

NOTES

1. Sharon Doyle Driedger, "Promise of Prosperity: Fad or Fact, Feng Shui is All the Rage," *Maclean's* 110/17 (April 28, 1997):56-57.
2. Tom Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), p. 24.
3. Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith*, p. 117.
4. *Maclean's* 107/41 (October 10, 1994).
5. See, for example, John Naisbitt, *Megatrends 2000*.
6. Sharon Doyle Driedger, "On a Higher Plane," *Maclean's* (Dec. 25, 1995-Jan. 1, 1996): 23.
7. Martin Wroe, "American Pie in the Sky," *Third Way* 18/7 (September 1995): 13.
8. Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith*, 14.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
10. Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 4.
11. Kenneth Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), pp. 40-41.
12. Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, p. 15.
13. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 90.
14. Johann C. Roten, "The Marian Counterpoint of Postmodern Spirituality," in *Divine Representations: Postmodernism and Spirituality*, ed. Ann W. Astell (New York: Paulist, 1994), pp. 113-14.
15. Roten, "The Marian Counterpoint of Postmodern Spirituality," p. 114.
16. See, for example, George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society*, ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934, 1974) 138-58.
17. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, *Theory and History of Literature* 10 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 15.
18. See, for example, Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd. ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 221.
19. See, for example, Robert N. Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 81.
20. Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 15.
21. Kingsley Davis, *Human Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), pp. 531, 532-33.
22. E.g., Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, Anchor Books edition (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969), pp. 3-51.
23. Augustine, *Confessions* 1.1, trans. Vernon J. Bourke, volume 21 of *The Fathers of the Church*, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari, eighty-one volumes (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1953), p. 4.

24. Douglas Coupland, *Life After God* (New York: Pocket Books, 1994), p. 359.
25. Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith*, p. 94.
26. Francis Schaeffer, *True Spirituality*.
27. Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith*, p. 140.
28. John Fawcett, "Blest Be the Tie that Binds."

POSTMODERNISM ON RACE AND GENDER: AN EVANGELICAL RESPONSE

DOUGLAS GROOTHUIS

The loaded term "postmodernism" covers a vast conceptual terrain, which I shall not attempt to traverse in this essay.¹ But one salient feature of various forms of postmodernist thought is the rejection of truth as that which corresponds to an objective and knowable reality. Truth is constructed, not discovered. Many postmodernists take this notion not to entail skepticism or nihilism, but instead to be an idea with great social potential for good. I will explore and critique this constructivist claim as it relates to race and gender. Then I will sketch a biblical perspective that answers the concerns for justice voiced by postmodernists, but which does so according to a biblical world view that honors and defends objective truth instead of dismissing it as intrinsically oppressive. I will also address and oppose the often-heard notion that evangelical egalitarianism is a covert and insidious form of postmodernism.

The postmodernist destabilization and redescription of truth often poses as a form of liberation from racial and gender oppression. "Truth," they claim, has been used to subjugate women and minorities by muting and marginalizing them according to categories that are really no more than reifications or social fictions. Foucault said, that

which categorizes the individual...attaches him to [an] identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him.... [This] is a form of power which makes individuals subjects.²

This superimposition of categories is what made blacks slaves; what made women second-rate citizens in a man's world; what fueled white imperialism worldwide for centuries; and what continues to hinder many minorities and women from appropriate social attainment. This purported "law of truth" stigmatizes homosexu-

Douglas Groothuis is an associate professor of philosophy at Denver Seminary in Denver, Colorado.

THE ASBURY THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

FALL 1999 • VOL. 54 • NO. 2

als, lesbians, and bisexuals as "abnormal," "deviant," and "sinful." Zygmunt Bauman tersely states what he takes to be the essential fault of this kind of thinking to be: "The target of certainty and of absolute truth was indistinguishable from the crusading spirit and the project of domination."³ The idea of a fixed truth about race and gender is the culprit, the engine of domination. As William Simon put it,

A quest for some seemingly permanent objective guide to human uses of gender tends to reveal little more than a history of historically specific human uses. The quest for a comprehensive species-wide "truth" only reveals a rapidly expanding pluralization of gender "truths."⁴

In the shadow of rigid and oppressive gender stereotypes and in the presence of various liberation movements striving to give voice to the concerns of the sexually marginalized, postmodernists believe that a new model of gender must be forged, one that realizes that "*gender identity* is not so much a thing as a continuing process of negotiation—not only between the individual and the world, but also between different constructions of the self."⁵ Anderson claims that the global women's movement is powerful precisely because it has made "one of the most fundamental and revolutionary discoveries people have ever made: That any society's customs are constructions of reality." Since they were invented under various conditions, they can be reinvented when the time comes.⁶ Women's gender identities are a process of construction and deconstruction, invention and reinvention, with little if any mooring to transcultural realities. Anderson grants that there are certain *sexual* givens of the male and female body, but norms of behavior and interpretations of sexual identity are matters of socially constructed *gender*.⁷ The culture gives and the culture takes away; nothing is permanent. "For the postmodernist, there is no true self."⁸

These postmodernist claims are daunting issues because of their complexity and consequence. In this article I will consider how the postmodernist view of race and gender is at odds with the biblical account of truth. However, I will also argue that the concept of reification, or social construction, can be a useful conceptual tool for analysis from a Christian perspective. Christians have often succumbed to the worship of ideological idols, or reifications, which have put women and minorities into false and constricting molds not justified by Scripture.

TRUTH, RACE, AND GENDER

Everyone should celebrate the fact that women and minorities are finding a more confident and courageous voice in Western cultures. Scripture affirms that all people are equally made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26), that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), that God deeply cares about those who have been oppressed and abandoned, that Jesus' disciples should not show favoritism (James 2:1), and that the gospel message must be brought to people of every racial and ethnic group (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8-9). However, giving voice to people who have been silenced or muffled does not entail that they will always speak the truth. Both oppressed and oppressors are, in the biblical vision, sinners in need of forgiveness and intellectual/moral reorientation by the Word and the Spirit. We all need large transfusions of objective truth from God to off-

set our proclivities to self-justification, exoneration, blame-shifting, stereotyping, and so on. But an objective orientation to truth is a vanishing value in postmodernity.

Thomas Sowell, a wise and rigorous social analyst, comments on the fact that readers thanked columnist Anna Quindlin for "speaking our truth" on a particular matter. "However lofty and vaguely poetic such words may seem, the cold fact is that the truth cannot become private property without losing its whole meaning." This is because truth "is honored precisely for its value in *interpersonal* communication." If we relativize truth to individuals or special interest groups, we would be more honest "to stop using the word or the concept and recognize that nobody's words could be relied upon anymore."⁹ By making truth the particular possession of oppressed groups we insinuate that "we should arbitrarily single out some group for different standards, according to the fashions of the times."¹⁰ When truth is reduced to a fashion statement, it has no binding force or persuasive power. The apprehension of truth decays when relativized to certain culturally anointed groups; only a pathetic plethora of opinions remains.

No one owns or controls *truth*, although *opinion* is shaped in many ways. Sowell cites John Adams' comment: "Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."¹¹ Truth is neither pigmented nor gendered. There is no "black truth" or "white truth" or "red truth" or "gay truth" or "women's truth" or "male truth." Truth is a property of only those propositions and beliefs that match objective reality; it matters not who utters them, where they are uttered, or why they are uttered. The real questions of moral order fall along these lines: Who is speaking the truth? What are the social and ethical consequences of truth and of falsity? What rights do all people deserve? How should particular groups be treated with love and justice? Everyone deserves to be heard; sadly, society has not always allowed women and minorities that voice, despite their First Amendment rights. Yet not all voices speak truthfully or reasonably. We must distinguish between the importance of free voices and truthful speech.

Arthur Schlesinger, a well-respected senior historian, worries that groups who have not been adequately recognized in history tend to engage in "compensatory history" in order to get even for past offenses at the expense of objectivity and dialogue. One writer he cites, John Henrik Clarke, claims that "African scholars are the final authority on Africa," as if pigment and culture dictated truth.¹² This is as wrong as saying that American scholars are the final authority on America. Some multicultural curricula approach history "not as an intellectual discipline but rather as a social and psychological therapy whose primary purpose is to raise the self-esteem of children from minority groups."¹³ The question of objective truth takes a back seat to narratives that supposedly empower beleaguered groups. But only the truth will ever set anyone free, not compensatory constructions lacking factual foundation and rational support.

Historian Gertrude Himmelfarb notes that the postmodernist writing of history makes it "an instrument for the struggle to power." The postmodernist "historian...is the bearer of the class/race/gender 'war'—or, rather 'wars.'"¹⁴ When history is used as a weapon to counterbalance past evils (real or supposed), it fails to focus on a real past and, instead, constructs a useable past for present political and cultural purposes. However, two wrongs don't make a right; and two lies don't make a truth. Postmodernist history-writing results in

a quandary; when the quest for objectivity is lost, and everyone is writing from a specific racial/ethnic/gender perspective radically different from and incommensurate with other perspectives, fairness and justice—professed postmodernist values—are necessarily ruled out.

Ironically, the postmodernist attempt to give a voice to the marginalized results in incompatible perspectives marginalizing other perspectives. As Himmelfarb notes, all “the ethnic, racial, religious, sexual, national, ideological, and other characteristics that distinguish people” are rendered divisive and serve only to politicize history. The “pernicious effect” of postmodernist history is to

demean and dehumanize the people who are the subjects of history. To pluralize and particularize history to the point where people have no history in common is to deny the common humanity of all people, whether their sex, race, class, religion. It is also to trivialize history by so fragmenting it that it lacks all coherence and focus, all sense of continuity—indeed all meaning.¹⁵

Postmodernists typically take this consequence as good, since it brings down “the ‘totalizing,’ ‘universalizing,’ ‘logocentric,’ ‘phallogocentric’ history that is said to be the great evil of modernity.”¹⁶ However, racial, gender, and ethnic fragmentation can hardly encourage mutual understanding, reconciliation, and civility that are so needed in our increasingly pluralistic, confusing, and antagonistic world.

Without the concept of a knowable objective truth concerning a reality independent of our biases, ignorance, and prejudices, history becomes a wax nose that can be twisted in any direction without regard for proper method, objective facts, or implications. All that remains is partisanship, ideology, power-mongering, image-manipulation, name-calling, propaganda, and subversion. These are not the essential elements of equitable gender and racial relations.

It is beyond question that power and prejudice can and do corrupt our understanding of the truth about race and gender. They can even silence the voices of the oppressed and rob them of comfort, as the ancient Preacher noted:

I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun:
I saw the tears of the oppressed—
and they have no comforter;
power was on the side of their oppressors—
and they have no comforter (Eccles. 4:1).

Postmodernists face a daunting dilemma when it comes to matters of race and gender, given their views of truth and the self. On the one hand, postmodernists make truth the possession of various groups, fracturing truth into ethnic and gender conclaves.¹⁷ On the other hand, postmodernists reject all forms of “essentialism,” the notion that there is an essential or given identity that is fundamental to any individual or social group. All identity, whether individual or collective, is contingently constructed and is not rooted in any objective reality beyond culture.

Anderson explains that the efforts of “earnest liberals” to preserve the distinct identity

of various ethnic groups "are biased in favor of an idea of the naturalness and timelessness of those cultures, blinkered against recognizing them as inventions that have been turned into things by the process of reification."¹⁸ Postmodernists cast off all essentialist notions. Rather, identity (along with every other abstract value or concept) is socially constructed by specific cultures and communities. Since any person normally moves in and out of a number of subcultures every day, postmodernist identity is not determined either by the individual or the group. Instead, identity is indeterminate and protean, and the postmodernist self is really much more *self*-involved than involved with any one social group. Thus postmodernism scuttles objective truth and furthers the fragmentation of individuals and communities that began with modernity.¹⁹

SCRIPTURAL TRUTH ON RACE AND GENDER

Christians should rise to the postmodernist occasion by articulating and incarnating a theology of race and gender equal to the task of creating a climate for rational discourse, civil exchange, and social justice. Without attempting to resolve the debates on affirmative action, the strengths and weaknesses of multiculturalism, and other highly charged political issues, I will give the rudiments of a biblical theology of race, gender, and justice that honors individual uniqueness, ethnic and gender identity, and objective truth. All three are indispensable.

The biblical metanarrative begins with God creating the universe by his Word (Gen. 1:1; 1 John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:2-3). The world is the expression of God's power and design. The Creator recognized the prehuman world to be good, and deemed humans, who were made in his image and likeness, to be "very good" (Gen. 1:26, 31). The first man and woman are the parents of us all, both in their original goodness and in their original sin. This couple was charged to procreate, to care for creation, and to cultivate it under God's guidance. However, both heeded the serpent's lie that the way of disobedience and autonomy was better than the way of obedience and blessing under God. This resulted in the fall of humans from their original state of goodness and social harmony. The world "east of Eden" is riddled with gender, racial, and class hostilities that are rooted not in God's original design for human flourishing, but in human rebellion (Genesis 3; Romans 3).

Humans of both genders and all races are equally sinful as well as equally created in God's image. Sin takes different forms in different cultures at different times, but women and men of all races have "fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Gen. 3:16 teaches that after the fall, man will "rule over" woman. This is not God's moral command, but a consequence of sin having poisoned the world through human rebellion against God's character and commands. It is a description of the coarse contours of an alienated world in crying need of healing grace.

God has not placed one race above any other race. The supposed "curse of Ham" as applied to blacks has no basis in Scripture, but was derived from a text used out of context as a pretext for racism against blacks (Gen. 9:18-27). In his Mars Hill address, Paul states that from the first human God "made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole world; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places they should live." God did not make one nation superior to another. God's purpose was that "they should seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us"

(Acts 17:26-27). God's election of Israel was not because of their race or their strength or wisdom, but by God's grace alone, and through them all the nations of the world were to be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3).

God's redemptive plan brought Jesus to this sin-stained, tear-soaked, blood-caked planet to reconcile creatures to the Creator and to reconcile them one to another. The drama of the gospel's liberation began with the Jews, but quickly moved out to embrace the world. Jesus instructed his disciples to receive the Holy Spirit's power and to be his "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The inclusion of Samaria is significant, since the Jews historically took the Samaritans to be racially and religiously contemptible. These barriers had already come down in Jesus' ministry (John 4) and had to be cleared away completely for the gospel to prosper. Patterns of prejudice and bigotry had to be broken. Jews and all Gentiles can find unity through the work of Jesus Christ (Acts 10; Eph. 2:11-22).

Moreover, men and women are released from the old social structures of domination and subservience through the life, death, and resurrection of the divine Messiah. Jesus said that his followers are not to dominate each other (as did the Gentiles), but rather to serve one another. He scandalized the establishment of his day through his respect for women demonstrated in many circumstances. Dorothy Sayers captures this poignantly:

Perhaps it is no wonder that women were first at the Cradle and last at the Cross. They had never known a man like this Man—there never has been such another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, never faltered or coaxed or patronized; who never made jokes about them, never treated them either as "the women, God help us!" or "The Ladies, God bless them!"; who rebuked without querulousness and praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously; who never mapped out their sphere for them, never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them for being female; who had no ax to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend; who took them as he found them and was completely unself-conscious. There is no act, no sermon, no parable in the whole Gospel that borrows its pungency from female perversity; nobody could possibly guess from the words and deeds of Jesus that there was anything "funny" about woman's nature.²⁰

The promise of the Kingdom involves both men and women filled with the Spirit and serving Christ (Acts 2:17-18; see also Joel 2:28-32). The new covenant, unlike the old, allows for no principled privileging of men over women as part of God's spiritual order. Paul enunciates this in his charter of Christian freedom for all peoples and both sexes. Here he speaks not merely of salvation, but of one's spiritual prerogatives and responsibilities in Christ:²¹

You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:26-28).

COLORIZING CHURCH HISTORY

Sadly, the voices of women and minorities have not always been heard in the Western Christian tradition. The oneness in Christ emphasized by Paul has often been neglected. This injustice should be rectified. Christians should not reject all multicultural concerns in an effort to guard against the “politically correct” ideology of postmodernists who abandon objective truth and paint Christianity as inherently oppressive and hegemonic. In 1992, historian Ruth Tucker wrote a provocative essay for *Christianity Today* called, “Colorizing Church History: A history that ignores women and minorities is a poor reflection of our Christian heritage.” Without challenging the notions of objective truth, rationality, or the need for impartial evidence, Tucker asks why our accounts of church history are dominated by white men when, in fact, God has powerfully used women and people of other races to propagate, defend, and apply the gospel through the centuries.

