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The Whole Counsel of God: A Tribute to E. Herbert Nygren

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THE WHOLE COUNSEL of GOD

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The Whole Counsel of God

Essays in Honor

of

E. Herbert Nygren

edited by

Paul R. House
and
William A. Heth

The Whole Counsel of God

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Preface

Several people deserve thanks for their part in this volume. Daryl Yost, Provost of Taylor University, provided funding for the project. Dan Jordan and Roger Judd at Taylor University Press, and Jim Garringer, campus photographer, helped produce the book. Members of the Department of Biblical Studies, Christian Education, and Philosophy worked hard to complete their articles. Bill Heth cheerfully edited the footnotes. More than anyone else, Joanne Giger deserves credit for the volume's completion. She spent many hours typing and formatting the manuscript.

Herb Nygren has served Taylor University faithfully for over twenty years. As chair of the Department of Biblical Studies, Christian Education, and Philosophy, he has modelled sound teaching and solid scholarship. Upon retirement, he leaves us a legacy of dedication, service, and love for Christ. The members of his department offer these essays as a small token of our esteem.

Paul R. House
Upland, Indiana
Easter, 1991

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Faye Chechowich, M.R.E.
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Remembrance and Review

Dr. E. Herbert Nygren was honored as Taylor University's Professor of the Year in 1973. The award was no surprise to those of us who were students at the time. Dr. Nygren was proclaimed "favorite professor" by many students. We appreciated his classes because we were challenged and taught how to think and express our faith with reasoned clarity. As I contemplated the schedule for my last semester at Taylor, one of my non-negotiables was a final course with Dr. Nygren. That "Faith and Learning" seminar was one the highlights of my Taylor education. Years before he had declared his intention to teach. He then qualified himself for the task. I am one among many students who is grateful.

E. Herbert Nygren is a Brooklyn-born, Taylor University graduate. The following caption accompanies his picture in the 1951 yearbook:

E. Herbert Nygren
Galatians 2:20
Psychology
Life Work: Teaching
Language Club, Philosophy & Religion Club, Student Pastor

These few lines describe his focus and interests during college years, and also reflect commitments which would guide future decision making. From the beginning, Herb's life has been characterized by broad interdisciplinary interest and by continued involvement in pastoral ministry.

Following graduation and marriage to Louise in 1951, Herb began theological studies at Biblical Seminary and studies in Philosophy at New York University. During these years he pastored St. John's

Evangelical Church and Immanuel Methodist Church in Brooklyn. He was awarded the Master of Divinity and M.A. in Philosophy in 1954, and was ordained by the New York conference of the Methodist Church the same year.

After a year-long pastorate in Baltimore, Maryland, Herb, motivated by his desire to teach, began doctoral studies in Philosophy at New York University. Shelton Methodist Church in Shelton, Connecticut provided opportunity for pastoral ministry as he worked on the degree. The Ph.D. in Philosophy was granted in 1960.

Emory and Henry College in Emory, Virginia invited Dr. Nygren to join the faculty in 1960. He taught Philosophy and Religion, and served as department chair until 1969. This cross-disciplinary focus was to be characteristic of the rest of his teaching career.

He accepted an invitation to teach at Taylor University in 1969 when Taylor was being shaped by the leadership of Dr. Milo Rediger, one of Herb's former professors and mentors.

In his tenure at Taylor University, Herb taught courses in Philosophy, Religion, and Biblical Studies. He also helped to create and teach cross-disciplinary courses that facilitated the integration of faith and learning. In addition to other institutional responsibilities, Herb served as department chair for over 20 years.

Herb has continued to serve the local church in the area around Upland. Congregations in Windsor, Pleasant Grove, Jalapa, Roll, and Oak Chapel have called him Pastor. He actively participates in the lay training program of the Methodist church.

E. Herbert Nygen, teacher and pastor, retires from formal service to Taylor University, leaving the Department of Biblical Studies, Christian Education, and Philosophy with ten faculty members who are committed to the authority of Scripture, to the integration of truth with life, and to the preparation of students for effective service. The department faculty he helped to recruit will continue to reflect his commitment to sound scholarship and involved pastoral care. In addition, Dr. E. Herbert Nygren will be remembered by many appreciative students, who will acknowledge as did a recent alumna chapel speaker, "I began to learn how to think in Dr. Nygren's class."

Part I
Biblical Studies

Evangelical Church and later named Methodist Central in Brooklyn. He was awarded the Master of Divinity and M.A. in Philosophy in 1954, and was ordained by the New York Conference of the Methodist Church the same year.

After a year as pastor in Bethlehem, Maryland, Herb, motivated by his desire to learn, began doctoral studies in Medieval Philosophy at New York University. Bethlehem Methodist Church in Easton, Connecticut provided opportunity for pastoral ministry as he worked on the degree. The Ph.D. in Philosophy was granted in 1961.

Emory and Henry College in Emory, Virginia invited Dr. Nygren to join the faculty in 1962. His teaching of Greek, Religion, and served as department chairman for 1962–1976. This experience would be characteristic of the rest of his teaching career.

He accepted an invitation to teach at Taylor University in 1969 when Taylor was being guided by the leadership of Dr. Milo Rediger, one of Herb's former professors and mentors.