Tucker notes that God often uses the weak and small things of the world for great purposes (Matt. 20:26; 1 Cor. 1:27-28). Thus Christians should recognize that “a history that focuses on those with prestige and position is not the fullest reflection of our Christian heritage—in that it is out of step with how God works in the world.”²² She tries to rectify this somewhat by telling of Katherine Zell’s forgotten role in the Reformation. Although excluded from the clergy, she preached in the streets of Strasbourgh, wrote tracts, supervised a large refugee program, edited a hymnbook, and took a stand for religious toleration among orthodox Christians, even the often despised Anabaptists.²³ Zell was not as influential as Luther or Calvin or other male reformers whose gender gave them opportunities unavailable to women of the time. However, “her ministry of servanthood—as Jesus defined servanthood—is worthy of recognition, and her stand against religious intolerance ought to serve as a model for Christians today.”²⁴

Our understanding of church history, and of all history, influences our views of ourselves and others. We are historical beings who need heroes to emulate (Hebrews 11). Those struggling for recognition and opportunity need strong roles models, such as Zell, for inspiration. Tucker alerts us that “the standard list of great nineteenth century American revivalists invariably leaves off men and women of color.”²⁵ We hear much of Charles Finney’s influence, but little of John Jasper, his African-American contemporary. Both had dramatic adult conversions, ministered for over half a century, and were recognized as powerful preachers who drew enthusiastic crowds. Jasper began a church in Richmond, Virginia, with nine members, which grew to over two thousand. Although he was a “great humanitarian and defender of the Bible...his story has been lost in obscurity.”²⁶

Tucker also writes of Samson Occum, a preacher and evangelist who ministered for over forty years in eighteenth-century New England and New York. He studied at a school that later became Dartmouth, ministered in England, and published a hymnal for his people. Why have we not more heard of him? Why is he omitted from Sydney Ahlstrom’s well-respected work, *A Religious History of the American People*? Occum was a Mohegan Indian.²⁷

Tucker issues this clarion challenge:

We need to re-examine the lens we use to view church history. Like the writers of Scripture, we need to focus on the significance of women, minorities, and those of various cultures. Only by using this more inclusive lens will we have any hope of

seeing the full spectacle of what God is accomplishing on earth through his church—and any hope of seeing him, and each other, more clearly.²⁸

Tucker does not advocate a quota system for church history or a compensatory model that vilifies previous heroes (typically white males) to make room for new (nonwhite) ones. Rather, "Church history must be told anew—not to satisfy certain interest groups, but to capture the whole picture of the church and to listen to voices that have traditionally not been heard."²⁹

TRUTH KNOWN AND SHARED ACROSS CULTURES

While we must retain the doctrines of biblical inspiration and the objective meaning of biblical texts, Christians ought to open up the discourse on theology, biblical studies, apologetics, and ethics to the global Christian community, male and female. The Body of Christ is multi-colored, multi-ethnic, and of both sexes. God is a global God, disclosing insights and teaching lessons to Christians around the world. The postmodern condition of expanded communications and travel allows us greater access to this rainbow of truth given to the church worldwide. There is nothing postmodernist about pursuing all of God's truth, as it is reflected through different peoples in different places.

Standard theological works should not be dispensed with because they are typically written by white, European males. (Saint Augustine, however, was from North Africa, and may have had dark skin.) Nor should minority voices always trump received opinion, simply because they are minority voices. We don't need an Hispanic theology, an African-American theology, an Asian-American theology as separate fields of study, any more than we need a white theology. True theology is the corpus of God's truth that is true for all, engaging for all, and needed by all. Christians should practice theology by discerning the proper application of God's objective, universal, and absolute truth to their particular cultural situation. Rather than *any* ethnocentric or male-centered or female-centered reading of Scripture, we need a theo-centric reading of Scripture that discerns how God's universal truth applies to all people and all cultures.³⁰

Women and people of color will often bring different questions to the text of Scripture and, therefore, find truths neglected or minimized by others. These truths are not constructed, but discovered. Nevertheless, we are all Christians who open the same Bible and bow before the same universal Lord. The "black perspective" or the "Native American perspective" or the "Asian perspective," is, of course, experienced within particular cultures; but if these perspectives lay claim to truth at all, they can and should be presented to and known by others outside of these cultures. This may be difficult and require time and patience, but if truth is truly truth, the enterprise is possible and worthwhile.

Keith Yandell argues against the claim that knowledge is only contextual and local and not universal or commonly shared:

The questions to ask are questions about how the perspective of one context allows its inhabitants to see accurately a common world better than do those in other contexts, and how it prevents its inhabitants from accurately seeing a common world as well as those who do inhabit other contexts.... But those questions assume a

knowledge that is not merely contextual, local and particular. No knowledge is *intrinsically* local; all is potentially universal.³¹

Dorothy Sayers makes the helpful distinction between special *knowledge* and special *ability* with respect to “the woman’s point of view.” In areas where women have knowledge not typically—or ever—held by men, their “point of view” is uniquely valuable. Sayers notes that since some women know more about children than most men, their opinion as *women* is valuable, but only in the same way that a coal miner’s opinion on coal-mining and a physician’s opinion on disease is valuable. It is because they have special knowledge. But there are other matters where “the woman’s point of view” has no value or does not even exist, since the particularities of being female are irrelevant. There is no “woman’s point of view” on Greek grammar or logic or the art of writing a detective story.

However, if a woman derives an insight from Scripture that would normally be difficult for men to perceive, this insight would be true whether received by a woman or a man. For instance, the *Study Bible for Women* contains an insightful sidebar about the “crisis pregnancy” of Mary, which elaborates on facets of her condition that most men would never consider—such as her fears, need for friendship, and so on.³² Although it is more likely for an attentive woman—especially one who has experienced a crisis pregnancy—to discover these truths, if a woman *knows* these truths of Scripture, it means that her belief corresponds to what the sacred text teaches (which itself is an accurate report of what happened in history). Although men and women may have, in some cases, different ways of coming to know certain things, there is no “female truth” as opposed to “male truth.” If any man or any woman *knows* anything, he or she must know something that is *true*, something that matches up with objective reality. Truth itself is not gendered; truth answers to reality.

POSTMODERNISM AND ETHNOCENTRISM

This principle of seeking objective truth about race and gender should be applied more broadly to all of cultural history. Keith Windshuttle, an Australian historian and author of *The Killing of History*, a critique of postmodernist trends in history-writing, nonetheless recognizes that in his nation the “Aboriginal perspective, and the often shocking and disgraceful story of how Aborigines were treated, was omitted entirely” from history writing until 1970. He does not question “whether the views of this repressed ‘other’ should return or be revived.” The question is whether the tools of traditional historiography need to be thrown out in order to do so.³³ Windshuttle thinks not, and argues against the assumptions of postmodernist historians, which, he claims, work against any hope for understanding between groups or for building a more just social order.

Postmodernists reject history-writing based on observation and inductive argument as Enlightenment modernism. They also embrace relativism concerning truth and knowledge, and most deny that anything can be known with certainty. Each culture creates its own truth. Most deny that humans can “gain any direct contact with or access to reality.” Instead, “we are locked within a closed system of language and culture, which refers not beyond our minds to an outside world but only inwardly to itself.”³⁴ With these assumptions locked in place, any meaningful communication between, say, Aborigines and white Australians or white Americans and Native Americans would be impossible in principle. Each culture cre-

ates truth through its language, and language cannot refer to extralinguistic realities. The Enlightenment vision of rational observation and inductive argument is merely a cultural prejudice that sheds no light on other cultures' histories. Yet without at least a partially knowable past as part of our common discourse, neither repentance nor restoration is possible. Ludwig Wittgenstein's epigram is telling: "Only someone who can reflect on the past can repent."³⁵

Terry Eagleton observes that the "postmodernist 'anti-ethnocentrism'" ironically rebounds into ethnocentrism since it "leaves our own culture conveniently insulated from anyone else's culture. All those anti-Western bleatings from the so-called third world may be safely ignored, since they are interpreting our conduct in terms quite irrelevant to us."³⁶ This makes moral discourse across cultures unattainable. The problem ramifies even within pluralistic cultures, where diverse ethnic and racial groups coexist within a common legal framework and geographic area. For instance, in America, a Laotian Hmong man in his thirties kidnaps a seventeen-year-old woman as part of the accepted marriage-by-capture practice of the Hmongs.³⁷ This forces the postmodernist into a sharp dilemma. The traditional Hmong culture endorses this overtly patriarchal abduction as a binding marriage; the American legal system considers kidnapping a crime and not the equivalent of matrimony. Who is right? Whose law should obtain?

The Christian view provides the moral assessment that avoids both the errors of ethnocentrism and postmodernism. The Hmong people are made in the image and likeness of God and are eligible for redemption in Christ; but they are just as subject to sin as any other group. Given that patriarchal abuses flow from the disorder of the fall (Gen. 3:16), every culture is adversely affected by such abuses, and every Christian needs to work for equal dignity and respect for women and men. The Christian condemns the traditional Hmong practice on the basis of the woman's created dignity as a person with human rights granted by God. Kidnapping under the Old Testament law was a capital offense (Exod. 21:16; Deut. 24:7); the creation order for marriage is mutual care and concern in a voluntary, one-flesh relationship (Gen. 2:20-25); marriage should involve mutual submission, respect, and love (Eph. 5:21-33; 1 Cor. 7:1-7).

One can denounce the Hmong practice as the worst sort of misogyny, not because of any prejudice against Asians, but because of God's objective and cross-cultural standards. In fact, Hmong people who are Christians should oppose this practice. Similarly, Christians oppose female genital mutilation, abortion on demand, institutionalized poverty, racism, and slavery wherever they occur, because they hold every culture accountable to God, especially their own.

Using one's own culture as the final standard is idolatry. Even the ancient Jews, who were graciously selected by God from among all the peoples of the earth, could not invoke their ethnicity to justify themselves or excuse their sins. On the other hand, not recognizing the gifts God has given one's own culture is sinful ingratitude. Each culture is a complicated mixture of common grace, sin, and special grace. The wheat will grow with the tares until the final harvest (Matt. 13:24-30). The moral assessment of practices enshrined in other racial groups is not necessarily racist or ethnocentric. Charles Taylor makes this clear:

When we stand with the moral outlook of universal and equal respect, we don't consider its condemnation of slavery, widow-burning, human sacrifice, or female

circumcision only as expressions of our way of being, inviting a reciprocal and equally valid condemnation of our free labor, widow-remarriage, bloodless sacrifice, and sex equality from the societies where these strange practices flourish... The moral outlook makes wider claims, and this by its very nature. For it engenders a pitiless criticism of all those beliefs and practices within our society which fail to meet the standard of universal respect.³⁸

The standard of universal respect is no mere reification, social construct, or final vocabulary. We cannot alter it any more than we can create it or destroy it. The standard requires a standard-stipulator, who established the moral law over all nations, peoples, and for all time.³⁹

The Christian insistence on the reality of an objective moral standard applicable to all people does not preclude a development over time of a culture's or individual's knowledge of moral truth, with respect to gender and race. Sadly, American Christians were divided over the legitimacy of slavery for far too long, with each side invoking Scripture for support. Christians also opposed women's suffrage, supposedly on biblical grounds.⁴⁰ But in both cases the interpreters were in error, not the Scriptures. As has been often said, "There may yet be more light to break forth from God's word."

ARE EGALITARIANS POSTMODERNISTS?

Some have claimed that those who reject a gender-based hierarchy of authority and who hold to the full equality of men and women in marriage, the church, and society have capitulated to the postmodernist sensibility that texts can be deconstructed to mean things radically different from their intended meanings. Since the traditional view has been that the biblical text says that women must submit to their husbands unilaterally (i.e., in ways that husbands do not reciprocate) and that women should not be allowed to serve in the highest positions of leadership in the church, deviation from this view is deemed a concession to postmodernist ideas; Scripture "clearly teaches" otherwise. It is feared that some evangelicals have allowed "women's experience" to pollute their understanding of the sacred text. The question as to whether the traditionalist view has correctly discerned the objective meaning of the biblical text often is not seriously considered for these reasons.

Those who make these charges typically categorize belief in biblical equality with all manner of deviations from orthodoxy. So, Robertson McQuilken and Bradford Mullen claim that

we are challenged by fellow evangelicals to give up Adam and Eve, role distinctions in marriage, limitations on divorce, exclusively heterosexual unions, hell, faith in Jesus Christ as the only way to acceptance with God and—most pivotal—an inerrant Bible.⁴¹

They also accuse egalitarians of "tortuous hermeneutics" in their defense of egalitarian marriage from Ephesians 5, and claim that the "cultural form of husband/wife, parent/child, master/servant relationships are part of the mandate in that passage and indeed define the principle of 'being subject to one another' enunciated as a preamble."⁴²

Evidently, according to these traditionalists, the authoritarian, patriarchal customs of ancient Greco-Roman societies—including the absolute rule of the wife by the husband and the ownership of the slave by the master—are divinely mandated for all time, and are to be seen as inherent to and compatible with the principle of mutual submission that the passage also mandates. This reading of the text is not only rather “tortuous” itself, but would universally sanction slavery as well as wives’ unilateral submission to husbands, which were the *cultural forms*, after all. (This was the argument of Christian slave-owners before the Civil War.) Moreover, evangelical egalitarians do not “give up role distinctions in marriage,” since they affirm heterosexual monogamy and all its sexual distinctions.

Yet the authors fail even to address such responses to their position, thinking they have dismissed the alternative view as merely tortuous, postmodernist hermeneutics. In this they commit the fallacy of guilt by association. This certainly inhibits healthy debate.⁴³

The debate on gender roles is very complex, and I cannot settle it all here. My point is that although one *may* embrace egalitarianism for postmodernist reasons (as we will see below), a strong biblical case can be made for gender equality that keeps the notions of biblical inerrancy, objective truth, universal rationality, and authorial intent firmly in place. This is significant to understand because Christians often become unfair in labeling egalitarian believers as sub-Christian or even anti-Christian in this respect.

DERRIDA TO THE RESCUE?

Before addressing the specific charges by traditionalists, I want to consider an example of ill-advised postmodernist influence on the gender controversy. In critiquing the views of gender held by J. I. Packer, egalitarian Curt Purcell argues that Packer’s belief in the inherent, objective meaning of Scripture is unwarranted. Purcell claims that, on the contrary, all language is equivocal and no language is univocal. “An irreducible moment of equivocity lies at the heart of all language, ever forcing us to decide how words with which we are confronted fit into the context in which we encounter them.”⁴⁴ He then quotes a passage from Derrida to make his point: “If, in fact, equivocity is always irreducible, that is because words and language in general are not and cannot be absolute objects. They do not possess any resistant and permanent identity that is absolutely their own.”⁴⁵ The last two sentences quoted by Purcell trail off into unintelligibility (as does much of Derrida), so I do not cite them.⁴⁶

To enlist Derrida for the cause of biblical equality is both unnecessary and self-destructive. Derrida removes any objective meaning from texts; their meaning is forever indeterminate. This view would render the concept of Scriptural *authority* void. If something is to have authority it must be in the intellectual position to demand and receive obedience. The author’s voice must be heard for there to be *authority*. If a text is intrinsically and irreducibly equivocal, its meaning is unavailable and its interpreters can never be judged rationally against the one meaning of the text itself. The author vanishes, and readers are left adrift. Since Scripture is God’s inspired word (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21), it *does* possess a “permanent identity that is absolutely its own.” The divine Author employed human authors to make truth known. Our concern is how to interpret rightly and truly the objective meaning of the text, to discern how it coheres with the rest of Scripture and how the text applies to us today.

A difficulty in interpreting a particular text such as 1 Tim. 2:8-15 (concerning the place of women in the church) implies nothing about the text itself being equivocal. Paul, under infallible divine inspiration, had something definite in mind for his original readers, and that principle applies to us today, however different our cultural and ecclesiastical situation might be from that of the early church at Ephesus. What Paul meant, and what his words mean for us, is a matter of intense debate. Egalitarians find a principle concerning the inadvisability of women *in that church* teaching and having authority over men, because of some factor not inherent to their gender—such as ignorance or false doctrine. Traditionalists find a cross-cultural principle of male spiritual authority. Egalitarians disagree, since we find women in God-ordained leadership over men throughout Scripture. God would not break his own rules.⁴⁷

Peter did warn that some of Paul's writings were difficult to understand, but he affirmed that they were still inspired Scripture, and that some had misinterpreted them to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16; see also Jer. 8:8). The very concept of a misinterpretation necessarily assumes an objective and determinate meaning that has been violated by bad faith or poor reasoning of some kind. Both the egalitarian and traditionalist interpretations cannot be correct; one has missed Paul's original and intended meaning (which is singular, not plural). However, this does not make the egalitarian view postmodernist, since evangelical egalitarians reach their conclusions by using essentially the same exegetical methods as traditionalists. Egalitarians maintain that certain cultural prejudices have hindered traditionalists from seeing the theological, exegetical, and logical evidence against male authority and for biblical equality. The situation should not be viewed as a hopeless power struggle, since God's word is "living and active" to accomplish its purposes in the long run (Heb. 4:12; see also Isa. 55:10-11).

In some limited cases, a particular section of Scripture may be interpreted in two opposing ways, each of which is equally rational, given the knowledge available at the time.⁴⁸ That is, interpretation A and interpretation B may end up being exegetically equal; both can be rationally accepted by informed, wise, and godly people, and no third interpretation seems plausible. In this case, "It could go either way." But it is either one way or the other, not both and not neither (unless a better interpretation C is found later). Even when an interpretation is difficult, some interpretations can be ruled out. Whatever Paul meant by being "baptized for the dead" (1 Cor. 15:29), and this is much disputed, he did not mean that we should perform proxy baptisms that somehow apply salvation to those now dead, as the Mormons teach; for this would contradict clear teaching elsewhere in Scripture on the need to find salvation before death (e.g., Heb. 9:27).⁴⁹

These issues in interpretation stem not from the text itself being equivocal (many texts that seem obscure to us were perfectly clear to the original recipients), but from *our* interpretational limitations. The meaning of the text remains unequivocal in itself, and with new arguments and discoveries the equivocality of our understanding of the text may be cleared up, or at least reduced. The reduction or elimination of ambiguity and unclarity in our understanding of Scripture should be the goal of biblical interpretation. This, however, is *not* Demida's point. His view in the passage quoted is that word meanings are inevitably and always equivocal; such a view must be rejected as destructive to biblical authority, to sound exegesis. As Carl Henry notes, "in the absence of an objective textual meaning, no

valid choice is possible between two or more conflicting interpretations.⁵⁰ The result is “hermeneutical nihilism.”⁵¹ The purpose of biblical interpretation is to *discover* the text’s meaning, not to *supply* or *construct* a meaning for the text.

Ironically, Derrida has attacked his critics, such as John Searle, for misinterpreting and misrepresenting his own work. Apparently, Derrida’s intended meaning took on an objective identity, which he expected his readers to ascertain. He even claimed that his point should have been clear and obvious to Searle!⁵² Millard Erickson notes that this is “an incredibly nondeconstructionist nonpostmodern response for someone who maintains that the meaning of a text is not in the author’s intention, but in what the reader finds it saying to him or her.”⁵³ In response to a deconstructionist reading of Scripture, D. A. Carson explains that there is always “a link between text and authorial intent. I have never read a deconstructionist who would be pleased if a reviewer misinterpreted his or her work: thus *in practice* deconstructionists implicitly link their own texts with their own intentions.”⁵⁴ If so, why should we exempt the biblical text—or any other text—from this commonsensical and eminently logical approach?