In his time at Taylor University, he taught courses in Philosophy, Religion, and Biblical Studies. He also helped to create and teach new disciplinary courses that featured the integration of faith and learning. In addition to other teaching responsibilities, Herb served as department chair for over 20 years.

Herb has continued to serve the local churches in the Evangelical United Congregations in Upland. Congregations in Upland, Pleasant Grove, Jerico, Roll, and Gas Church have called him Pastor. He also served as Dean in the lay training programs of the Methodist Church.

H. Herbert Nygren, teacher and pastor, continues his ministry at Taylor University, leading the Department of Biblical Studies, Christian Education, and Philosophy with his faculty members who are committed to the authority of Scripture, to the instruction of truth, and to the preparation of students for effective ministry. The department members respect and honor what is central to effective teaching as many students pass over through its halls. Dr. H. Herbert Nygren will be remembered by many dedicated students who were challenged to think, stimulated to new understanding, and encouraged to know more and more fully the Gospel of Christ.

Larry R. Helyer, Ph.D.
Fuller Theological Seminary

1

The Old Testament and the Undergraduate

> Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed
> about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house
> who brings out of his storeroom new treasures *as well as*
> *old* (Mt 13:52).

The Old Testament is the most neglected treasure the Church possesses. This is puzzling, especially in a time of widely available, modern translations, study Bibles, study guides and commentaries. Why are there, for example, still so few sermons expounding its message? Why so few Christian young people who truly know and love its contents? Why has its significance not dawned upon our generation with power and conviction? These questions deserve a book-length response.[1] My purpose in this article is much more modest. In grateful recognition of Dr. E. Herbert Nygren's 22 years of teaching Old Testament survey classes at Taylor University, I wish to offer a rationale for devoting three valuable semester hours to the study of the Hebrew Bible.

Why teach the Old Testament as a required course? It will not pass muster if we answer that it has always been a required course and so we must continue this tradition. Scarcely more convincing is the concern that our constituency will think we are going "liberal" if we drop it. We improve our position if we recall that the Church has contended valiantly for the place of the Old Testament in the canon of Holy Scripture. Against the Marcionites of the second century to their latter day sympathizers like Harnack and Bultmann, the Church has maintained that Christians read the Old Testament as part of their

Scriptures.[2] Dropping it from the list of required courses displays a failure of nerve to continue this long standing commitment to the status of the Old Testament. Evangelical Christian colleges play a key role in upholding the view of the historic Christian Church. We further strengthen our ground by adding that to be liberally educated necessitates an acquaintance with the Old Testament--after all, Western civilization is permeated by ideas and allusions drawn from it.[3]

Do the above arguments, however, justify squeezing three hours out of an already crammed curriculum which we claim is designed to enable the individual to be all she or he was meant to be? I propose to defend the continued place of Old Testament survey (or its equivalent) in our college curriculum. My defense consists of an urgent insistence that the theological integrity of Christianity is at stake. A full-orbed evangelical theology is simply not possible without the foundation of the Old Testament. I am becoming concerned about the future of an authentic evangelical faith when there are signs everywhere of a growing ignorance of the Old Testament. It has been my experience that in class sizes of about 60 students, only two to four students have read the Old Testament in its entirety--less than 10%! Of course a majority of the students have at least read portions of the Old Testament and only a handful have not even read it at all. Still, one wonders what kind of understanding exists when the knowledge is so smattering.

This leads to a crucial question: What are those truths which are vitally important to the maintenance of our evangelical faith? I suspect that, although there would be some overlap and commonality, there would also be considerable diversity of response among those who teach Old Testament survey. I will simply share my thinking on this subject.

My own stance toward the educational process is most closely akin to what Elliot W. Eisner calls "academic rationalism."[4] I am committed to exposing my students to the great theological ideas of the Old Testament not only for their intellectual development, but especially for their spiritual development. I have slowly gravitated

toward the isolation of four core truths around which my course is constructed. These core truths operate in a spiral fashion so that there is repetition and enlargement throughout the entire course.

Before I elaborate on these core truths let me first indicate where I believe evangelicals need to place more emphasis. If my perceptions are correct, the overwhelming majority of our students affirm the inspiration, authority and inerrancy of Scripture. In spite of a woeful ignorance of the content of the Old Testament, they nonetheless have an abiding confidence in its authority. I think we are probably spending too much time tilting with foes of Scriptural authority and trying to answer questions our students are not really asking. The real issue lies in the application of Scripture to daily life.

I turn to the first of the core truths. The plan of salvation in the Old and New Testaments is essentially one. There is a unity of God's redemptive activity. Both Testaments proclaim this unity. For whatever reasons, many of my students think that God saved human beings differently in the Old Testament era than he does now. The problem is that if such a view is entertained, the Old Testament lacks an immediate relevance and hence tends to be ignored. This is unfortunate because there is such a richness in the Old Testament witness to God's saving activity. The narrative form is one of the most appealing and powerful modes of communication. The Old Testament tells stories about real people facing real situations. With some bridging of the cultural distance, these stories add immeasurably to the experience of the student.[5] Consequently, I structure my course so that the student can appreciate the essential unity of salvation; this is a recurring core truth. I will select two segments of the course which demonstrate this unity of salvation: the Abraham cycle in Genesis 11:27-25:11 and the Exodus from Egypt in Exodus 1-15.