WHY EGALITARIANISM NEED NOT BE POSTMODERNIST

The above postmodernist-leaning defense of egalitarianism does not exhaust the field of possibilities. I disagree with Packer’s conclusions on gender restrictions. However, I find no need to invoke notions of the intrinsic equivocacy of texts or to conscript Derrida to the cause. Theologically, I agree with Packer’s views of divine inspiration, the objective meaning of biblical texts, and the classical method of biblical interpretation.

The charge that biblical egalitarians are crypto-postmodernists rests on a few incorrect assumptions; by identifying them we can clear up some confusions so that a fair debate may ensue.

1. Egalitarians are accused of simply copying postmodern secular culture and twisting the Bible to mean what they want it to mean. This begs the question as to what the Scriptures actually teach. Egalitarians are asking for an alternative analysis of the ancient text, not an updated or edited Bible. The assumption that egalitarianism is postmodernist also commits the genetic fallacy, that by discrediting the source of an idea, one discredits the idea itself. But even if some Christians have been challenged to rethink what Scripture teaches on gender because of feminist insights from secular culture (although much of secular feminism is patently unbiblical and rejected by evangelical egalitarians), it does not follow that Scripture itself opposes every aspect of feminism. Many evangelicals and fundamentalists, such as Jerry Falwell, initially rejected the civil rights movement as unbiblical and merely worldly, only to realize later that white Christians should have supported its nonviolent expressions all along, precisely because that was the biblical thing to do.

2. The charge is made that egalitarians make their own experience or beliefs the final authority over Scripture. Since they have felt uncomfortable with traditional gender roles, they have misinterpreted the Bible accordingly. One’s experience certainly affects how one comes to Scripture, but it does not determine how Scripture comes to one. Many egalitarians, such as my wife and I, were at first reluctant to embrace egalitarianism because we were not sure it was biblical. Early on we were rightly taught that we should put Scripture above experience. Therefore, we had to be thoroughly convinced theologi-

cally and exegetically before we could change our minds. Many other cases also follow this pattern. This is not a postmodernist matter of an individual or a community freely choosing a lifestyle without any objective criteria or concern for objective truth and rationality.

3. Some also argue that egalitarians deconstruct gender roles and engage in a postmodernist construction of gender without objective constraints. This is why McQuilkin and Mullen put egalitarianism in the same category as homosexual unions, denying hell, and so on.⁵⁵

It is true that egalitarians believe that many of the traditionalist views on gender are social reifications and are not rooted in God's created order or Kingdom realities. For instance, if traditionalists take God to be male in some spiritual sense (and not all do), this is a reification, since God is beyond gender and sexuality.⁵⁶ If traditionalists take maleness to mean superiority to femaleness with respect to leadership in the home and the church, egalitarians believe that they have taken a contingent social structure and absolutized it. Scripture is filled with examples of powerful women leaders (such as Deborah and other Old Testament prophetesses, and female prophets and leaders in the early church).⁵⁷ and the New Testament teaches mutual submission and reciprocal love in marriage (Eph. 5:21-33; 1 Cor. 7:4; 1 Pet. 3:7).⁵⁸

Egalitarians agree that God has framed our sexuality according to his wisdom. This means that heterosexual, monogamous marriage is the moral norm and the standard cross-culturally (Genesis 2). Fornication, adultery, and homosexual relations are intrinsically sinful and must be avoided (Exod. 20:14; Rom. 1:18-27; Eph. 5:3-5). Children should be prized and not aborted for personal preference or career advancement.⁵⁹ However, egalitarians believe that the structure for marriage and ministry is not provided by male hierarchy but by Christian love (1 Corinthians 13), the principles of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), and the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1-17). These are sufficient for friendship and leadership in marriage, the family, and the church. There is nothing postmodernist here. Further, biblical egalitarianism does not undermine "role distinctions" in marriage; the distinctions are real where they touch on sexual relations. Everything is not up for grabs if some of the traditional gender roles are challenged.

4. Many also assert that egalitarians relativize biblical passages about the submission of women by making them "merely cultural"; they make postmodern culture normative and deny "the clear teaching of Scripture." Hermeneutically, all Christians must fathom how ancient commands obtain today. Paul said to greet one another with "a holy kiss," that women should wear veils in church, and that slaves should submit to their masters. Christians today understand the cultural context of these commands, without rejecting them as uninspired. The operative question in understanding such texts is, "What is the principle behind the commands and how do we obey it today?"

Yes, Paul told the Corinthian church that women were not to speak in their worship service (1 Cor. 14:34-35). Does that mean women should not speak in churches today? The answer to this question requires an understanding of the cultural context of the Corinthian church. Egalitarians believe that "the universal principle behind Paul's words is not the permanent silencing and subordinating of women in the church, but the curtailing of practices that disrupt the flow and order of the public assembly of believers."⁶⁰

The above response to these four assumptions only touches the tip of the iceberg. For an in-depth treatment of the historical, cultural, exegetical, and theological issues involved, the work of Rebecca Merrill Groothuis should be consulted, as well as other evangelical egalitarians.⁶¹ The divide between postmodernism and biblical egalitarianism is wide, and far wider than the divide between evangelical traditionalists and evangelical egalitarians.⁶²

BEYOND REIFICATION AND INTO POSTMODERNIST CHAOS

Those postmodernists who take *all* gender identity to be mere reification sometimes confuse their lawlessness with liberation. Maureen O'Hara claims that a constructivist view of gender ought not lead to despair but "an enormous sense of relief, hope, and responsibility," because

the idea that each of us recreates reality with each encounter fills me with wondrous hope, empowerment and community connection. If there is no absolute truth "out there" to create pristine "expert systems" that can somehow solve our problems mathematically...then we are called to a new kind of community. If I can make culture I must act responsibly. If I can only ever be part of the creation I must act humbly.⁶³

Exuberant academic prose does not justify non sequiturs. If there is no "absolute truth out there," then there is no possibility of responsibility or community or humility. These concepts imply that we are moral agents who owe allegiance to an authority beyond ourselves, and that we ought to act in certain ways in relating to one another. O'Hara's postmodernist constructivism eliminates the categories of moral authority and accountability entirely. Her hope is emptiness constructed upon emptiness—all the way down. This is what Francis Schaeffer called "semantic mysticism": authors use words with positive connotations that their own world view cannot rationally accommodate. This is done to mask their world view's philosophical malignancies.⁶⁴

A BETTER WAY FORWARD

The biblical metanarrative supplies us with form and freedom for women and men of various races and ethnic extractions. We can live out our micronarratives and personal pilgrimages as gendered and racial beings within the all-encompassing metanarrative of God's providence. This is possible through the direction provided by Scripture, by the encouragement of the community of faith, and according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Rather than making our differences our starting point, we should emphasize that we are first and foremost creatures before the face of our Creator. Christians, in addition, are redeemed people in Christ. As Paul exclaimed, all of our cultural background, ethnic inheritance, and even our gender pales in comparison with the wonder of knowing Christ (Phil. 3:1-11; Gal. 3:26-28). Glenn Loury, an African-American economist and writer, gets to the heart of the issue:

Who am I, then? Foremost, I am a child of God, created in his image, imbued with his spirit, endowed with his gifts, set free by his grace. The most important challenges and opportunities that confront me derive not from my racial condition, but

rather from my human condition. I am a husband, a father, a son, a teacher, an intellectual, a Christian, a citizen. In none of these roles is my race irrelevant, but neither can racial identity alone provide much guidance for my quest to discharge these responsibilities adequately.⁶⁵

Instead of stereotyping others (or even ourselves) by race or gender, Christians should "let God be God" as he demonstrates his unshakable Kingdom through the marvelous diversity of his one redeemed people, the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31). As these Kingdom realities are demonstrated, the hollowness of postmodernist posturings can be exposed in the light of something far greater.⁶⁶

NOTES

1. I attempt to deal with many aspects of postmodernism in my forthcoming book, *Truth Decay: Defending Postmodernism Against the Challenges of Postmodernism* (InterVarsity Press), from which this essay is adapted.
2. Michel Foucault, *The Subject and Power*; quoted in Kenneth Gergen, *The Saturated Self* (New York: HarperCollins Publishing Company, 1991), p. 95.
3. Zygmunt Bauman, "Postmodernity, or Living with Ambivalence," in *A Postmodern Reader*, ed. Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 11.
4. William Simon, "The Postmodernization of Sex and Gender," in *The Truth About Truth*, Walter Truett Anderson, ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1995), p. 157.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Walter Truett Anderson, *The Future of the Self: Inventing the Postmodern Person* (New York: Jeremy Tarch/Putnam, 1997), p. 60.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
8. Walter Truett Anderson, "Four Different Ways to be Absolutely Right," in *The Truth About Truth*, ed. Walter Truett Anderson (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), p. 114.
9. Thomas Sowell, *The Vision of the Anointed: Self-congratulation as a Basis of Social Policy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 98.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
11. John Adams, *John Adams: A Biography in His Own Words*, edited by James Bishop Peabody (New York: Newsweek, 1973), pp. 121-22; quoted in Sowell, p. 64.
12. Arthur Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991), p. 70.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 68. For a thorough assessment of afrocentrism, see Dinesh D'Souza, *The End of Racism* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), pp. 337-39, 360-80, 396-97, 421-46, 469. For a Christian perspective that differs somewhat from D'Souza, see Glenn Ustry and Craig S. Keener, *Black Man's Religion: Can Christianity be Afrocentric* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996).
14. Gertrude Himmelfarb, *On Looking Into The Abyss* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), pp. 153-54.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
17. See Gene Edward Veath, Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1994), pp. 142-56.
18. Anderson, *The Truth*, p. 58.
19. This paragraph was written by Rebecca Merrill Groothuis.
20. Dorothy L. Sayers, *Are Women Human?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 47. For an in-depth treatment of the Gospel material on how Jesus

treated women, see Millard Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: An Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1991), pp. 577-93.

21. For an elaboration on this vital point, see Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1997), pp. 19-39.

22. Ruth Tucker, "Colorizing Church History," *Christianity Today* (July 20, 1992), p. 20.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

30. Against the charge that the Bible is written from a male perspective, see Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Women Caught in the Conflict: The Culture War Between Traditionalism and Feminism* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), pp. 103-8.

31. Keith E. Yandell, "Modernism, Post-Modernism, and the Minimal Canons of Common Grace," *Christian Scholar's Review*, vol. XXVII:1 (Fall 1997), p. 25.

32. Catherine Clark Kroeger, commentary on Luke chapter 1, *Study Bible for Women* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1995), pp. 121-22.

33. Keith Windshuttle, *The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists are Murdering Our Past* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), p. 35.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

35. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. Wright (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), #519, 91e.

36. Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Backwell Publishers, 1996), p. 124.

37. This is a true story related to me by a Hmong student at Denver Seminary in 1997. The abductions can sometimes also involve rape. This is cited in Daniel A. Farber and Suzanna Sherry, *Beyond All Reason: The Radical Assault on Truth in American Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 106.

38. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 67-68.

39. See chapter eight for a discussion of the theistic grounding for morality.

40. On this see Groothuis, *Women Caught in the Conflict*, pp. 39-40.

41. Robertson McQuilkin and Bradford Mullen, "The Impact of Postmodern Thinking on Evangelical Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40/1 (March 1997), p. 72.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

43. For an evangelical interpretation of Ephesians 5 that relies on no postmodernist assumptions, and which explains and defends egalitarian marriage, see Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women*, pp. 145-58; 164-70.

44. Curt Purcell, "J.I. Packer and the Logic of Patriarchy," *Priscilla Papers*, vol. 11, no. 1 (Winter 1997), p. 12.

45. Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, trans. John P. Leavy, Jr. (Stony Brook, N.Y.: Nicholas Hays, 1978); Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, Bison Books, 1989), p. 104; quoted in Purcell, p. 12.

46. They read: "They have their linguistic being from an intention which traverses them as mediations. The 'same' word is always 'other' according to the always different intentional acts which thereby make a word significative," *Ibid.* This passage may be trying to prove Derrida's point about the unintelligibility of texts! I assume he has one meaning in mind, but has difficulty express-

ing it coherently. Foucault once accused Derrida of writing obscurely and then of attacking people for misinterpreting him. See Himmelfarb, p. 159.

47. For a discussion of this issue, see Rebecca Merrill Grootuis, *Good News for Women*, pp. 209-30.

48. I do not take this to be the case with 1 Tim. 2:8-15, since I believe the traditionalist view is much less plausible than the best egalitarian interpretations.

49. On baptism for the dead, see David A. Reed and John R. Farkas, *Mormons Answered Verse by Verse* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1992), pp. 85-87.

50. Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 4 (Waco, Texas: Word Publishers, 1979), p. 305.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 296-315.

52. Jacques Derrida, "Limited, Inc., abc," *Glyph* 2 (1977): 162-254; cited in Millard Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), p. 156.

53. Erickson, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

54. D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996), 103. For an excellent discussion of postmodernist ideas on hermeneutics, see Carson, pp. 93-140.

55. For the record, I (as an egalitarian) have written a piece defending the doctrine of a literal hell (Matt. 25:46). See Douglas Grootuis, "What About Hell?" *Christian Research Journal* (Winter 1997), p. 8ff.

56. See Rebecca Merrill Grootuis, *Good News for Women*, pp. 91-117.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 189-201.

58. The NIV and NIV1 translations do not reflect the issue of mutual authority in 1 Cor. 7:4 as well as do the NASB, NRSV, and the KJV.

59. For an argument that liberalized abortion is anti-women and anti-feminist, see Grootuis, *Women Caught in the Conflict*, pp. 75-87.

60. Rebecca Merrill Grootuis, *Good News*, p. 203.

61. See Rebecca Merrill Grootuis, *Women Caught in the Conflict, Good News for Women*; Craig Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992); and Mary Stuart VanLeuwen, *Gender and Grace* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

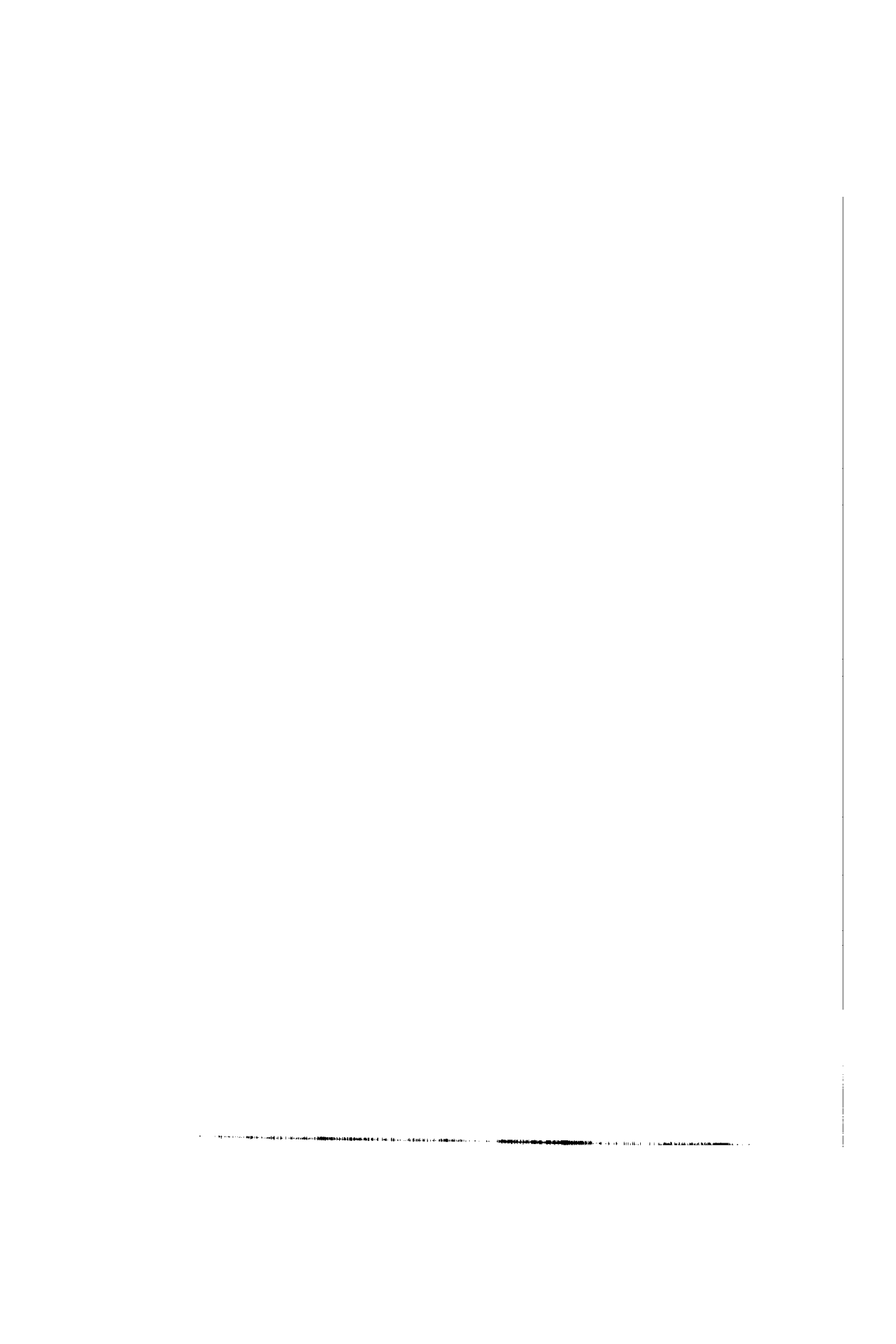
62. See Rebecca Merrill Grootuis, *Women Caught in the Conflict*, pp. 89-108. Careful readers will not find any postmodernist philosophical assumptions in her defense of biblical egalitarianism.