There are theologians who believe that God's promise of blessing and salvation is the leading theme in the Old Testament.[6] Certainly it looms large in any reckoning of its central message. The promise of God as covenanted to Abraham inaugurates a new chapter in salvation history. It also outlines the essentials of God's kingdom

program. In many ways, all that follows the story of Abraham is but an elaboration of what God promised to and through this patriarch. Since space limitations prevent a consideration of the skill with which the Abraham cycle is crafted, I content myself by summarizing the theological contributions of this segment of the Old Testament.

In the first place, the call of Abraham represents a decisive moment in the unfolding history of redemption. The great question of Genesis 11 concerning the destiny of the scattered nations begins to receive an answer. The Lord will bless those nations through the offspring of Abraham. Thus Gen. 1-11 stands over against Gen. 12- Rev. 20 in the relationship of problem to solution.[7] God's saving plan, remarkably, begins with the call of a solitary man and his wife. Their offspring will be the channel of blessing for the entire world. God's strategy comes down to this: it is through the *One* that the *Many* will be reached. That *One* is the promised *seed* of Abraham (singular), as Paul pointedly insists in Galatians 3:16 (cf. Ro 5:12-21).

Secondly, the story of Abraham is, at several points, typological; that is, it points beyond itself to the coming of Jesus Christ, the ultimate seed of Abraham. This is supremely so in the 22nd chapter of Genesis. This episode anticipates or prefigures the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ which took place very near the location where Abraham was going to offer up his only son Isaac whom he loved (cf. Jn 3:16).

Thirdly, this cycle of stories highlights the faithfulness of God to his covenant promise. The Lord, who added to his inviolable word of promise an oath (cf. Heb 6:13-20), is the covenant-keeping God. Great is his faithfulness. At the end of Abraham's earthly pilgrimage, we read: "and the Lord had blessed him in every way" (24:1). This was in fulfillment of the Lord's initial promise. "I will bless you" (12:2). Fittingly, the story ends with this statement: "God blessed his son Isaac" (25:11).

Fourthly, this story underscores the necessity of obedience to the will of the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. The

climactic test of Genesis 22 comes down to this: "Now I know that you fear God..."(22:12). Abraham was blessed because he obeyed. The old gospel song summarizes the life and example of Abraham-- "Trust and obey, for there's no other way...." Abraham's faith was demonstrated by his obedience--a point repeatedly made by New Testament writers such as Paul (I Th. 1:3; Ro 1:5; 6:17; Gal 5:6), James (Jas 2:21-24), and John (1 Jn 2:3-5).

Finally, we consider the soteriological implications of this section of Scripture. What must one do to be saved? How is it possible for one to be in a right relationship with God? The answer peals forth in Genesis 15:6: "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness." This liberating affirmation re-echoes in the words of our Lord (Mk 1:15) as well as the apostle to the Gentiles (Ro 3:22; cf. Ro 4:3,9,22; Gal 3:6). It is essential that our students realize that Abraham is "the father of all who believe...in order that righteousness might be credited to them" (Ro 4:12). The doctrine of justification by faith is securely grounded in the story of Abraham.

When one turns to the story of the Exodus, more light is cast upon God's redemptive program. The various aspects of that deliverance from Egypt enable one to glimpse the grand unity of God's plan of salvation. Four features of the Exodus enable us to appreciate this fact. First of all, the deliverance was essentially an act of liberation or redemption. It was liberation from both political and spiritual bondage. Secondly, it had as its goal or purpose the creation of a unique people of God. "I will take you as my own people and I will be your God" (Ex 6:7). Thirdly, the deliverance from Egypt was completely dependent upon divine intervention. Military options for Moses and the Israelites would have been futile and negotiations and diplomacy a farce. Only an unprecedented display of divine power could rescue Israel from pharoanic clutches. Fourthly, despite the necessity of divine initiative and intervention, the Lord's deliverance did employ human agency. A Moses and an Aaron were raised up by the Lord to announce and mediate the rescue operation.

As we reflect on these four characteristics of the Lord's deliverance of Israel, it is striking how this pattern is reflected in New

Testament soteriology. Thus the salvation accomplished for us in Christ can be described in terms of the Exodus. "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin." (Col 1:13, cf. Gal 1:4) The purpose or goal of New Testament salvation is likewise peoplehood. In a remarkable passage applying Exodus 19:5,6 to the Church, Peter can remind his Christian readers that "you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God..." (1 Pe. 2:9,10). No point is more insisted upon in the New Testament than the necessity of divine initiative and intervention if one is to be delivered from sin's condemnation and dominion. As was the case in Moses' day, so in the Messianic era, salvation is absolutely dependent upon a gracious God who comes to us. There is no room for auto-emancipation in the New Testament gospel. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph 2:8,9). Finally, we have a corresponding involvement of human agents in New Testament salvation--those who proclaim the good news of deliverance. In a passage based upon Isaiah 52:7 (which itself employs the new Exodus motif), the apostle Paul makes the point that the Lord uses human preachers in the saving of a people. "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (Ro 10:14,15). The bottom line in this comparison is simply this: there is a fundamental harmony and unity in the Lord's plan of salvation. To be sure, there is a greater elaboration and an advanced experience of "such a great salvation" in the New Testament. But there is an undergirding continuity which binds the people of God together from Adam and Eve to the last sinner who shall be saved by grace.

One may ask: Why the necessity of insisting upon the unity of God's saving program? What is at stake in its denial? In short, the dependability and trustworthiness of God is at stake. In practical terms, there is no firmer foundation for our salvation than the One, true and living God who has one plan of salvation to create one people of God through one means--trust in the one Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 4:5-6). The simplicity of this truth is at once its profoundest justification. Paul's outburst in Romans eight settles forever the question of God's dependability. "What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?...For I am convinced that [nothing] in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 8:31,38,39). And, we are reminded, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8).

I turn to a second core truth which reflects a considerable shift of perspective in my own spiritual pilgrimage. Simply stated it is faith and politics. My spiritual roots are in Fundamentalism. I perceived the relationship between faith and politics to be something which occurred every four years during presidential elections. In the interim, one simply retreated from the political arena and complained about or lamented the vicissitudes of the political process. What has happened is that with each passing year of teaching, I become more convinced that faith and politics is a crucial issue. In short, I have elevated it to the level of a core truth.

This development in my own thinking has been prompted, I believe, by a growing awareness that the Old Testament records, in the life of Israel, a remarkable political experiment which provides a splendid case study for political issues--issues which continue to be at the very heart of human existence. Had I taught only the New Testament, I doubt that I would have come to this realization.

As you think about it, the New Testament has remarkably little to say on the question of faith and politics. To be sure, in the teaching of Jesus, one has the saying which enjoins giving to Caesar what is Caesar's (Mt 22:15-21 and parallels). There is also a critique of leadership styles and the new model of servant leadership inculcated

on the followers of Jesus, but this relates to leadership in the kingdom of God and is contrasted to "Gentile politics" (Lk 22:24-30; cf. Mt 18:1-4; Mk 9:33-35; Lk 9:46-48). The apostle Paul enjoins submission to the governing authorities in Romans 13, as does Peter in his first epistle. John raises a number of difficult questions about the stance of believers to an oppressive, satanically controlled government in the Apocalypse. But when these references are synthesized, one is far from a comprehensive, or even adequate, formulation of a theological understanding of politics.[8] It is worth noting that the NIV Study Bible, in the index to its study notes, has no entries for "politics," "leadership" or "government." Under the heading of "civil authority" there are three notes: Romans 13:1,3,4; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13. All three notes simply comment on the necessity of the Christian being submissive to the governing authorities and that this is based upon the principle of the greatest good for the largest number of people. The NIV Study Bible has nothing on the subject from the Old Testament!

Actually it is the Old Testament which provides needed insight into this dimension of life. The New Testament, as one would expect, focuses upon the "Good News," the "new creation in Christ." It speaks of the new realities in the heavenlies and points to the ultimate resolution of the political issues in the future, glorious kingdom of God. Certainly it braces us with an optimism about the future. But the vital contribution of the Old Testament is to provide concrete examples for a theological critique of the politics of the present. As Jacques Ellul has said with regard to the book of 2 Kings:

> [This book] is probably the most political of all the books of the Bible. For its reference is to Israel genuinely constituted as a political power and playing its part in the concert of empires. Furthermore, its reference is also to an age of crisis. Above all, we see here politics in action and not just in principle.[9]

I can only sketch this idea in a cursory manner.

The theme of faith and politics grows out of the creation narrative. Genesis one climaxes with the bestowal of power upon human beings. They are enabled by their Creator to exercise authority, to manage, direct and dominate the created order. The *imago dei* is most profoundly exhibited in this capacity. The question of politics is thus unavoidable. The only real question is how, not whether, this authority should be exercised.

The Old Testament teaches that (1) power is a gift from God; (2) the exercise of power is not optional--it is necessary; (3) power is a gift which must be exercised with extreme caution--to quote Machiavelli: "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely;" (4) one of the greatest tensions is that between faith and politics. I first heard this last statement as a graduate student in a class on Old Testament themes taught by Dr. David Hubbard, president and professor of Old Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary. At the time it seemed a memorable saying, but it didn't resonate in my thinking as it does now. This idea has completely revolutionized the way I now read the Old Testament.

If the theological basis of political philosophy is rooted in the creation mandate, then its justification is underscored in a study of the Fall and the Flood, Genesis 4-11. Genesis 4:1-6:8 narrates the explosive acceleration of sin in the pre-flood world. As the effects of sin spill over from family to society to the entire planet, the abuse of power becomes acute. The brief account of Lamech illustrates the crisis (Ge 4:19-24). Lamech becomes a bully on the block. He is a law unto himself who takes unrestrained retaliation and first demonstrates the connection between power and sex which we see so shamefully displayed in our own day. As Henry Kissinger is once reported to have said, "Power is the strongest aphrodisiac known to man." In the time of Noah "the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence" (Ge 6:11).

Surely the Noahic covenant speaks to the issue of the exercise of power. To prevent a repeat of the pre-flood crisis, God institutes a form of restraint upon the selfish and destructive desires of human

beings. The unsavory story in Genesis 9:20-27 of Noah's drunkenness and the sexual offense of Ham[10] underscores the fact that the flood has not washed away sin; human nature is unchanged. Sin as an inherited condition must be brought under some form of restraint. Human government is that restraining agency which has, in spite of periods of anarchy and collapse, been able, to the present day, to prevent a return to the pre-flood chaos. The bottom line rationale for human government in the post-Edenic era is thoroughly theological: it is the doctrine of human depravity. All forms of utopianism self-destruct because of this fact.