63. Maureen O'Hara, "Constructing Emancipatory Realities," in *The Truth About Truth*, p. 155.

64. Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 30th anniversary ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998; orig. pub., 1968), pp. 76-93.

65. Glenn Loury, *One by One From the Inside Out: Essays and Reviews on Race and Responsibility in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), pp. 7-8.

66. My thanks go to Rebecca Merrill Grootuis for her invaluable and insightful assistance with this chapter.



THE X-FACTOR: REVISIONING BIBLICAL HOLINESS¹

BRENT A. STRAWN

"Thus, law implements as social policy and social practice this articulation of God. God is not simply a religious concept but a mode of social power and social organization.... The reality of God's passion is mobilized in social policy."

—Walter Brueggemann²

"Holiness calls."

—John G. Gammie³

For Dr. Frank C. Carver in honor of his retirement from Point Loma Nazarene College

I. INTRODUCTION

Most students of the Bible would acknowledge that holiness is of critical importance to its subject matter. A text like Lev. 19:2: "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy"⁴ aptly summarizes this perspective. Moreover, the fact that this text is cited in 1 Pet. 1:13-16⁵ would seem to underscore that holiness is a concern, even a command, that runs throughout the text of the Christian Bible—that is, the Old and New Testaments.⁶ But this unity is not uniformity; and the problem of the significance of holiness—what holiness is and does or what holiness is supposed to be and supposed to do—often goes unexpressed and unexplained. The present study is an attempt to get at these issues and takes its cue from texts like Ezek. 20:41:

As a pleasing odor I will accept you, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will manifest my holiness [תקדשתי] among you in the sight of the nations.⁷

Brent A. Strawn is an assistant professor of biblical studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.

THE ASBURY THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

FALL 1999 • VOL. 54 • NO. 2

Or from the sentiment found in the Jewish prayer, the Amidah, benediction three:

To all generations we will declare your greatness, and to all eternity we will proclaim [שׁוֹמְרֵי] your holiness, and your praise, O our God, will never depart from our mouth, for you are a great and holy God and King. Blessed are you, O Lord, the holy God.

Put simply, these texts demonstrate that holiness has an *external function*. It can be *manifested* among the nations, as in Ezekiel, and is *to be proclaimed* to all eternity, as in the Amidah. In short, it can be and should be *communicated*. These two points—that holiness is of central import in Scripture but is diversely expressed therein and that holiness has a communicative function—comprise the central points of this paper and will be addressed sequentially.

II. HOLINESS *MENTALITÉS* VS. HOLINESS *ESPRIT*

The fact that holiness is a major concern of the biblical witness and as such runs throughout the biblical texts does not require extensive comment. Holiness has often been highlighted in critical research on the Bible and biblical theology. C. F. A. Dillmann in the late nineteenth century, for instance, determined that holiness was the essential characteristic of Old Testament revelation.⁹ He located this “principle” in Lev. 19:2 and regarded it as “the quintessence of the revelation, and to it he related all other ingredients of Hebrew faith and practice.”¹⁰ Somewhat later, J. Hänel also located the central idea of Israelite religion in the concept of holiness.¹¹ And these two are not alone in the history of Old Testament scholarship. Other names could be added to the list: E. Sellin or T. C. Vriezen, for example.¹² Even if scholarship is no longer locating holiness at the center of the Old Testament—and indeed, the quest for a or the “center” (*Mitte*) seems permanently defunct after Eichrodt¹³—the topic of holiness continues to receive at least some attention in most theological treatments.¹⁴ And deservedly so.

What is more important for the purposes of this study, then, is not to discuss the centrality or prevalence of the holiness concern in Scripture—what might be called the Bible’s *esprit* or spirit of holiness—but rather to discuss the diversity of ways this concept is appropriated or enacted in Israel. For lack of a better term, these latter may be called the various *mentalités* or mechanisms of biblical holiness.¹⁵

The late John Gammie, in his monograph *Holiness in Israel*, has performed this task quite well and his work can be briefly summarized here. Gammie discussed three major strands in Israel’s understanding of holiness: that of the priests, the prophets, and the sages. He went on to discuss variations on each of these understandings and then added a treatment of the apocalyptic writers; this produces a sevenfold perspective on how the Old Testament views holiness. Gammie found a unity running across the biblical material: “The holiness of God requires a cleanness on the part of human beings.”¹⁶ But equally as important, Gammie found not a single doctrine of holiness but a diversity or, at least, “a unity with a diversity.”¹⁷ That is, while cleanness may be a consistent requirement, each of the three traditions Gammie discussed would seem to stress a different kind of cleanness:

- For the priestly tradition, holiness entails a call to *ritual purity, right sacrifice, and separation*;

- Holiness for the prophets involves the *purity of social justice*;
- The wisdom literature stresses the *cleanness of individual morality*.¹⁸

Moreover, there is variation *within* each of these traditions. For example, even in those portions of Scripture that Gammie identified as “Variations on the Priestly Understanding of Holiness” (basically Ezekiel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles), all of which stand in “remarkable continuity with the normative” Priestly perspective, there is nevertheless significant variation.¹⁹ In the prophetic material the differences are even more pronounced: according to Gammie, nowhere in Jeremiah, Deuteronomy, or the Deuteronomistic History, for example, are there passages that articulate that “the holiness of God requires the cleanness of social justice.”²⁰ Though Gammie went on to offer an *apologia* for this attenuation, there is nevertheless a clear difference at work in the understandings of holiness found in the various *corpora* that comprise the Old Testament. Hence, Gammie concluded:

In the light of the overview of the preceding pages it cannot be claimed that holiness in Israel is the central, major, or unifying concept of the Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures. It is fair to claim, however, that the concept of the holiness of God is a central concept in the Old Testament, which enables us to discern at once an important unity and diversity.²¹

Gammie’s assessment is helpful. It should be added, however, that the complexity of the matter is compounded when one considers the New Testament materials. One can easily see the issues by comparing, say, Ezra’s concern with separation with what many have identified as the radical inclusivity of Jesus and the early community gathered around him.²² Of course, one has to be careful here, as texts such as Matt. 10:5-6 and 15:24 have led some scholars to say that the ministry of Jesus was originally only to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.”²³ This certainly softens the inclusivity; even so, the Gospels as a whole, and especially Acts and the ministry of Paul, would seem to register a rather gross disparity with the concerns for ethnic boundary preservation found in Ezra-Nehemiah. Even so, holiness continues to be a concern in the New Testament texts and period.²⁴

Still, the difference between Ezra and the early Jesus movement is instructive and gets to the heart of the matter. Simply put, *different traditions, periods, situations, peoples, and so forth, manifest—even require—different understandings and appropriations of holiness*. The struggle for self-preservation and economic stability that characterized the returnees from Exile under Ezra and Nehemiah is not equivalent to the pressures faced by the early Jesus movement. It is not surprising then, to find that Ezra-Nehemiah and the Jesus community have different appropriations or *mentalités* for holiness; nor is it surprising to find these to be, in turn, both similar to and different at points from priestly and prophetic understandings. In short, the manifold ways that the concept of holiness is appropriated is diverse and dependent to a large degree on different geo-political, sociological, and/or theological situations.²⁵ As such, one might look at them as limited, time-bound manifestations or mechanisms by which holiness is enacted and lived out.

Yet this is not the whole story. The concept of holiness itself is more than the sum total of these *mentalités*. Biblical holiness is not, therefore, merely the various understandings and

implementations of holiness found in the Bible. Rather, there is an *esprit* that runs throughout the text. For Gammie it is "cleanness." I will shortly discuss *difference* in similar fashion. Whatever the exact identification, however, the diversity of appropriation itself is proof of the *esprit's* existence. While the diversity may at first seem crippling on the practical level, the fact that holiness reappears in the various traditions and sections of the Bible—despite and in spite of the fact that it is differently manifested—underscores the point that holiness is a central biblical concern. Holiness is part of the Bible's fundamental grammar; to borrow Walter Brueggemann's terminology, it comprises part of Israel's core testimony about God.²⁶

III. THE X-FACTOR:

TOWARD AN APPROPRIATION OF THE HOLINESS *ESPRIT* AND THE HOLINESS *MENTALITÉS*

But what exactly is that testimony? What precisely is the *esprit*? After the preceding diachronic analysis, it seems more than a bit perilous to hazard a guess on what the notion of holiness might mean *throughout the entire* biblical witness. After all, even if a biblical *esprit* on the matter does exist, hypothetically or ideally, isn't it bound up inextricably with the same socio-political realities mentioned earlier? Perhaps so. But the synchronicity of the concept—above all exemplified by its ubiquity throughout and across the texts and testaments—urges the endeavor. To be sure, it may be that it is the consistent presence of holiness that is the only stable factor—the only *esprit*, as it were—that can be identified. But such an evaluation, while perhaps accurate on the descriptive level, is hardly adequate on a practical or prescriptive one. That is, if the biblical conception of holiness is to be recaptured, recovered, or revisioned for the twenty-first century, we must not only find the biblical *esprit*, we must also attempt to (re-)formulate it in a *mentalité* that is, while faithful to the *esprit* and within the appropriate range of biblical *mentalités*, simultaneously functional and faithful in our own contemporary context.

A clue for doing this can be taken from the second major point of the present paper: namely, that holiness has a *communicative or proclamatory function*. In Gammie's words: "Holiness calls."²⁷ Gammie, of course, went on to specify this calling: the holiness of God summoned Israel to aspire to justice and compassion; thus, holiness calls for and calls forth cleanness. While this may be true, this calling is not restricted to the holiness of God. Holiness *itself*, I would contend, contains this aspect of calling or communication *in its very nature*. Sociological and anthropological studies are of paramount importance at this point,²⁸ and it is unfortunate that their presence in biblical scholarship is still a relatively recent development.²⁹ While sociology and anthropology are critical tools in assessing all kinds of religious phenomena, holiness, in particular, is an excellent case in point. Social-scientific analyses may even help to explain the various factors at work in the different *mentalités* previously described.³⁰

A basic and oft-cited characterization of holiness from the perspective of these disciplines, at least since the work of Rudolf Otto, is that holiness is fundamentally *separation*: The Holy is Wholly Other.³¹ Yet this insight is not only phenomenological; it is also found in Scripture as, for instance, in Lev. 10:9b-10: "It is a statute forever throughout your generations: You are to distinguish between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean."³² To be sure, holiness involves more than separation, Otto's analysis includes elements besides the *mysterium*, and the biblical material discusses holiness in

ways that lie outside Otto's scheme.³³ Nevertheless, it seems to be consensual (if not consonant)³⁴ that one of the central aspects of holiness is separation.

Thus stated, separation, if not *the* biblical *esprit* of holiness, is certainly a major aspect and dominant part of that *esprit*. Unfortunately, most theory stops there. But this insight must be pressed: What does this separation *do* sociologically *and* theologically? Here the biblical texts must reenter the discussion. The notion of separation, or what might be best called difference, can be illustrated by means of several texts in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. Before undertaking this task, it is necessary to point out that I think that the biblical *esprit* of holiness and its various *mentalités* can be encapsulated by the notion of "the X-Factor."

An X-Factor is something that differentiates two, otherwise identical, entities.³⁵ Given the presence of the X, the term is somewhat mysterious. The letter X, as is well known, is often used in algebra and higher mathematics for a symbol of unknown or variable quality. The elusive quality of the X has passed over into everyday parlance as terms like "Generation X," "the X-Files," or even "Madame X," amply attest.³⁶ Other examples could be added, but suffice it to say that the X-Factor is something that separates, that differentiates, that is mysterious, and as such fascinates and attracts. In so doing, it also *testifies*. In my estimation, this notion can be quite helpful in an attempt to understand the biblical conception of holiness.

"I Am Yahweh": The Holiness Code and Ezekiel

An obvious place to start this task is with Leviticus 17-26, commonly called the Holiness Code because of its predominant concern with holiness.³⁷ While it may be an obvious place to start, it is not an easy one. The Holiness Code comprises a dizzying myriad of laws and commands, almost none of which immediately recommend themselves to the contemporary (at least contemporary *Christian*) situation. Or so it would seem.

What is clear, however, is that holiness is central throughout the Holiness Code and is manifested in a number of ways—indeed, in almost as many ways as there are laws—including regulations regarding sacrifice (Lev. 17:1-6), sexuality (Lev. 18:6-23), familial relations (Lev. 20:9), idol worship (Lev. 20:1-5), priesthood (Lev. 21:1-24), offerings (Lev. 22:1-23), festivals (Leviticus 23), and so forth. Leviticus 19 is a particularly interesting chapter, and probably the most well-known given v. 18b: "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." The juxtaposition of this verse with a prohibition against mixed breeding shows that this chapter serves as a microcosm for what one finds throughout the Holiness Code.

What is perhaps most striking about Leviticus 19, besides the rough juxtaposition already mentioned, is the refrain that echoes throughout the chapter: "I am the LORD" (19:3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37). It occurs, in fact, in the famous v. 18, which reads in full:

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

It is also found after other laws, such as "You shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the LORD" (19:12) and "Do not turn to idols or make cast images for yourselves: I am the LORD your God" (19:4). But it is also found in several of those laws that seem exceedingly strange. For example, "You shall not make any gash-

es in your flesh for the dead or tatoo any marks upon you: I am the LORD" (19:28) or "But in the fifth year you may eat of their [the trees's] fruit, that their yield may be increased for you: I am the LORD your God" (19:25). What does this refrain mean? Why is it scattered throughout this chapter and elsewhere in the Holiness Code?³⁸

To answer this question we need to look to the other main locus for this type of phraseology, the Book of Ezekiel, and to the scholar who has thought longest and best on the topic, Walther Zimmerli.³⁹ Zimmerli has demonstrated that the "I am Yahweh" (NRSV: "I am the LORD") formula, or what he calls variously the "demonstration/manifestation word," "recognition formula," or "proof-saying" (*Erweiswort*) functions to reveal God's being through God's action. In Ezekiel, this formula always precedes God's activity and Yahweh is always the subject. The purpose of the action in question is to produce recognition of God's revelation within it. The appropriate response is for Israel and the nations to recognize, acknowledge, and submit to God.⁴⁰ Put simply, the action that accompanies the phrase "I am Yahweh" functions to reveal God's person and nature to those who encounter it.⁴¹

This is a fascinating insight and one that has bearing on the instances of the formula in the Holiness Code, which Zimmerli unfortunately treats only briefly.⁴² The point is that this strange hodgepodge of laws that include both reverence for God, family, and neighbor, as well as prohibitions against wearing clothing made from two types of fabric and the like, somehow serves to reveal God and more specifically, God's nature and God's holiness. What an odd God, that God's holy being should be manifested in such ways! But the earlier question, "What do these laws *do*?" still remains. If this could be answered, perhaps it might explain what seems, on the face of it, so odd, arbitrary, and irrational.

In Israel, these laws would seem to bind the people together, uniting them as one people of God, serving and obeying that God in any and every way. Simultaneously, however, these laws serve to *separate* them and *mark them as different* from the outside world. In short, these laws are an X-Factor differentiating Israel from her neighbors.⁴³

This is no small point. Boundaries are of critical importance to societal and communal existence. Witness Ezra and Nehemiah, for instance.⁴⁴ But this separation is not an end *in and of itself, for and unto* itself. The laws of the Holiness Code, after all, would separate Israel *regardless* of the self-revelation formula "I am Yahweh." But the presence of that formula gives the legislation motivation and reason for being. The formula is also what gives the laws their communicative function. After all, Israel—as separate, holy, and different as it was and could be—was hardly isolated on the geopolitical stage of the ancient Near East. Only rarely in its history was Israel sufficiently free of foreign domination to develop and flourish as it would. And even at those rare moments of independence, Israel constantly came into contact with nations great and small throughout the ancient world: Egypt, Aram, Phoenicia, Philistia, Assyria, Babylon, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the rest. Furthermore, the major trade routes of the ancient world happened to run right through Syria-Palestine and thus through Israel.⁴⁵ Israel could not be geographically separate then, and yet was called to be sociologically and theologically separate by virtue of its practices. Or better, Israel was called to be *different*.⁴⁶ Again, the purpose for this difference does not seem to have been for its own sake or because of some unknown disease residing in pork, from which God wished to spare Israel.⁴⁷ Rather, the purpose was אֲנִי יְהוָה, "I am Yahweh," and that means God

wishes to know and be known by humans. In short, in my judgment, laws like those found in the Holiness Code *function both theologically and sociologically to simultaneously separate Israel unto itself, and to attract and call others unto Israel.*⁴⁸ Furthermore, the recognition formula that serves as conclusion to and motivation for these laws shows that their communicative function is part and parcel of the divine economy and plan.

"When the Children/People Ask You":

Deut. 6:20-25, Ezek. 24:15-27, Jer. 16:1-13, and the Function of Symbolic Activity (Attraction)

Though the communicative function of the Holiness Code can certainly be debated, the case can be made rather easily sociologically, if not historically.⁴⁹ In brief, it is a naturally occurring result of the practices in question. Ironically, then, the very barriers that *separate* and thus *exclude* are also the very structures that make it (at least) possible to *allow in* and *include*. Thus, these laws that seem so obscure and strange in the Holiness Code, not to mention elsewhere in Scripture, have a sociological function that is *communicative*, perhaps one might even say *missiological* if not *evangelical*.⁵⁰ This statement is true only if and as long as a means to transition from one side of the barrier to another exists or only if and as long as there is a message to communicate from one side to another and a means by which this can be done. This is obviously a source of intense debate in the history of Israelite religion.⁵¹ Even so, I am inclined to think that this difference is *purposeful*; that it did create a barrier but also made it a porous one—indeed, one that exists for penetration and crossing.

While some may remain skeptical, the communicative nature of the legal material can be demonstrated with even greater clarity *within Israel*.⁵² The problem of transgenerational value communication, for instance, is a case in point. Children, upon noticing these laws, often do not understand them and inquire about them. The laws thus produce their initial inquiry regarding the Law. The instructed parental answer is then given and is oriented, not toward the laws or the Law, but toward the Lawgiver. Note Deut. 6:20-25:

When your children ask you in time to come, "What is the meaning of the decrees and the statutes and the ordinances that the LORD our God has commanded you?" then you shall say to your children, "We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. The LORD displayed before our eyes great and awesome signs and wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household. He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors. Then the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our lasting good, so as to keep us alive, as is now the case. If we diligently observe this entire commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, we will be in the right."⁵³

In this text, the child first encounters the system but is then immediately introduced to the Savior.⁵⁴ But the "system-first" situation isn't so bad—even if it isn't ideal—because the encounter with the system is *designed to* or at least *functions to* introduce the Savior.

Another example of or analogy to this dynamic is found in the symbolic activity of the prophets, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel.⁵⁵ In Ezekiel 24 we find the prophet engaged in yet another symbolic action—something of a personal specialty of his.⁵⁶ This particular

example is especially disturbing. Yahweh says to Ezekiel:

Son of man, with one blow I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes; yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down. Sigh, but not aloud; make no mourning for the dead. Bind on your turban, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your upper lip or eat the bread of mourners (Ezek. 24:15-17).

The "delight of your eyes" (מחמד עיניך) is somewhat ambiguous. To what or to whom does the phrase refer?⁵⁷ The suspense mounts as Ezekiel responds to the divine word: "So I spoke to the people in the morning" (Ezek. 24:18a). We are not told what Ezekiel said to the people, but presumably it was a verbatim repetition of the divine message. As such, perhaps the taking of the "delight of your eyes" applies to the people, not Ezekiel.⁵⁸ But alas, no. The suspense is cut; simply and plaintively v. 18 continues: "and at evening my wife died. And on the next morning I did as I was commanded" (Ezek. 24:18b). The crux immediately follows:

Then the people said to me, "Will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting this way?" Then I said to them: The word of the LORD came to me... (Ezek. 24:19-20a; emphasis added).

This is echoed in v. 24:

Thus Ezekiel shall be a sign to you; you shall do just as he has done. When this comes, then you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

The prophet's activity thus symbolizes what will happen to the house of Israel: Ezekiel's wife is taken and so shall Jerusalem be taken. But it also does more: *it produces the encounter* with the word and thus the revelation of God—"then you shall know that I am the Lord GOD" (24:24; cf. 24:27).

Jer. 16:1-13 is functionally identical. There the prophet is told not to marry or have children (vv. 2-4) and not to mourn for the dead (vv. 5-9) because God is bringing judgment and disaster on Israel. This leads to a turning point:

And when you tell this people all these words, and they say to you, "Why has the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? What is our iniquity? What is the sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?" then you shall say to them... (Jer. 16:10-11a; emphasis added).

Here again the sign-action produces a confrontation. The people *will* inquire and Jeremiah *will* respond. Perhaps Israel should have known the reason for Jeremiah's celibacy,⁵⁹ but the point is that they did not. The symbolic action becomes *the vehicle by which they learn it*—even if they (and the prophets themselves!) have to learn it the hard way. Apparently, the stubbornness of the people forces God and the prophets to reconsider their communication strategies and make their message even more severe.⁶⁰

The significance of all this is that God does not forbid Ezekiel to mourn or Jeremiah to marry because these things are wrong or harmful. On the contrary, it is exactly the *commonality* and *normalcy* of such activities that makes them ideally suited to produce a reaction or encounter, which the prophets then turn to their advantage in delivering the divine message. Marriage was altogether normal and standard, so much so that Jeremiah 16 is virtually the only example of bachelorhood in ancient Israel.⁶¹ Mourning for the dead is also a common human process and experience.⁶² But these are the things forbidden the prophets; again, not for any reason inherent in the practices themselves and at the same time not without any reason whatsoever; but rather in order to lead those unacquainted with the people or word of God to an *encounter* with exactly those subjects. This confrontation, in turn, functions to reveal Israel's God as the proof-saying formula ably demonstrates.⁶³

Given the presence of "I am Yahweh" in the Holiness Code, the same processes seem to be at work there. Ancient Israel was demarcated from surrounding nations *purposefully*, in order to produce questions like: "Why don't you gash yourself for the dead? Why don't you sacrifice to Molek? Why don't you gather the fallen grapes in your vineyard—why do you leave them for the poor?" The answer was not to be mumbled under one's breath after clearing one's throat ("Ahem, er, well, ah, because I am an Israelite...") and indeed ultimately has little to do with the Israelite *qua* Israelite. On the contrary, the answer is יהוה יהוה "he is Yahweh"—that is, "because Yahweh is our God" (see Ps. 105:7; 1 Chron. 16:14). The Holiness Code is thus like a giant symbolic activity on a nationwide or global scale that serves, as do the prohibitions in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, to assist Israelite children as well as foreigners come to the knowledge of Yahweh.⁶⁴

As separation, therefore, the X-Factor serves *to attract* or *to invite*. But there is more at work in this notion and in these biblical texts than outside attraction. Furthermore, there is more to the Bible and to the legal corpus than "don't dos"—or what might be termed negative difference or separation.⁶⁵ There are also positive injunctions (positive separation/difference) that may very well still attract, but that are primarily focused inwardly on Israel's communal life together.⁶⁶

"When You See It, Then You Will Remember": Num. 15:37-41 (Accountability)

Since the sociological cohesion produced by boundaries and common legislation is well-known,⁶⁷ this aspect can be dealt with in briefer fashion. Moreover, in some ways it is subordinate to attraction because the dynamic is the same: positive separation also attracts, but its main focus is internal—it attracts those already in the group and thus acts as a mechanism for accountability or memory. This can be nicely demonstrated by Num. 15:37-41:

The LORD said to Moses: Speak to the Israelites, and tell them to make fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generations and to put a blue cord on the fringe at each corner. You have the fringe so that, when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and not follow the lust of your own heart and your own eyes. So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and you shall be holy to your God. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God.

Here we find an injunction as strange as those found in the Holiness Code.⁶⁸ The Israelites are to put blue cords on the fringes of their garments (cf. Deut. 22:12) and when they see these blue fringes, which would presumably happen quite frequently throughout the course of a day, they are to remember the commandments. The situation works out rather logically, though perhaps a bit woodenly:

- you will *see* the blue cords,
- you will *remember* all the commandments,
- you will *do* them,
- and you will *not turn away* faithlessly.

Following the tassel, that is, instead of the lusts of the heart and eye, helps one follow God: "So you shall remember...and you shall be holy to your God."

In Numbers 15 we find a difference—an X-Factor—that serves as a reminder to inculcate a righteous and faithful lifestyle in the Israelites.⁶⁹ This aspect, which has to do with accountability, comprises the second major purpose of the X-Factor. Again, separation or difference is not an end in and of itself; rather, difference is *unto encounter and proclamation*; and it is also *unto remembrance and enactment*.⁷⁰ And, as is rather obvious in the case of Numbers 15, an X-Factor can oftentimes simultaneously do both.⁷¹

IV. CONCLUSION: REVISIONING AND REAPPROPRIATING HOLINESS VIA THE X-FACTOR

In sum, then, the differences highlighted here under the rubric "the X-Factor" may involve abstention from normal involvements or may involve participation in atypical activities in order to produce twin aspects: attraction unto encounter and remembrance unto accountability. It is these aspects or purposes of the deep structure of the X-Factor that give it reason for being. That is, the X-Factor itself is not invariable. On the contrary—the X-Factor changes as often as the biblical *mentalités* do or as often as the symbol "x" signifies different values in algebra. In fact, the different *mentalités* are themselves different X-Factors, as long as they serve the purposes of attraction and accountability. So, the particular action chosen—be it Ezekiel's stoicism, Jeremiah's celibacy, the holy hodgepodge of Leviticus, or the blue cords of Numbers—will change and vary. These activities are situation-specific and timebound, limited and temporary. But the difference encapsulated therein, the separation that produces (or should produce) attraction and accountability remains constant. The X-Factor, then, summarizes the *esprit* of holiness (difference), while also providing a grid that both explains and incorporates the *mentalités'* content and method (their ongoing appropriations, revisioning, and so forth).

Several points need to be stressed, however. First, this grid of possible *mentalités* isn't infinite.⁷² It is certain that if holiness is to be revisioned and relived, it must be done in such a way that is both comprehensible and relevant today. The X-Factor permits this by showing how various persons, movements, and periods have lived out holiness in differing, and not always ideal, ways. We are on good ground, then, to say that the exact manner (*mentalité*) in which we enact holiness (the *esprit* itself) is of secondary importance to the fact *that* we live it out. Thus, as long as the X-Factor, the separation or difference, produces an encounter and reminds us who and whose we are, its focus and locus, its mech-

anism and appropriation, will and should vary. But the variation is limited, or should be, to the range demonstrated within Scripture itself. Or better: it is limited to the *dynamic* found within the Scriptural range of *mentalités*. This dynamic is properly one that *comes from God*. The word of the Lord came to Ezekiel and Jeremiah and told them what to do. The commandments in the Holiness Code and Numbers 15, similarly, are stamped with the divine “*imprimatur*.”⁷³ So too modern appropriations of biblical holiness should follow the command of God, expressed above all in Holy Scripture.⁷⁴

This point already anticipates the second, namely, that the X-Factor should be *purposeful*. The X shouldn’t be arbitrary: It should be designed to lead to the twin aspects and be subject to and take its origin from the command of God. It should also be tied to the character and holiness of God.⁷⁵ Although separation does not exhaust the concept of holiness in Scripture or in the phenomenology of religion, it does prove helpful at this point, since God is nothing if not different—especially, the incarnation notwithstanding, different from us.⁷⁶

But Christ nevertheless plays a role here. It is not unimportant to note that our English letter “X” comes from the Greek letter χ (*chi*), the first letter of $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ (*Christos*), the “Christ.”⁷⁷ Ultimately, for Christians, it is our relationship with Jesus Christ that makes and marks us apart—as separate and different. One might say that the Gospel itself is our X-Factor. That is well and good and as it should be. The purpose of this paper has been to provide motivation for the concrete manifestations of that relationship and in so doing to fill holiness with meaning by appealing to the ultimate purpose of communication via attraction and accountability. The latter two, respectively, provide the opportunity and the message for the former.

To be sure, conceptions of the X-Factor, although not with that label, have long been around. Difference, separation, “coming apart from the world,” refusing to be “of it,” are all hallmarks of the Christian tradition—especially the holiness variety.⁷⁸ But rarely, or so it seems, has the purpose of separation been expressed and unmotivated separation quickly becomes *separatism*. This scenario, while rather typical, is exceedingly problematic. But the X-Factor provides a way out of it. It can serve as a hermeneutical key that motivates and explains distinctive characteristics (both positive, e.g., care of the poor, and negative, e.g., abstentions from various practices) that are periodically undertaken by communities of faith. Moreover, the notion of the X-Factor can function on a transgenerational level, since its explanation and enactment of the *esprit* is independent of one particular type or even brand of *mentalité*.

If holiness is to be appropriated in the next century, I think it will have to be done in this sort of way. The X-Factor gets around the problem of unmotivated and thus lifeless difference and also holds promise for transgenerational and evangelistic communication. But the X-Factor also poses a threat to the way holiness has been traditionally conceived. Built into its structure is variability, openness, change—at least on the level of *mentalité*. This has not been a hallmark of the holiness traditions, nor of any other denomination for that matter, which have tended to demarcate their ethical conduct early in their histories and modify them only slightly over long periods of time. But, taking its cue from the biblical material, the X-Factor is more pragmatic than idealistic. It *encourages*, even requires, difference in mechanism of appropriation *as long* as these mechanisms produce the intended results: attraction and accountability, encounter and remembrance. As already stated,

communities of faith—holiness and otherwise—have long practiced these types of mechanisms whether intentionally or unintentionally, sometimes with remarkable effect.⁷⁹ Still, what seems to have been missing is the theoretical support for these practices and especially the motivation (communication and memory) that lies behind them.

This, in sum, is what the X-Factor is about and what it does. In my judgment, it has the potential to help traditions maintain their distinctives while at the same time communicating their message to a broader audience and to the next generation. If so, maybe that nasty little X in “Generation X” will turn out to be positive after all. Who knows? Perhaps the notion of the X-Factor will help all generations “proclaim God’s holiness to all eternity” (Amidah 3).⁸⁰

NOTES

1. This paper was delivered at the joint meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society and the Society for Pentecostal Studies held in March 1998 at the Church of God Theological Seminary (Cleveland, Tennessee) entitled: “Purity and Power: Revisioning the Holiness & Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements for the Twenty-First Century.” I would like to thank my respondents, David L. Cubie (Mount Vernon Nazarene College) and Michael K. Adams (Emmanuel College), for their valuable comments and critique. The original idea for this paper was born in my undergraduate days in a class taught by Prof. Robert W. Smith of Point Loma Nazarene University. In addition to Prof. Smith, I would like to thank Bill T. Arnold, Shane A. Berg, James K. Mead, Rickie D. Moore, Henry W. L. Rietz, David L. Stubbs, R. Wesley Tink, and John W. Wright—each of whom read drafts of the paper and made helpful comments. None of these should be held responsible for the opinions expressed herein.

2. Walter Brueggemann, “Old Testament Theology as a Particular Conversation: Adjudication of Israel’s Sociotheological Alternatives,” in *Old Testament Theology: Essays on Structure, Theme, and Text*, ed. Patrick D. Miller (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), pp. 118-49; citation from p. 128.

3. John G. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), p. 195.

4. The translation used here and throughout is the NRSV, though I have sometimes modified it. In this case, the emphatic (adjective-first position) word order for the term “holy” (קדושים and קדוש, respectively) in the Hebrew text should be noted.

5. On this text, and especially its relationship to Leviticus and the issues discussed in this paper, see Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, ed. E. J. Epp, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), pp. 117-22.

6. Many texts, of course, could be appealed to here. Cf., e.g., Lev. 11:44-45, 20:26; Matt. 5:48; 2 Cor. 6:17; Col. 1:21-22; 1 Thess. 4:1-9; 1 Pet. 2:9-10; Heb. 12:14.

7. See also Ezek. 28:22, 25 (Oracle against Sidon); and 39:27. The only other instance of this particular verbal form is Lev. 22:32, a text that is also pertinent to the discussion.

8. Literally: “we will sanctify.” But note that the term is in parallel with נודיע (“we will declare”). In post-biblical Hebrew the term often carries proclamatory force, especially in the Piel. See Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, 2 vols. (New York: The Judaica Press, 1992), 2:1319-20. The translation “proclaim” follows Joseph H. Hertz, *The Authorized Daily Prayer Book: Hebrew Text, English Translation with Commentary and Notes*, rev. ed. (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 5709/1948), p. 137 (for the Hebrew text, see p. 136). It should be noted that this is a later version and that while the Amidah is an ancient prayer, benediction three probably did not originally contain this section. For the historical background, see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)*, rev. ed. by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1979), 2:455-63.

9. Christian Friedrich August Dillmann, *Handbuch der alttestamentlichen Theologie*, ed. R. Kittel (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1895).
10. John H. Hayes and Frederick Prussner, *Old Testament Theology: Its History and Development* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), p. 122.
11. Johannes Hänel, *Die Religion der Heiligkeit* (Gütersloh: Bertelmanns, 1931). See Hayes and Prussner, *Old Testament Theology*, pp. 167-68.
12. Ernst Sellin, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Leipzig: Von Quelle and Meyer, 1933), pp. 18-19: "Gott ist heilig. Hiermit berühren wir das, was das tiefste und innerste Wesen des alttestamentlichen Gottes ausmacht" ("God is holy. Herein we touch on that which makes up the deepest and innermost nature of the Old Testament God"); and Theodorus Christiaan Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell and Mott, 1962), p. 151: "The holiness of God is the central idea of the Old Testament faith in God." Hayes and Prussner, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 257 note that the holiness of God has been proposed as the center of the Old Testament in previous research.
13. See Hayes and Prussner, *Old Testament Theology*, pp. 257-60.
14. See, e.g., Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1962-1965), 1:204-7, 272-79; 2:236, 343, 345; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Old Testament Library hereafter OTL, 2 vols., trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961-1967), 1:270-82; David P. Wright, "Holiness (OT)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* hereafter ABD, 5 vols., ed. D. N. Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:237-49; Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), p. 354; Helmer Ringgren, *The Prophetic Conception of Holiness* (Uppsalla: Lundequist, 1948); William Dymess, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), pp. 51-53; Horst Dietrich Preuss, *Old Testament Theology*, OTL, 2 vols., trans. Leo G. Perdue (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991-1992), 1:240-41; Claus Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), pp. 195-97; and especially Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*. This statement is not, of course, true in all cases. Note Werner H. Schmidt's assessment that holiness is rather peripheral to the Old Testament (*The Faith of the Old Testament: A History* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983], pp. 152-56; but cf. Gammie's remarks, *Holiness in Israel*, pp. 2-3).
15. Alternatively, one could use a linguistic analogy and use the terms "grammar" and "vocabulary" for *esprit* and *mentalité*, respectively. In this scenario, the grammar remains constant (or similar) across various dialects or languages even while the vocabulary changes. I thank Steven T. Hoskins for suggesting this alternative terminology.
16. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, p. 1. Thus stated, "cleanness" would be Gammie's assessment of the biblical *esprit* of holiness. Cf. p. 195: "A unity of the Old Testament can be discerned in this unified response to holiness on the part of Israel: holiness requires purity."
17. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, p. 1.
18. *Ibid.*, and cf. pp. 43, 100, 149, respectively. The apocalyptic material contains a sort of combination of these traditions (see p. 198). For the priestly tradition see further Philip Peter Jensen, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series hereafter JSOTSupp 106 (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1992) and Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).
19. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, pp. 69, 196-97. For instance, the first part of the Chronicler's History places "less emphasis on the typically priestly insistence on separation from other peoples than in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah" (p. 196).
20. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, p. 123. But see Jeffries M. Hamilton, *Social Justice and Deuteronomy: The Case of Deuteronomy 15* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

21. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, p. 197 (emphasis his).