In addition to these foundational issues, however, we must also recognize that redemptive history is intertwined with the narration of the political history of Israel. Israel was created as a nation which was the vehicle for the kingdom of God on earth. The unfolding story permits us to examine how they grappled with the pragmatic dimensions of politics.[11] This brings us to a hermeneutical problem. It is so extensive and complex that an adequate discussion would take us far afield. Simply stated, the problem is one of discerning the cultural boundedness of the Old Testament while also preserving its transcending principles.[12] The thrust of my teaching on this theme is to highlight those truths of a theological-political nature which I believe offer guidance to, and a critique of, any political system. These truths relate to the fundamental issue of the exercise of power.

The evolution of the people of Israel from a tribal confederacy to an international state of the first order affords a laboratory for studying the use and abuse of power in their political system. Without baptizing their system, we can, nonetheless, learn from their political history, and, by analogy, apply the insights to our own developing political odyssey. The underlying hermeneutical assumptions are two-fold: (1) human experience contains enough transcultural constants that such an endeavor will yield valid and useful results and (2) Old Testament redemptive history is not intended as a solely private paradigm for godly living; it also speaks to the larger arena of communal and political life.

Consider the recognition by the "Founding Father" of Israel that

the abuse of power constituted the single greatest threat to good government. Already in the renewal of the Sinai covenant east of the Jordan, Moses anticipates a future shift to kingship in Israel. In Deuteronomy 17:14-20 regulations were drawn up to give direction for this eventuality. The requirements and prohibitions are instructive. Those items which were forbidden all revolve around the issue of power. Militarism, unrestrained sex, with its accompanying idolatry (cf. Eph 5:5, which closely associates immorality and covetousness with idolatry), and excessive personal wealth are manifestations of the abuse of power.[13] Verses 18-20 address the means by which this temptation to misuse power can be curbed.

> When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and *not consider himself better than his brothers* and turn from the law to the right or the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.

Here we have in a nutshell the ideological and theological basis of kingship in Israel. The king is under an unconditional obligation to uphold the stipulations of the Sinai covenant. In this regard he is the leading citizen, indeed, the model citizen of the theocracy. The human king occupies a position which is one of continual responsibility and accountability to the Great King, the Lord. This is a far cry from the ideology of kingship practiced by Israel's neighbors. These nation-states subscribed to a form of divine kingship in which immense power was exercised by the king and/or a small cabal of the elite. In actual practice it led to constant abuse of power as may be seen in the "taunt songs" of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28.

A further means of curbing the power of the Hebrew king resided

in a structure which restricted the scope of his authority. The king was not to intrude into the office and function of the priesthood. The combination of political and religious power has always been a dangerous one. Evangelicals are beginning to find out just how dangerous! The Pharaohs of Egypt probably possessed more absolute power than all other kings in the ancient Near East. Their ideology of divine kingship concentrated authority in the person of the god-king. The word of the king was the very word of God. This kind of power was not permitted to a Hebrew king.

Besides the separation of the cultic and the civil, the Israelite system provided for an independent agency which monitored the king's performance. This was the office of prophet. The prophet functioned as a delegate of the overlord, the great king, the Lord. If the Hebrew king was guilty of violating the Sinai covenant, a prophet was dispatched by the Lord to warn the vassal-king of the consequences of further disloyalty.[14] This adversarial role was played out frequently during the course of the Hebrew kingdoms.

Our students need to understand the parallels in United States political history. Our "Founding Fathers" knew well the dangers of excessive concentration of power in the hands of a king. Our political system consists of a carefully thought out separation of power into three branches; checks and balances are built into the structure and functioning of government. Great forethought went into the design for a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

Still, politicians always find ways to "beat the system." A quick survey of some leading Hebrew kings illustrates the point. The tragic story of Saul is "must" reading in this regard. Beginning in humble circumstances, Saul is transformed from a self-effacing, reluctant ruler into a scheming tyrant who refuses to let power slip through his fingers. His dying ambition is the creation of a Saulide dynasty. His failure is traced to an intrusion into the office of the priesthood and incomplete obedience to the prophet as the emissary of the overlord. But the root problem, as analyzed by Samuel, comes down to this: "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not

become the head of the tribes of Israel?" (I Sa 15:17). In short, Saul abused the power granted him.

David's reign, though much more positive and glorious than Saul's, ends on a sour note. He, too, succumbs to the abuse of power. The infamous "Bathsheba affair" once again finds a courageous prophet indicting the king for covenant violation. "I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes?" (2 Sa 12:8b-9) The success and power of David led him to consider himself better than his loyal servant, Uriah the Hittite.

No Hebrew king reigned with as much power and prestige as Solomon. Unfortunately, his display of power was matched by his abuse of power. 1 Kings 10 and 11 highlights Solomon's disregard for all the warnings of Moses about kingship in Israel. Wealth, war machine and women--he exceeded all bounds in all three. He established a deadly precedent for emulating the kings of the neighboring nations. Succeeding Hebrew kings virtually vie with each other in the degree to which they imitate pagan kings. The list could go on. In fact, no Hebrew king managed to escape this "occupational hazard."

The inspired records speaks for itself. No issue is more germane to our own political system than this. Senator Mark Hatfield speaks eloquently about the seductive nature of power in his book *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*:

> The allurement of power and honor subtly but malignantly grows within the politician, often gaining control of one's whole being before it is discovered.
>
> An important, but often ignored factor is the essentially dehumanizing character of relationship in the political world. People relate to a Senator's prestige, title, and influence. They assume that his opinions must automatically be more accurate than their own. A Senator grows accustomed to being treated in this reverential way. Within, this can breed

the belief that *he is more important, more virtuous, and wiser than the average citizen whom he represents.*[15]

In this last sentence we hear the echoes of Moses' warning long ago. Sadly, one never lacks for up-to-date examples from the arena of politics to illustrate the point. The problem of the abuse of power, of course, bedevils all of society--even the Church is not immune as recent scandals unfortunately testify. Students need to have a realistic understanding of the world we live in. The Old Testament provides us with such a perspective. As Jacques Ellul has said, "the domain of politics is also a domain of Satan."[16] This acknowledgment should not, however, hamstring our efforts to work for a just and merciful society. Again, as Ellul reminds us, "the sense or conviction of the utter futility of the work we do must not prevent us from doing it. The judgment of uselessness is no excuse for inaction."[17] Hence the stress in my course upon the tension which exists between faith and politics.

The fourth core concept is faith and ethics. Ethics pertains to moral values and behavior. Ethics deals with the "oughtness" of life. How should one conduct his or her life? What is the basis for determining ethics? What relationship exists between faith (here viewed as the content of what one believes) and ethics (how one behaves)?[18]

The contribution of the Old Testament in this area is not that it supplies what is largely lacking in the New Testament. One thinks of Paul's typical parenesis in which he conjoins the imperative and the indicative--be what you are! Rather, the Old Testament broadens the scope of ethics with its emphasis upon the corporate and societal dimension of ethics. The enterprise of transmitting to a new generation ethics rooted in scriptural revelation has acquired a sense of urgency in my mind. What follows is a sampling of how this core truth is integrated into the Old Testament survey course.

A study of the creation narratives against their Near Eastern background demonstrates the crucial connection between worldviews and behavior. Polytheism could never sustain a truly ethical society

because the gods worshiped were not consistently ethical. The Hebrew doctrine of creation is rooted in ethical monotheism: one, true, and living God who is the source of all things and who is himself good. As seen in the creation narratives, God desires that the crowning achievement of his creative work reflect his own goodness. Creation anchors the basic motivation for ethical living in personal accountability to a God who is good (Ge 2:17).

Genesis 3-11 raises a fundamental problem for ethics. Why is it so difficult to do what we ought? The answer lies in *the sin nature* we all possess as an inheritance from our first parents (Ps 51:5). The primeval history graphically depicts the power of sin which dominates individuals and society. Only as God's grace is appropriated through faith and repentance can one "do what is right" (Ge 4:7). The truly ethical life is not achieved by self-effort, but divine enablement. Ethics flow out of redemption, not the other way around.

The story of Abraham reminds us that one cannot neatly separate one's public from one's private life. The family histories of Lot, Ishmael, and Isaac have evolved into one of the most complex and dangerous political dilemmas of our time. Unethical decisions made in private eventually spill over into the public area. The recent parade of fallen political figures, disgraced by moral indiscretions, dramatically illustrates the point. The lesson is clear: ethical behavior is essential to the well-being of any society.

The Sinai Covenant brings us to the high water mark of Old Testament ethics. The moral law of ancient Israel is distilled in the Ten Words, or Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1-17; Dt 5:6-21). The entire Mosaic law code may in fact be viewed as but commentary on and elaboration of the Ten Commandments. This is the heart of Israel's faith and practice.

The Ten Words divide into two main divisions: commandments 1-4 focus upon relationship to God; commandments 5-10 focus upon relationship to neighbor. The first four deal with the vertical dimension of life; the second six, the horizontal. The order is not indifferent; only as one is right with God can there be any hope of living rightly with one's neighbor. When asked to identify which of

the commandments was most important, Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments under two main ones: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Mt 22:37-40).

Three positive statements are included among the prohibitions. These positive declarations establish the basis or provide a context for the prohibitions. Thus, the prohibitions against disloyalty, the making of idols or images and the misuse of God's name are all predicated upon the grand declaration of the existence and redeeming activity of the Lord. Commitment to this saving God is strengthened by Sabbath observance (commandment four). The fifth commandment, a positive declaration concerning parents, heads the list of prohibitions which treat the horizontal relationships of life. The family forms the core of any society; if one has difficulty with the authority of one's parents, there is almost inevitably difficulty in other relationships (husband-wife, employer-employee, teacher-student, and so on). Honoring one's parents goes a long way towards the establishment of a proper context for relating to one's neighbor.