22. See, e.g., Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), passim, especially pp. 176-77: "It does not take long to show how sharply Jesus rejected all attempts to realize the community of the remnant by means of human striving or separation... Jesus does not gather the holy remnant, but the all-embracing community of salvation of God's new people." More recently, E. P. Sanders has also underscored the inclusive nature of Jesus' mission to and calling of "the sinners" (*Jesus and Judaism* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], especially pp. 174-211).

23. E.g., Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision: Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987), pp. 126-27. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 220: "But the overwhelming impression is that Jesus started a movement which came to see the Gentile mission as a logical extension of itself" (emphasis his). Sanders goes on to say, however, that "Iwle need not think that Jesus imparted to his disciples any view at all about the Gentiles and the kingdom" (p. 221).

24. See, e.g., Otto Procksch and Karl Georg Kuhn, "ἅγιος, ἁγιαζῶ, ἁγιασμός, ἁγιότης, ἁγιωσύνη," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (hereafter TDNT), 10 vols., trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 1:88-115; Robert Hodgson, Jr., "Holiness (NT)," in *ABD* 3:249-54; G. F. Hawthorne, "Holy, Holiness," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), pp. 485-89; Marcus J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (New York: Mellen, 1984); David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); and Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols., trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951-1955), 1:338-39; 2:180, 189, 223. Cf. also note 6 above.

25. Cf. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, p. 196: "Each of these groups set forth its teaching in response to holiness and what holiness had impressed upon their hearts and minds. No claim of exclusive apprehension of holiness and the requirements of holiness is possible for any one of the three groups. The lessons for contemporary religious denominations that look to the Scripture for guidance are obvious."

26. The language, though not necessarily the sentiment, is taken from Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997). For the holiness of Yahweh, see pp. 288-93.

27. See note 3 above.

28. See, e.g., Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1989), especially chap. 3, "The Abominations of Leviticus," pp. 41-57; idem, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: The Free Press, 1965); Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993); idem, *Ancient Judaism*, trans. Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (New York: The Free Press, 1952); Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1996); Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1958); and idem, *Religious Essays: A Supplement to The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931). For an Old Testament theology that incorporates some of Otto's insights and terminology, see Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology*, Religious Perspectives, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978). A recent treatment of Otto's work can be found in Melissa Raphael, *Rudolf Otto and the Concept of Holiness* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997). For a treatment of Douglas from the perspective of biblical studies, cf. J. F. A. Sawyer, ed., *Reading Leviticus: A Conversation with Mary Douglas*, JSOTSupp 227 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) and also Edwin Firmage, "The Biblical Dietary Laws and the Concept of Holiness," in *Studies in the Pentateuch*,

ed. J. A. Emerton, *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 41 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), pp. 177-208. In addition to sociology and anthropology, psychological studies of religious experience can also be extremely illuminating in matters such as these.

29. For Old Testament studies see, among others, the work of Robert Wilson, Walter Brueggemann, and Norman Gottwald. Gottwald has been something of a pioneer in this area in Old Testament studies and has, in turn, provided impetus to scholars like Brueggemann. In addition to Gottwald's many articles on various subjects, note especially *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E.* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979) and *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). New Testament scholarship has also benefited from social-scientific approaches. See, e.g., the work of Gerd Theissen, Howard Clark Kee, Bruce Malina, Jerome Neyrey, Carolyn Osiek, and John Elliot to name a few.

30. See, e.g., Jerome H. Neyrey, "Clean/Unclean, Pure/Polluted, and Holy/Profane: The Idea and the System of Purity," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Richard L. Rohrbaugh (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), pp. 80-104; and the works by the other scholars cited in the previous note. For the Jesus movement see especially Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); and Carolyn Osiek, R. S. C. J., *What Are They Saying About the Social Setting of the New Testament?*, rev. ed. (New York: Paulist, 1992); as well as the essays gathered in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

31. To list citations of this aspect of holiness in secondary literature would take an entire monograph, but see, as representative, Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, pp. 25-30 (on the *mysterium*); Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, pp. 9-12 and passim; von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:205; Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, pp. 49-51; and Jack Miles, *God: A Biography* (New York: Vintage, 1995), p. 22. From a theological perspective, see recently Jürgen Moltmann, *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), pp. 43-45.

32. See Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 18-25 for a convenient summary of the system of holiness found in Leviticus.

33. See especially von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:206 for this criticism of Otto.

34. It is often said that separation is part of the etymological meaning of Hebrew *קָדַשׁ* (e.g., Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Cesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1979), p. 871; TDNT 1:89; Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p. 49; and much secondary literature). More recent lexica, however, have rightly questioned this. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner (*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, rev. by Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm, trans. M. E. J. Richardson, 4 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996-1999), 3:1072), for instance, indicate that *קָדַשׁ* is "an original verb, which can only with difficulty be traced back to a root *קָדַ* 'to cut'; [nevertheless] if this is the case the basic meaning of *קָדַשׁ* would be 'to set apart.'" Yet, even if the conception of "separate-ness" is etymologically debated for *קָדַשׁ*, at the very least this notion is clearly involved on the semantic level.

35. This definition is more idiomatic or colloquial than Webster's which defines an X-factor as "a relevant but unidentified factor" (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*, ed. Philip Babcock Gove (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1993), p. 2644) and *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter OED), 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 2353 which notes that the word was originally a military term, referring to "the aspects of a serviceman's life that have no civilian equivalent; pay made in recognition of these."

36. Perhaps, one of the more powerful and controversial X's in recent memory is found in the person of Malcolm Little who upon conversion to the Nation of Islam changed his last name to X. The X in Malcolm's case symbolized the renunciation of a former "slavemaster name" and the anonymity or loss of one's "true African family name that had been taken from every African brought

to America as a slave. Adding an 'X' to one's name, therefore, is a *public sign, a testimony* against the legacy of slavery, where freed slaves either took on the names of their former slavemasters or created new names entirely" (Garth Kasimu Baker-Fletcher, *Xodus: An African-American Male Journey* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], p. 75; emphasis mine). Recently, Baker-Fletcher has used the X, especially Malcolm's, as a symbol to invigorate African-American male spirituality "outside of the moral parameters and definitions of European space." See his "Xodus Musings: Reflections on Womanist Tar Baby Theology," *Theology Today* 50 (1993):38-44, especially p. 43 and, more recently, *Xodus*, especially pp. xv-xvi, 73-91, and 175-94. Note the proclamatory function of the X in his work.

37. For a brief overview of some of the critical issues around the Holiness Code, see Henry T. C. Sun, "Holiness Code," in *ABD* 3:254-57. Not a few scholars have questioned whether the Holiness Code really existed independently or can be treated separately from the rest of Leviticus. See, e.g., Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary*, trans. Douglas W. Stott, OTL (Louisville: Westminster, 1996), p. 18.

38. E.g., Lev. 18:5, 6, 21; 20:7; 21:12; 22:2, 3, 8, 9, 30, 31, 33; 23:22; 24:22; 25:17; 26:2, 45; etc.; cf. 11:44-45.

39. Walther Zimmerli, *I Am Yahweh*, trans. Douglas W. Stott, ed. Walter Brueggemann (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982). Cf. also idem, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24*, trans. R. E. Clements, eds., F. M. Cross, K. Baltzer, and L. J. Greenspoon, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), pp. 37-40; and idem, "The Message of the Prophet Ezekiel," *Interpretation* 23 (1969):131-57.

40. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p. 38: "In his action in history Yahweh sets himself before his people and the world in his own person. All that which is preached by the prophet as an event which is apparently neutral in its meaning has its purpose in that Israel and the nations should come to a recognition, which in the Old Testament also means an acknowledgement, of this person who reveals himself in his name. All Yahweh's action which the prophet proclaims serves as a proof of Yahweh among the nations" (emphasis mine).

41. Cf. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p. 40: "The whole direction of the prophetic preaching is a summons to a knowledge and recognition of him who, in his action announced by the prophet, shows himself to be who he is in the free sovereignty of his prophecy."

42. Primarily in the essay "I am Yahweh" (in *I Am Yahweh*, pp. 1-28). Zimmerli does point out, however, that the presence of this formula in the Holiness Code makes the latter quite significant: "A comparison of the Holiness Code with Ezekiel 20:7 makes it clear that this indefatigable repetition of *ny yhw* at the end of individual statements or smaller groups of statements in the legal offerings is not to be understood as thoughtlessly strewn decoration; rather, *this repetition pushes these legal statements into the most central position from which the Old Testament can make any statement*. Each of these small groups of legal maxims thereby becomes a legal communication out of the *heart of the Old Testament revelation of Yahweh*. Each one of these small units offers in its own way a bit of explication of the central self-introduction of Yahweh, the God who summons his people—or better, recalling Leviticus 18ff. (and Ezek. 20), the God who sanctifies his people" (*I Am Yahweh*, p. 12; emphasis mine). This should caution those Christians—scholars and otherwise—who would pass over the Holiness Code too quickly and ignore it in theological (and even ethical) reflection.

43. Interestingly, Wenham, *Leviticus*, pp. 261-75 entitles chapter 19 "Principles of Neighborliness."

44. See Daniel L. Smith, *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* (Bloomington: Meyer Stone, 1989) for an excellent treatment that draws extensively on sociological data.

45. Cf. David A. Dorsey, *The Roads and Highways of Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

46. This is not to downplay the sociological and theological similarities that, as is well-known,

about between Israel and her neighbors in the ancient Near East. The prophetic "cleanness" of social justice for instance (so Gammie) could also be incorporated under difference, but in so doing one would need to be cognizant that the emphasis on social justice is fairly typical in the ancient world (see, e.g., Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995]). Even so, Psalm 82 may be an important text at this point.

47. See Lev. 11:7; cf. Deut. 14:8. See further Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, pp. 43-45 for "medical" and "meaningless/arbitrary/irrational" interpretations of Leviticus, especially the dietary laws. Douglas herself opts for reasons relating to locomotion. Firmage ("The Biblical Dietary Laws," pp. 177-208) has challenged this and offered, in its place, an interpretation based on the connection (or lack thereof) of the entire animal world to established sacrificial animals. Whatever the case, one might note that, while pork was prohibited in Israel, it was eaten by persons in close proximity to Israel (notably the Philistines), apparently with no harmful result. On the eating of pork in antiquity generally, see recently Brian Hesse and Paula Wapnish, "Can Pig Remains Be Used for Ethnic Diagnosis in the Ancient Near East?," in *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, eds. Neil Asher Silberman and David Small, JSOTSupp 237 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). The point being stressed here, however, is that *there may be no inherent reason for these laws* other than to produce the dynamic outlined above.

48. The notion is certainly not altogether new. Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669), for instance, in his *Summa doctrinae de foedere et testamento Dei* (1648), included the Mosaic law in the covenant of grace, partially because "it separated the Hebrews as the bearers of the kingdom from the surrounding heathen groups and so preserved the people for Christ" (Hayes and Prussner, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 21). Note George Adam Smith, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament* (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1901), p. 142: "We have seen that the gradual ethical development, which thus differentiated Israel from her neighbors, appears to have begun with the introduction to the nations of Jahweh as their God; and that every stage of its progress was achieved in connection with some impression of His character. It seems to me that there are here the *lines of an apologetic, for a Divine Revelation through early Israel*, more sure and clear than any which the traditional interpretation of the Old Testament ever attempted to lay down" (emphasis mine); and see also Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 5749/1989), p. 257: "The gulf between the sacred and the profane was not meant to be permanent. The command to achieve holiness, to become holy, envisions a time when life would be consecrated in its fullness and when *all nations would worship God in holiness*. What began as a process of separating the sacred from the profane was to end as the unification of human experience, the harmonizing of man with his universe, and of man with God" (emphasis mine).

49. The communicative function of legislation is exponentially increased in the probable historical location of much of the Priestly writing, namely, the Babylonian Exile. It is in that context that much of the legislation (certainly earlier than the sixth century in origin if not composition) takes on new significance as it functions to differentiate a small, foreign minority group from a larger, dominant host society. See further on this situation Smith, *The Religion of the Landless*; and Rainer Albertz, "The History of Israelite Religion in the Exilic Period," in *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 2 vols., OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 2:369-436. On this point, note Psalm 137 and Daniel 3 and 6—texts that indicate that worship itself was an X-Factor in the diaspora.

50. For the former see Christopher J. H. Wright, "Old Testament Ethics: A Missiological Perspective," *Catalyst* (forthcoming).

51. See, e.g., Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew," *Harvard Theological Review* 82 (1989):14-33; idem, "Conversion to Judaism in Historical Perspective: From Biblical Israel to Post-biblical Judaism," *Conservative Judaism* 36 (1983):31-45; Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), especially pp. 288-382, 416-46; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *From Darkness to*

Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); idem, "Conversion," in *ABD* 1:1131-33; Jacob Milgrom, "Religious Conversion and the Revolt Model for the Formation of Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (1982):169-76; Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), especially pp. 1-108, 154-74; Scot McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991); A. D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933); and Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), especially pp. 1-183, 285-300. While I cannot demonstrate it here in detail, in my judgment such means did, in fact, exist in early (i.e., pre-exilic) Israel. In addition to the sociological function of legal and ritual practice that I am describing here (which may well be the strongest evidence), I would make mention of biblical stories like Ruth, Rahab, Naaman, Jonah, and so forth, as well as biblical scholars like Gotwald. For the latter, see especially *The Tribes of Yahweh* and idem, "Religious Conversion and the Societal Origins of Ancient Israel," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 15 (1988):49-65. Even so, it must be admitted that we know very few "converts" to Israelite religion by name.

52. Even those skeptical of the argument here should note that in Ezekiel the proof-saying is often used for the nations' knowledge of Yahweh. Cf. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:236-37: "This 'manifestation' is therefore much more than simply something inward or spiritual; it is an event which comes about in the full glare of the political scene, and which can be noticed by foreign nations as well as by Israel....The final goal of the divine activity is therefore that Jahweh should be recognised and worshipped by those who so far have not known him or who still do not know him properly."

53. Cf. also Josh. 4:5-7, 20-24.

54. I am indebted to Dr. Rueben Welch for this terminology.

55. The classic treatment remains that of Georg Fohrer, *Die symbolischen Handlungen der Propheten*, 2d ed. (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1968). See more recently Kelvin Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts: Rhetorical Nonverbal Communication*, JSOTSup 283 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

56. See Ezek. 4:1-5:17; 12:1-6.

57. Zimmerli is certainly right to caution against overinterpreting "the delight of your eyes" (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel I*, p. 505), but at the same time, the Hebrew is at least somewhat excessive. After all, אִישׁוֹר could have been used just as easily.

58. Of course, the resulting oracle shows that it applies to both, but the second person forms in Ezek. 24:15-17 are singular, while those in 24:21-24 are plural.

59. So Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 153.

60. On this phenomenon, especially in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, see Thomas M. Raitt, *A Theology of Exile: Judgment/Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

61. Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelley, and Joel F. Drinkard, Jr., *Jeremiah 1-25*, Word Biblical Commentary 26 (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), p. 216 go so far as to use the "unusualness of the prohibition to marry" to argue for the authenticity of the pericope.

62. This is rather obvious, but note also the "house of mourning" (בֵּית מוֹרָה) in Jer. 16:5. The Hebrew term *marzē(a)h* is rare in the Hebrew Bible. It does occur, however, in other ancient Near Eastern literatures, including that of Ugarit (2nd millennium BCE; see especially KTU 3.9), where it apparently refers to some sort of funerary association. What Yahweh forbids, therefore, is nothing less than a long-standing, cross-cultural tradition. See further Theodore J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 39 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) and Brian B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and*

Tradition (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995).

63. Especially in Ezekiel. Note Ezek. 24:24, 27; cf. Jer. 16:21.

64. Note especially on this point that Jer. 16:14-21 switches to the theme of restoration and climaxes in vv. 19-21 with the "conversion of the nations" (Craigie, Kelley, and Drinkard, *Jeremiah 1-25*, p. 216; cf. William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25*, ed. Paul D. Hanson, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986], pp. 480-81). Note also the use of the proof-saying in Ezekiel for the nations' knowledge of Yahweh and cf. above on the (heightened) significance of difference in Exile.

65. "Negative" primarily in that it involves abstention from practices engaged in by surrounding cultures. Even so, it goes without saying that at times separation is offensive and that part of the encounter with the holy may involve *dread* fascination.

66. See Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p. 51 on the Holy as wholeness and completeness, not just separation.

67. See especially Douglas, *Natural Symbols*; Smith, *The Religion of the Landless*.

68. Some scholars have thought that this section is in fact a fragment of the Holiness Code. See George Buchanan Gray, *Numbers*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1903), p. 183; but contrast Philip J. Budd, *Numbers*, Word Biblical Commentary 5 (Waco: Word Books, 1984), p. 177.

69. Cf. Budd, *Numbers*, 178: "In the wider context they [vv. 32-36] function as a fitting conclusion to the section dealing with Israel's sin, specifically the rejection of the land in Num 14, but more generally the whole section of disaffection in Num 11-14. The tassels ought to be a safeguard against these besetting sins."

70. Budd, *Numbers*, p. 177 entitles this section "Tassels of Remembrance." Cf. the dual aspects of remembrance and encounter in Baker-Fletcher, *Xodus*, p. 75: "The 'X' in this way is a prophetic symbol of retrieval and remembrance" and has impact not only for African Americans, but also for Euro-Americans.