Finally, notice that there are no sanctions mentioned for failure to comply. These statements stand as categorical imperatives--they are the expression of God's will for his people. They are founded not upon social wisdom, political expediency or royal preference. They are a transcript of the character of God. As such they possess divine authority. In this regard, Israel's law code was unique in the ancient Near East. Furthermore, the Ten Commandments continue to exercise a powerful influence upon the conscience of human beings. As H. L. Ellison has so well stated:

> ... the Ten Commandments contain a statement of the great
> basic principles of character that must exist if a man wishes to
> be in fellowship with God; all the rest is commentary and a
> guide towards the creation of this character.[19]

Students need to be alerted to the fact that in our pluralistic society, morality and ethics are increasingly a matter of consensus and majority vote. In principle, if a majority of our citizens or the Supreme Court deem a certain behavior as legal then it is acceptable or permissible. The Christian, however, has a basis for ethics in something more enduring than prevailing opinion; indeed, in *someone* who is eternal. This higher standard must take precedence (cf. Ac 5:29).

When we turn to the Former Prophets (Joshua - 2 Kings), we engage some of the most compelling and memorable stories of the Old Testament--laden with ethical issues. For example, the rise and fall of Samson and the checkered career of David offer many episodes which force us to grapple with ethical decision making. The consequences of ethical failure reach out and shake us from our complacency. Reliving with the kings of Israel and Judah the hard decisions they were frequently forced to make can become a dress rehearsal for our own "tough calls."

Surely one of the most useful of all portions of the Old Testament Scripture for the cultivation of an ethical life remains the classical or writing prophets. These courageous emissaries of the Lord confront us with the constant tendency of human nature to compartmentalize our lives. They throw down the gauntlet to a generation which wishes to dichotomize faith and ethics--to disguise moral failure by pretentious religiosity.[20] A timeless relevance accompanies the scorching rebuke of an Amos:

> You who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground.... You who hate the one who reproves in court and despise the one who tells the truth...you trample on the poor.... You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts...I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies.... But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream (Amos 5:7,10,11,12,21,24).

Finally, one discovers in the wisdom literature a gold mine of counsel for the establishment of an ethical life. Here we learn the intensely practical art of being skillful and successful in life. This success is defined in relational terms: it is rooted in fellowship with God and neighbor. God's wisdom is the source and beginning of a truly successful life which is measured by character rather than by intellectual prowess or accumulation of this world's goods. The truly wise know that character without ethics is impossible.[21]

All of this has immediate relevance to Christian college students. Increasingly, our students are admitting that their behavior does not always coincide with their expressed and written commitments when they sought admission. This, in turn, merely reflects the tendency of our society at large. Gallup Polls consistently show that as many as 80% of Americans claim to be "born again." At the same time moral standards continue to decline. Such a dichotomy between profession and practice is symptomatic of a deep spiritual malaise. The Old Testament challenges our students to eschew superficial commitment and to join the ranks of "the deeply committed."

The fourth core concept confronts us, appropriately enough, at the frontier of a new century. Faith and the future takes up eschatology-- that is, the study of last things. How will human history end and what does God plan for humans and the cosmos in the afterlife? These intriguing questions form the focus of this core concept. The eschatology of the Old Testament stands in stark contrast to the eschatology of modern secularism. For the latter, we can only anticipate death for the individual, death for the species, and death for the cosmos. Over against this utter pessimism, the Old Testament radiates with hope (often in settings where the present seems extremely bleak) which takes hold of God's promises for the future.[22] Hope is essential for the establishment of a stable, satisfying life. At a time when teenage suicide rates continue to rise, we need a fresh infusion of hope. Eschatology enables us to grasp how the diverse strands of Old Testament teaching on last things point toward the New Testament fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This teaching speaks powerfully to us about our own personal encounter with the

last enemy, death.

Already in the creation narratives we discern in outline form what God desires as the final outcome for humans. The creation mandate to subdue the earth remains the agenda for the future. There will be no escape of the spirit from the bondage and confines of the material order in God's complete salvation. God's redemptive plan features a new earth as the ultimate residence of redeemed humanity. Thus, biblical eschatology is grounded in the doctrine of creation. There is, in the end, a return to the original task (cf. Rev 21).

The primeval history draws attention to an important, but often ignored, aspect of God's future plans. *He will judge the world in righteousness and justice* (Ac 17:1). Three great judgments in this section sober us by their severity. They are vivid reminders that "the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness..." (Ro 1:17). The expulsion from Eden symbolizes the mortality and spiritual alienation which characterize fallen humanity. Life must now be lived east of Eden--a foretaste of final punishment (cf. Ge 3:24 and Rev 21:27; 22:14,15). The great flood of Noah stands as the first of two universal acts of judgment. The world that now is awaits its final baptism by fire (2 Pe 3:7). The Tower of Babel also casts a long shadow into the future. The rebellious intent to create a self-sufficient society anticipates another day when "the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction" (2 Th 2:3). This rebellion, led by the Antichrist, culminates human history and, thankfully, climaxes in the return of the rightful "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Rev 19:16).