71. Cf. Richard Valantasis' comments on asceticism and the Gospel of Thomas, which exemplify the kind of dynamic I am talking about here: "At the heart of asceticism is the desire to create a new person as a minority person within a larger religious culture. In order to create a new person, there must be a withdrawal from the dominant modes of articulating subjectivity in order to create free space for something else to emerge. A redefinition of social relationships must also emerge from the new understanding of the new subjectivity, as well as a concurrent change in the symbolic universe to justify and support the new subjectivity. These are all accomplished through a rigorous set of intentional performances....My perspective on asceticism looks not only at the negative performances (rejecting wealth or sexuality), [termed in this paper *negative difference* or *separation*] but primarily toward the positive articulation of the new subjectivity that the gospel presents ('becoming a single one,' for example) [termed in this paper *positive difference* or *accountability*]. This positive perspective promotes a constructive reading of the text, so that all performances (whether negative or positive) are interpreted in the context of the larger project of creating an alternative identity within a larger and more dominant religious environment" (Richard Valantasis, *The Gospel of Thomas*, New Testament Readings, ed. John Court [New York: Routledge, 1997], pp. 22-23).

72. I'd like to thank Shane Berg for bringing this point to my attention and discussing it with me.

73. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, Anchor Bible 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), p. 230.

74. I hope in this way to get around the devastating critique of Christian interpretations of Old Testament legal material raised by Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), pp. 52-53, 54. My proposal does argue for an appropriation of the legal material that is, in some ways, *alegal* and therefore Christian/Protestant and subject to Levenson's critique. Yet at the same time, my proposal is also trying to do justice to those same laws and situations, especially the

dynamic at work within them and thus does not, or so it seems to me, fall under Levenson's judgment.

75. I'd like to thank David Stubbs for bringing this point to my attention and discussing it with me.

76. Cf. Lev. 20:26; Isa. 31:3, 8 (cf. 10:15); Hos. 11:9; etc., as well as Karl Barth's comments in the preface to the second edition of his Romans commentary: "My reply is that, if I have a system, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between time and eternity, and to my regarding this as possessing negative as well as positive significance: 'God is in heaven, and thou art on earth'" (Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns [London: Oxford University Press, 1968], p. 10). More recently, see Moltmann, *The Source of Life*, pp. 43-45.

77. See *OED*, p. 2352; cf. Baker-Fletcher, *Xodus*, pp. xvi, 80-81. Note that Greek χ , like XP, can be an abbreviation for Christ (*OED*, p. 2353).

78. See, e.g., Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

79. Note, for instance, the Nation of Islam's moral code (for some of its forbidden and positive aspects, see Baker-Fletcher, *Xodus*, p. 77; cf. p. xvi) and the impact this group has made on some of the worst inner-city situations of urban America. I would also mention various practices found among the Mormons (the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints): special ("holy") undergarments (accountability?), CTR ("choose the right") rings (attraction?), and so forth. Often Christian youth culture is effective at selecting these types of practices: witness the WWJD ("What Would Jesus Do?") paraphernalia for sale at Christian book stores. For a different example, cf. the comments of Richard Swinburne, "The Vocation of a Natural Theologian," in *Philosophers Who Believe: The Spiritual Journeys of 11 Leading Thinkers*, ed. Kelly James Clark (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), pp. 179-202 who discusses the practice of philosophy and the public identification of oneself as both a Christian and a philosopher in similar terms.

80. Cf. Baker-Fletcher, *Xodus*, p. 76: "as Malcolm recounted to Alex Haley: 'Mr. Muhammad taught that we would keep this 'x' until God Himself returned and gave us a Holy Name from His own mouth.' See Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965), p. 217.

BOOK REVIEWS

Achtemeier, Elizabeth. *Preaching Hard Texts of the Old Testament*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998.

Elizabeth Achtemeier shares with us, yet again, the fruits of a life of solid biblical scholarship. In *Preaching Hard Texts of the Old Testament*, she brings a freshness and a creativity to the text that is consistently rooted in a posture that honors the normative character of the text. While conversant with recent trends and "fads" in biblical studies, she discerns and delineates their inadequacies and determines to wrestle with the text with integrity. For example, her discussion of Gen. 3:14-19 (pp. 11-16) and the relationship between the sexes will not pass muster as being "politically correct," but it is both faithful to the text and to the greater biblical message: "The battle between the sexes will undoubtedly continue in our society...but in the church we know that the battle has been stilled and the love of Christ has joined women and men together" (p. 15).

Dr. Achtemeier begins on a lofty note: "I have always thought, and in fact taught, that if we have some problem with a passage in the Old Testament, it is not the Bible's problem. It is ours." Does she carry it off? Strictly speaking, no. But when one realizes that she operates as a biblical theologian, then the answer is, "Yes, she does." Again and again, Achtemeier urges the Old Testament text to a fuller exposition in light of the New Testament, never distorting or negating the meaning of the Old Testament text. While for some odd reason unknown to me, academics have hailed the death of biblical theology, it is a joy to see its influence yielding such fruitful results in this scholar's work. See her discussion of the sacrifice of Isaac. At some level, this biblical word is "incomplete" without the fuller explication of the sacrificial work of Jesus. Similarly she (rightly) subjects Ezra's teaching on divorce to the fuller light of Paul's teaching (pp. 80-85); and the message of Psalm 137, "Dashing the children on the rocks..." is superseded by Jesus' word of forgiveness in Luke 23:24 (pp. 105-110).

Achtemeier will not "trade in" biblical metaphors easily in the name of current sensitivities. Rather, she plumbs their depths for relevant meaning as she does on p. 28 with her discussion of God as Warrior and military language. Her wisdom on Sophia (pp. 111-15) is much needed today. Her discussion of Theophanies on p. 31 and Uzziah and the Ark (p. 73) are a needed corrective to the current, folksy religion that shares more in common with the self-help psychology section of a major bookstore than it does with vital biblical faith. Her treatment of the tragedy of Saul reflects her approach as one of vigorous honesty which allows the text to engage us in the real struggles of our world, never resorting to simplistic

answers, such as "obey and everything will be all right."

Once again, Dr. Achtemeier has provided a great resource to the church.

DAN G. JOHNSON
Trinity United Methodist Church
Gainesville, Florida

Longman, Tremper, III. *Making Sense of the Old Testament: Three Crucial Questions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998.

The volumes of the "Three Crucial Questions" series are derived from seminars by the same name, sponsored by Bridge Ministries of Detroit, Michigan. The editors assert that the books (and presumably the seminars) are based on the realization that "imperfect Christians seem to have no final answers" to certain critical issues related to our faith (p. 9). These volumes offer tentative answers to such crucial questions in the hopes of advancing the Christian faith in our times. Previous volumes have offered answers to three questions about Jesus (Murray J. Harris), the Bible (Grant R. Osborne), the Holy Spirit (Craig S. Keener), spiritual warfare (Clinton E. Arnold), and the last days (Daniel J. Lewis). The editors promise forthcoming volumes on topics of interest to all believers: three questions about women, black theology, the Trinity, salvation, moral reasoning, and racial reconciliation.

The topics chosen for the seminar and book series are indeed "crucial" to our faith, and as the history of interpretation demonstrates, none is more crucial to biblical hermeneutics than the way Christians relate to the Old Testament. Since Christians frequently raise tough questions about the Old Testament, this new volume is a welcome contribution. The book has a simple structure. There are three chapters, one devoted to each of the following questions. First, what are the keys to understanding the Old Testament? Second, is the God of the Old Testament also the God of the New Testament? Third, how is the Christian to apply the Old Testament to life?

The first chapter surveys the attractions and obstacles of Old Testament study and presents nine principles for successful interpretation, which the reader is to assume provide the "keys" to understanding the Old Testament. This portion of the volume is a lay-level introduction to biblical hermeneutics, and is a convenient summary of the author's earlier publications on this topic. The first principle is a defense of the traditional interest in authorial intent. Longman carefully navigates between newer approaches, many of which often abandon entirely the pursuit of authorial intent, and those who equate the human author's intent with God's intent (notably Walter Kaiser). Longman's conclusion is that the human authors sometimes "wrote better than they knew," meaning that "God's intention may surpass the conscious intention of the human author" (pp. 28 and 29). Other principles for reading the Old Testament include context, genre identification, attention to history and grammar, and so forth. At times Longman adopts a Christocentric (rather than Theocentric!) approach to the Old Testament, as in his discussion of principle 8: "Discover How the Scripture Passage Presents Jesus Christ" (pp. 52-53).

In the second chapter, Longman addresses the perceived contradictions between the

Testaments. In other words, Christians often have difficulty with the Old Testament because they perceive Yahweh as a vindictive, anger-filled despot, who seems to delight in punishing helpless victims. The chapter exposes the erroneous nature of such approaches to the Old Testament, by surveying three metaphors for God in the Bible: God as covenant king, God as warrior, and God as Immanuel. By stressing the continuity between the Testaments concerning these metaphors, Longman is able to conclude that the God of the New Testament is clearly the same God of the Old Testament, and that he revealed himself progressively through time (p. 101).

The third and final chapter addresses the issue of how the modern Christian is to apply the Old Testament to life. Longman begins the chapter with a brief survey of opposite extremes regarding Old Testament law: dispensationalism versus theonomy. In essence, the former overemphasizes discontinuity between the Testaments while the latter sees only continuity. The truth, Longman argues, lies somewhere between these extremes. The heart of the chapter then explores the most difficult part of the Old Testament to apply to modern Christians, namely, the laws of the Pentateuch. Relying on the well-worn distinctions between the moral law (the Ten Commandments), the ceremonial law (sacrificial and ritualistic regulations) and civil laws (societal legislation), Longman argues that the specific ceremonial and civil laws flow from the general moral laws of the Decalogue. Since the ceremonial and civil laws are defined culturally and presented in a specific redemptive-historical setting, they are no longer applicable to modern believers. Nevertheless such specific casuistic and ritualistic laws illustrate ethical principles that are still relevant.

Longman has a casual and easy-to-read style, which will make this a useful volume among lay-people and students interested in the Old Testament. But I was left wondering if he has asked the right questions, or to put it another way, if he has asked them specifically enough. Are these three general questions the questions plaguing modern Christians with regard to the Old Testament? There is no doubt that the most troubling question those of us in ministry hear today about the Old Testament is the problem of violence, particularly concerning the conquest narratives. The author's second chapter certainly addresses this question by affirming that Yahweh of the Old Testament is the same God as in the New. Particularly pertinent is his discussion of the metaphor of the Divine Warrior as a continuity between the Testaments. But there is much more that needs to be said on this point, especially concerning the centrality of the justice of God in both Testaments, and the modern misconception and overemphasis on the love (or better, the perceived sentimental drive) of Jesus in the New.

Likewise, another important question concerning the Old Testament is its applicability to modern life. Longman's third chapter is instructive at this point, but leaves us with further questions. For example, while the time-honored distinction between moral, ceremonial, and civil laws of the Pentateuch may be a useful starting point for discussion, it is inadequate to finally settle the question. What of sabbath-keeping? Observation of the sabbath is certainly part of the Decalogue, and by this definition is part of the moral law of God. But why then do so many Christians (in fact, all but the Seventh-Day Adventists) routinely alter this particular law? Some laws are both moral and civil, such as laws against adultery, stealing, and bearing false witness. Others are both moral and ceremonial, such as laws against idolatry and sabbath-breaking. The lines between the categories are not always easy to

determine. The moral-civil-ceremonial categories are a helpful start, but such distinctions are extra-biblical and are a bit arbitrary. It is better to accept some laws of the Pentateuch as broad and generally intended for all societies, while others are specific applications to Israelite culture and society. Rather than rely on an arbitrary distinction to determine when a law is applicable, is it not better to evaluate each law on a case-by-case basis?

Part of our difficulty in the West is our own context, specifically our industrial-urban setting. Much of the two-thirds world today (the majority of the world's population!) is closer to ancient Israel than we may think (and than we are). The specific applications of civil law are not so far removed from the culture and society of much of the world today. It may not be as satisfying initially, but I believe it is better to assert that the Old Testament law is God's word for us, though not his command to us in every situation. It is better to accept ancient Israel as the model and example of how God's revealed law is applied in that particular time and place. As we compare our own situation to theirs, we accept Pentateuchal law as confirmed by Christ (Matt. 5:17), and with the help of his Holy Spirit, the specifics of how we ought to love God and neighbor should become clear (for more on this approach, see Christopher J. H. Wright, *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990], pp. 260-65).

Longman has put us in his debt for addressing the most difficult topics involved in making sense of the Old Testament. This little volume will not settle those questions once and for all. But that would be too much to ask from any single volume, even one written by a scholar as gifted as Tremper Longman.

BILL T. ARNOLD
Asbury Theological Seminary
Wilmore, Kentucky

Currid, John D. *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997.

The historical reliability of the Old Testament has been a matter of sharp debate for generations. Scholars continue to be divided and scattered between two extreme poles: one being the minimalist view that most, if not all, of the historical material in the Old Testament is quite late (dated to the Persian period and later) and heavily dependent on other ANE cultures; the other claiming that the biblical presentation is altogether sound and historically accurate. Currid's work leans heavily toward this latter position and is an attempt to refute those denying the Old Testament's historical veracity. He does this, in particular, by presenting the Egyptian backgrounds to those portions of the Old Testament which deal in some respect with Egypt. Since certain scholars believe that much of the biblical material is a late creation, it naturally follows that those Hebrew writers would have known virtually nothing of the era about which they were writing (i.e., Joseph or Moses in their respective Egyptian settings). Currid wants to correct this notion by showing that the Egyptian backgrounds to these particular Old Testament passages, many of which, he argues, are polemical in nature, do indeed validate the authenticity of the biblical history.

Currid arranges the book in five parts. Part One is the introduction, wherein the author

asserts that, contrary to the opinion of many modern scholars, the ancient Hebrews were very well informed about Egyptian life and culture. He rejects the common idea that the Hebrew cosmology accounts are heavily dependent on their Mesopotamian counterparts, and stresses rather the dissimilarities between the two. Part Two, *Egyptian Elements in the Pentateuch*, is the bulk of Currid's work, not only in length but also in his efforts to prove the historicity of those particular passages in the Pentateuch involving Egypt. Part Three, *Contacts between Israel and Egypt in the Historical Books*, deals mainly with Solomon's reign (his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter, administration, etc.) and Shishak. Part Four, *Egyptian Wisdom Literature and the Poetical Books*, is basically a discussion involving the parallels between the "Instruction of Amenemope" and Proverbs. Part Five, *Egyptian and Israelite Prophecy*, describes Egyptian divination and examines certain Hebrew prophecies against Egypt.

It is unfortunate that Currid's Introduction and opening chapter of Part Two (i.e., the first three chapters of the book) are the weakest parts of his work. These sections deal with ancient cosmologies: those of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Israel. There are three basic faults. First, in an attempt to rescue the Old Testament from the claims, now quite dated, that the Hebrew account is completely dependent upon much earlier Babylonian lore,¹ Currid endeavors to de-emphasize the similarities between the two cosmologies and place greater emphasis upon their differences. The problems in doing so are multiple. To begin with, since such a powerful display of similarities does, in fact, exist between the Hebrew and Mesopotamian cosmologies (particularly the creation accounts), to emphasize their dissimilarities in an effort to prove their relative independence only weakens the *polemical* aspect which the Hebrew cosmology is leveling against the other. In other words, the similarities to the Babylonian material (though restricted for theological/polemical purposes) are the entire point of the Hebrew cosmology. Currid seems to impair this particular polemic, while he later depends on polemical arguments that are based on the *similarities* between Israel and *Egypt*. Interestingly, today there seems to be a growing understanding within scholarship which maintains that similar cosmological/mythological forms found in different cultures are not dependent upon direct borrowing. To note similarities between Mesopotamian and Levantine motifs says nothing about Israelite dependence on a Mesopotamian culture.² Furthermore, once Currid de-emphasizes the similarities between the Hebrew and Mesopotamian cosmologies, he then, in an effort to further distance the two stresses all the similarities between Hebrew and *Egyptian* cosmologies. These similarities seem more general and less impressive than he imagines. Ironically, he emphasizes an Egyptian milieu to the point that one could see a Hebrew dependence on Egypt!

A second basic fault in Part I is Currid's treatment of the Hebrew cosmology itself. For example, *bēre'šit* is given the standard definition of "in the beginning" without any mention of other possible readings.³ The creation is understood to be *ex nihilo*, which is based more on theological presuppositions than Hebrew syntax. Such an understanding of these concepts allows Currid to make a strong comparison to *Egyptian* cosmology, which portrays Ptah as speaking everything into existence.

One final fault, which tends to run throughout the book, is Currid's tone. He is quite inflammatory towards the "liberals" and the "revisionists." His work tends to be 'preaching to the choir' more than dialoguing with the scholarly community. Ultimately, he damages his own endeavors, as well as those of other conservatives, by fueling the 'fundamentalist' stigma.

Apart from these cosmological/cosmogonic issues, the rest of Currid's work is lucid and insightful (Part 2: Egyptian Elements in the Pentateuch; Part 3: Contacts between Israel and Egypt in the Historical books; Part 4: Egyptian Wisdom Literature and the Poetical Books; Part 5: Egyptian and Israelite Prophecy). He is much more comfortable dealing with those biblical passages with direct Egyptian contact, and his understanding of Egyptian cultural backgrounds is thorough. In these chapters, Currid reviews the history of Egyptological scholarship, often supplying his own opinion on the matter. A few examples would be chapter 4, Potiphar's position in society; chapter 10, Shishak and the Bubastite Portal (a partially legible inscription which records the Palestinian cities he conquered or subjugated); and chapter 12, Egyptian divination. His strongest work tends to be in Part Two, Egyptian Elements in the Pentateuch, and in particular his treatments dealing with serpents. In chapter 5, for instance, Currid discusses the first confrontation of Moses with the magicians (Exod. 7:8ff.), and in chapter 8 he deals with the episode involving the fiery snakes and the Bronze Serpent (Num. 21:4ff.). In both cases Currid delivers powerful and original arguments for a polemical understanding of these incidents. Having provided the Egyptian background regarding serpentine lore, he demonstrates how both instances could be interpreted as Yahweh mocking the Egyptian culture, religion, pharaoh, and ultimately the Egyptian gods. Yahweh displays his authority *over* (Exodus 7) and *through* (Numbers 21) serpents,⁴ which, in Egyptian culture, were endowed with various powers.

Overall, Currid's work is perceptive and vigorous. Although it is somewhat defensive in tone, it nevertheless provides valuable insights into the Egyptian backgrounds of the Hebrew Bible, as well as fresh approaches in interpreting various biblical passages with direct Egyptian connections. This volume is an excellent source for background material and would also be a fine resource for college and seminary students.

NOTES

1. Currid is especially sensitive to Friedrich Delitzsch's castigation of the Old Testament writers for their outright plagiarism of Babylonian material. See note 16, p. 28. Also see Delitzsch, *Babel and Bible* (New York: Putnam, 1903), pp. 149, 175, 176.

2. See Dorothy Irvin, *Mytharion: The Comparison of Tales from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East* (AOAT 32; Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon and Bercker/Neukirchener, 1978), esp. p. 112; Susan Niditch, *Folklore and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993); W. G. Doty, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1986).

3. Gen. 1:1 is understood by many as a circumstantial clause, dependent on verse 3, while verse 2 is parenthetical: "When God began to create...(now the earth was formless and void...) God said..." Others see verse 1 as a title or caption of the whole creative process. Currid fails to acknowledge the complexity of these verses. For a thorough discussion see G. Wehnart, *Genesis 1-15* (Word Biblical Commentary; Waco, TX: Word, 1987), pp. 11-17.

4. Healing, a common characteristic of Egyptian serpent gods, was only possible here through Yahweh's command.

PETER HERBERT DONGELL
Hebrew Union College
Cincinnati, Ohio

Hill, Andrew E. *Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 25D; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1998.

The editor and publishers of the Anchor Bible series have a tradition of producing large commentaries on small biblical books (e.g., 979 pages on Amos and 701 pages on Hosea), but Andrew Hill's contribution on Malachi takes us to a new level: 436 densely-printed pages on 55 verses.

In the introduction, the author includes sections on textual, canonical, literary, and historical considerations, as well as brief discussions of the date of Malachi's oracles and the use of Malachi in subsequent Jewish and Christian literature. This introduction is followed by an extensive bibliography that includes many works not directly related to Malachi, and 260 pages of meticulous commentary relying upon the author's new translation. The book concludes with appendices on a variety of topics related to interpreting the prophet, as well as extensive indices.

Most sections in the introduction survey the history of interpretation on a given topic and conclude with the author's position. On the question of the nature of "Malachi" as either a contrived appellation for the anonymous person responsible for compiling the book or a proper name of the author of the oracles, Hill sides with those scholars who take it as a proper name, probably meaning "my messenger." He further speculates that it may be an abbreviated theophoric name in the same vein as "Zechariah," that is, without a connecting "y" vowel. Hence, the original form might have been something like *mafākyaḥ(ā)*, or s'Malachiah," meaning "messenger of Yahweh" (pp. 15-18). In terms of the specific type of prophetic oracles found in Malachi, the author agrees with Claus Westermann and classifies it as prophetic disputation speech formula, part of the standard Old Testament prophetic judgement speech against the nations. The speeches contain the prophetic declaration, followed by the hypothetical audience rebuttal, and conclude with the prophetic refutation.

As a scholar who posits "the person and presence of God" as the theological center and organizing tenet for the Old Testament, Hill sees Malachi "as primarily a theology of Yahweh" (pp. 46-47). As much as we may appreciate this emphasis in the prophecies of Malachi, the perils of postulating such a center for the Old Testament generally are well known. One wonders how helpful it is to postulate a superintending *Mitte* (center) as vague as "divine presence."

After surveying scholarship on the date of Malachi's composition, Hill turns to a purely linguistic analysis, which has the advantage of being more objective (pp. 80-84). Relying on previous studies that establish a continuum between Classical Biblical Hebrew (the Deuteronomistic History) and Late Biblical Hebrew (secondary extensions to the priestly corpus), Hill proposes a round figure of 500 B.C. as the most reasonable date of composition for Malachi. This proposal stretches the consensus opinion, which places Malachi in the first half of the fifth century, and it precludes those positions that place Malachi after Nehemiah. The author also provides a healthy overview of the Persian period's history and its implications for interpreting Malachi, including four maps and four charts (pp. 51-76). There is an eight-page glossy insert with photographs and line art to shed light on the Persian period (found at p. 212).

At times the reader gets much more than expected from a commentary. For example, in

the introduction's section on "unity" (pp. 18-23), the author begins by describing three approaches to the Bible: the historical, the theological, and the literary. After discussing each, he explains how the theological approach to the Bible continues in the work of modern canonical criticism, especially as defined by James Sanders and Brevard Childs (even though Childs disavows the terminology). After a brief explanation of the differences between Sanders and Childs, the author uses two more pages to describe what all this means for interpreting Malachi. Most of these discussions are quite useful as surveys of various trends and emphases in the discipline, and few commentaries can afford the luxury of so much background and survey material. The author includes other such summaries in the text-critical presentation (pp. 3-12), his discussion of canonical considerations (pp. 12-15), the problem of genre classification in Old Testament studies (pp. 23-25), a survey of scholarly work on prophetic disputation speeches (pp. 35-37), and to a lesser degree, a survey of recent developments in Old Testament theology (pp. 46-47). One wonders, however, if all of these items—as informative as they are—are necessary for a commentary on Malachi, especially one intended for a scholarly readership.

This volume will no doubt be of enormous benefit to beginners in the field as well as professionals, though scholars may actually find it tedious to work through. All in all, however, we must be grateful for at least a few academic publishers and editors who allow such extensive treatment and space devoted to such a small biblical book. In this sense, the commentary is a rarity. Like most commentaries being produced today, this one will be most widely read for its introduction and turned to subsequently as a reference tool on the text of Malachi. Hill's commentary itself is painstakingly exhaustive, perhaps the most comprehensive biblical commentary I have ever seen. He is to be commended for an impressive amount of work. The result is a volume that will become one of the stock reference tools on Malachi, more because of its extensiveness than its innovations.

BILL T. ARNOLD
Asbury Theological Seminary
Wilmore, Kentucky

Dunn, James D.C. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1998.

In this major new treatment of Paul's theology, James Dunn of Durham University makes an impressive contribution to Pauline studies and New Testament theology. This is certainly a text to be included in all New Testament collections, and it will be of interest to all students of Paul's writings. Especially significant is the book's rare combination of clarity, incisiveness, and scope. Dunn writes clearly enough for a mature college student to grasp, and yet he engages the giants in the field productively, contributing effectively on their level. In twenty-five sections Dunn covers seven major themes (including chapters on God and Humankind, Humankind under Indictment, The Gospel of Jesus Christ, The Beginning of Salvation, The Process of Salvation, The Church, and How Should Believers Live?) introduced and followed by a helpful prologue and epilogue. Exhaustive bibliogra-

phies introduce each chapter, and the work is marked by fitting thematic progressions and appropriate topical excursions along the way.

Having discussed thoughtfully the question of whether a theology of Paul can be written, Dunn's approach begins with Romans, arguably the greatest theological work of the greatest Christian theologian. From thence, Dunn develops a model of theology as a dialogue or sets of dialogues—not simply an abstract set of ideas—wherein Paul's theological views and frameworks were forged. After all, what we have to work with is the letters of Paul, and these were produced as epistolary responses to specific issues within particular contextual settings. Nevertheless, Romans offers the most fitting template from which to construct one's presentation of Paul's theological work, as it is here that Paul's explorations are most comprehensive and far reaching.

This move leads Dunn to a fit ordering of his own explorations, beginning with Paul's treatment of God. Highlighting the provenance of Jewish monotheism, combined with Paul's personally transformative experience, Dunn moves from Paul's lively theism to a thoughtful discussion of the dialectics of human experience. Here the realities of human fallenness lead to discussions of "sin and death" and their effects. The law, of course, serves to define sin and convict humanity of it, but sin turns law into *gramma*, changing it from a gift of God to an instrument of death. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, however, proclaims the new era of the "eschatological 'now'" in which transformation is indeed possible. Normed by the ministry of Jesus, effected by his death and resurrection, worshipped as the preexistent one, and anticipated as the eternal Lord, christology is the pivotal center of Paul's theological platform.

In chapters 5 and 6, Dunn poses what may be one of his most creative treatments of Paul's thought: "The Beginning of Salvation" followed by "The Process of Salvation." This juxtaposition allows Dunn to develop meaningful discussions of such topics as justification by faith, participation in Christ, the gift of the Spirit, baptism, and other topics in chapter 5, while such topics as eschatological tension and Israel are reserved for chapter 6. This sort of division allows the full treatment of the "already" accompanied with the "not-yet" character of Paul's theology. It also brings works and transformation into the discussion meaningfully without compromising the importance of salvation by faith. Dunn then goes on to discuss matters related to the church and ministry, and then ethics, in chapters 7 and 8.

The great strength of Dunn's outline and approach is that it allows him comprehensive treatments of major issues in Pauline theology, and in doing so, he is able to sketch helpful connections between the relevant themes. While particular scholars will take issue with Dunn on one matter or another, this book is well worth considering on the whole, and on specific matters as well. In his postlegomena, Dunn comments on the importance of taking into account at least three levels of dialogue within Paul's theology—the reflective dialogue within himself, his dialogue with his Jewish tradition and convictions, and his many sets of dialogues with members of his communities of faith. Keeping these levels of engagement in mind helps later interpreters appreciate more fully the dynamic character of Paul's epistolary theologizing—a worthy interest indeed—as is this book!

PAUL N. ANDERSON
Yale Divinity School
New Haven, Connecticut

Pfizner, Victor C. *Hebrews*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997.

Worship lies at the center of the Christian life, and according to Victor C. Pfizner, a call to true Christian worship is the central message of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Pfizner, professor of New Testament and principal of Luther Seminary, North Adelaide, South Australia, has contributed a rhetorically, literarily, and theologically sensitive volume to the Abingdon New Testament Commentaries Series. The aim of this series is to address the needs and interests of pastors, theological students, and other church leaders, taking into account the technical scholarly literature but communicating in a way that can be understood by non-specialists. Pfizner fulfills this aim admirably. The volume has three basic divisions: an introduction, the commentary proper, and a select bibliography.

The introduction treats the standard questions of author, date, historical situation, and structure, all quite vexing issues with this epistle. The discussion of authorship is necessarily inconclusive. However, Pfizner is bolder regarding the date, departing from the (rough) consensus dating of the mid-90s and arguing convincingly for the late 50s or early 60s, based in part on Hebrews' silence about the destruction of the temple (AD 70). In addition to these standard questions, the introduction contains excellent summaries of Hebrews' literary and rhetorical qualities and its "World of Thought."

The structure of the commentary proper is threefold: literary analysis, exegetical analysis, and theological/ethical analysis. Generally, Pfizner does well in all three areas, but, as one might expect with this particular epistle, his literary and rhetorical analysis is especially detailed and nuanced. Hebrews is the most self-consciously rhetorical writing in the New Testament. Inclusions, alliteration, hookwords, and a dozen other tropes abound. But even with Hebrews, commentators have occasionally "found" more than is there. This is especially true with the rhetorical structure known as chiasm (A, B, C, C', B', A'). While Hebrews no doubt uses this technique, Pfizner on occasion seems to create them by seeing dubious relationships between clauses (pp. 48, 195). But in general his judgments are sound and his observations insightful. Inclusions, used pervasively by Hebrews (see esp. 4:1-16 and 10:19-23), are regularly noted by Pfizner. Transitions, preparations, and special occurrences and concentrations of words are effectively mined for their exegetical yield.

Pfizner offers a thorough exegesis of the principle argument in Hebrews: a series of amplified comparisons demonstrating the superiority of God's Son over angels, Moses, the Levitical priesthood, etc., and the lesser to greater argument for faithful endurance ensuing from those comparisons. At one point, however, he includes the enigmatic Melchizedek in the list of comparisons (p. 21) and later suggests that Hebrews' use of this figure constitutes an implicit lesser to greater argument, i.e., that Jesus is greater than Melchizedek (p. 104). But as Pfizner's own exegesis makes clear, Melchizedek is a type of Christ. The author's argument is not that Jesus is superior to Melchizedek (although presumably he would have thought this), but that Jesus' superiority to Abraham and to the Levitical priests is prefigured in Melchizedek.

Pfizner's novel contribution to the study of Hebrews lies in the prominence he gives to the theme of worship. Neglect of worship leading to apostasy is seen as the "real issue" behind the letter (p. 27). Indeed, the whole letter can be seen in the light of its conclusion (12:18-13:25) as "a call to worship" (p. 182). It is certainly the case that the recipients'

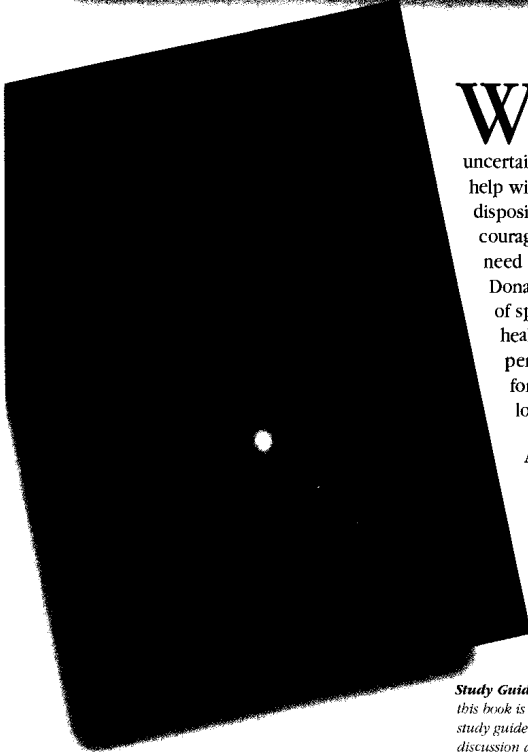
reinvigorated faith ought to express itself, among other ways, in worship. It is also true that at certain climactic points in Hebrews (4:16; 10:19-25; 12:22-24; 13:15-16) exhortations are framed in liturgical language of "approaching the throne of grace," "entering the sanctuary," etc. This being granted, there are occasions when Pfitzner's definition of "worship" is too expansive, and almost any doxological, eschatological, or ethical affirmation becomes an aspect of it (pp. 52, 83, 191). If the entirety of Christian existence can be subsumed under the category of "worship," then it would be surprising if Hebrews did *not* make it a central concern. Nevertheless, worship in a distinctively Christian mode is critical to this epistle, and Pfitzner rightly calls attention to it.

The commentary is uncluttered by footnotes, using instead parenthetical references to works in the bibliography. The concluding bibliography then gives full information about both significant monographs and articles (all English or English translations) and commentaries (mostly in English, but also the most noteworthy German and French works). The latter group includes brief annotations that will guide those wishing to do further study.

Among those "mid-range" commentaries that make no claim to be full reference volumes but aim at well-informed, accessible exegesis, Pfitzner's is among the best. Pastors, students, and conscientious lay persons will find Pfitzner's *Hebrews* to be an intelligible, learned, and reliable guide.

N. CLAYTON CROY
Trinity Lutheran Seminary
Columbus, Ohio

Experience the Healing



We all need some kind of healing. We need solace from the tension, pace, and uncertainty of our daily lives. We need help with our addictions, with our dispositions, with our lack of hope, courage, and discipline. And we need help helping each other. Donald Demaray explores aspects of spiritual, emotional, and physical healing that lead to the kind of personal wholeness people want for themselves and those they love.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Donald E. Demaray is Senior Beeson Professor of Biblical Preaching at Asbury Theological Seminary. He earned his Ph.D. at Edinburgh University. He has written, edited, or compiled over 30 books, including Basic Beliefs: An Introduction to Christian Theology and Laughter, Joy and Healing.

***Study Guide Available:** The 13-week agenda of this book is ideal for small group study. A separate study guide is available to facilitate group discussion and personal reflection on each topic. Study Guide ISBN 89367-239-4.*

Experiencing Healing and Wholeness A Journey in Faith

Donald E. Demaray

312 pages, softcover — ISBN 89367-233-5 — 14.99

Order today! Call: **1-800-348-2513**

Light
& **LIFE**
COMMUNICATIONS



First Fruits

THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

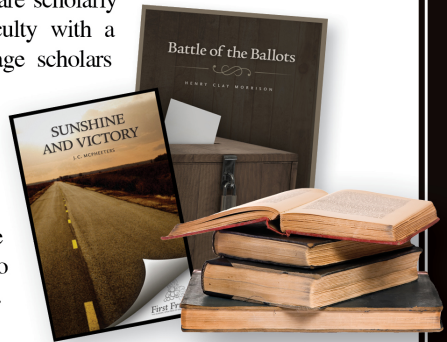
About First Fruits Press

Under the auspices of B. L. Fisher Library, First Fruits Press is an online publishing arm of Asbury Theological Seminary. The goal is to make academic material freely available to scholars worldwide, and to share rare and valuable resources that would not otherwise be available for research. First Fruits publishes in five distinct areas: heritage materials, academic books, papers, books, and journals.

In the Journals section, back issues of *The Asbury Journal* will be digitized and so made available to a global audience. At the same time, we are excited to be working with several faculty members on developing professional, peer-reviewed, online journals that would be made freely available.

Much of this endeavor is made possible by the recent gift of the Kabis III scanner, one of the best available. The scanner can produce more than 2,900 pages an hour and features a special book cradle that is specifically designed to protect rare and fragile materials. The materials it produces will be available in ebook format, easy to download and search.

First Fruits Press will enable the library to share scholarly resources throughout the world, provide faculty with a platform to share their own work and engage scholars without the difficulties often encountered by print publishing. All the material will be freely available for online users, while those who wish to purchase a print copy for their libraries will be able to do so. First Fruits Press is just one way the B. L. Fisher Library is fulfilling the global vision of Asbury Theological Seminary to spread scriptural holiness throughout the world.



asbury.to/firstfruits



ASBURY
theological
SEMINARY

asburyseminary.edu
800.2ASBURY