The promise to Abram in Genesis 12:3b sketches in outline the shape of the future: "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you." The Lord's redemptive plan incorporates *the salvation of the Gentile nations*. When history ends in judgment and the kingdom of God appears triumphant, around the throne of God appears "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people

and language ... crying out in a loud voice: Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev 7:9-10). Not all Gentiles, but all kinds of Gentiles, will be redeemed. The future of missions and evangelism is bright; the Lord desires more people to gather round his throne. The promise to Abram in Genesis 12:7 also included the specific grant of *the land of Canaan* as an inheritance. In 15:8-19 the Lord guaranteed this promise by a self-maledictory oath.   Any discussion of eschatology must take seriously the irrevocable promise of Canaan to *the physical descendants of Abraham* (Ro 11:29).   The particularity of the promise may be puzzling, but the certainty of a *future for the Jewish people in their "promised land"* remains intact.   Jeremiah's prophecy of future national restoration in Chapters 31-33 read in conjunction with the remarkable rebirth of the modern state of Israel inspires confidence in God's prophetic word.[23]

God's plan for humanity is also foreshadowed in the description of the Tabernacle and especially of the Most Holy Place. Inside this room, which was a perfect cube symbolizing the perfection of God, stood the centerpiece of the Tabernacle, the ark of the covenant. This chest surmounted by a lid consisting of two cherubim contained the two copies of the covenant between the Lord and Israel. Above the lid, conceived as the footstool of the Lord, shown the Shekinah, the visible radiance of God's presence. The ark was where the high priest sprinkled the blood of atonement on the Day of Atonement. The lid was called the mercy seat and typified the truth that only through the effectiveness of the shed blood may a worshiper come to God. This room, symbolizing the culmination of God's saving plan whereby the sinner is conformed entirely to the moral image of Christ, is the ultimate experience of seeing God face to face (Mt 5:8). In New Testament terms this represents the *doctrine of glorification* (see Ro 8:17,29,30). In short, the Tabernacle represents the completion and climax of God's redemption of his people. Accordingly, when the New Testament depicts this final culmination of God's redemptive program, it does so by portraying a city in the

shape of a cube. This perfect city, the New Jerusalem, is the place where God dwells with his people on a new redeemed earth (Rev 21:1-27). Of course the student of the New Testament recognizes that the Tabernacle fell short of the fellowship with God which is now available in Christ. In the Old Testament era only the high priest could venture into the Most Holy Place and that only once a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). Now, access has been provided on an unprecedented scale and scope (see Ro 5:1). The book of Hebrews makes the repeated point that the New Covenant far exceeds the privileges and experiences of the Old.

> Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb 10:19-22).

Even this, however, pales in comparison to the glory that yet awaits the people of God at the second coming of Christ. As the Apostle John so memorably expresses it: "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him, purifies himself, just as he is pure" (1 Jn 3:23).

Central to the drama of Old Testament hope stands the notion of the Day of the Lord--that dramatic, decisive intervention of God into the affairs of this world to culminate human history and inaugurate the glorious kingdom of God. So many themes pass through this venue. The ever-growing messianic hope, the mysterious Son of Man and the gentle, suffering Servant all contribute to a portrait whose lineaments are finally fleshed out in Jesus of Nazareth. The hope of national restoration for Israel (with its acute theological problems for us today) and the hope of life after death provided backbone and

stamina for a beleaguered people. They still do. In the Old Testament we read about faith standing on tiptoes, peering off at the horizon of the future. It is preeminently a theology of hope.

I summarize my main thesis. The Old Testament is essential to the continuance of authentic evangelicalism. Our curriculum should cluster around its central message. For me that central message revolves around four fundamental concepts: faith and the unity of salvation, faith and politics, faith and ethics, and faith and the future. These four no doubt are reducible to three--the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. (1 Cor 13:13). But no matter how we structure and teach our Old Testament survey course, if we are to be those "who correctly handle the word of truth," the end result should be students who "abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight" and are "able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God" (Php 1:9-11).

NOTES

1.   See James D. Smart, *The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970) 9-27.

2.   See Bernhard W. Anderson, Ed., *The Old Testament and Christian Faith* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969). An evangelical defense of the place of the Old Testament in the Bible may be found in David L. Baker, *Two Testaments: One Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1977).

3.   See Samuel T. Logan, "Preface" in Joyce Vedral, *A Literary Survey of the Bible* (Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1973) xix-xxii.

4.   This is developed by Leslie A. Andrews, "The Professor's Stance: Values Underlying Educational Choices," *Faculty Dialogue* (Fall 1987) 18-20.

5.   See Leland Ryken, *How To Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 33-73.

6.   See Walter Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).

7.   I am indebted to David J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978) for this formulation.

8.   For a synthesis of the New Testament teaching on the State, such as we have, see N. T. Wright, "The New Testament and the 'State,' "*Themelois* 16 (Oct/Nov 1990) 11-17.

9.   Jacques Ellul, *The Politics of God and the Politics of Man* (transl. and ed. Geofrrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) 13. See also Christopher J. H. Wright, "The people of God and the state in the Old Testament," *Themelois* 16 (Oct/Nov 1990) 4-10.

10.   See F. W. Basset, "Noah's Nakedness and the Curse of Canaan, A Case of Incest?" *Vetus Testamentum* 21 (1971) 232-37 for a possible interpretation of this difficult text.

11.   John Bright's *The Kingdom of God* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1953) is still useful in tracing this unfolding story.

12.   For further discussion see John Goldingay, *Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1981) 38-65.

13.   See further Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 253-57.

14.   See J. A. Thompson, *The Ancient Near Eastern Treaties and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale, 1964) 29-31.

15.   (Word: Waco, 1976) 16.

16.   *Ellul, Politics of God*, 19.

17.   Ibid. 195.

18.   See Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 1-56.

19.   *The Message of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) 40.

20.   See James Muilenburg, *The Way of Israel: Biblical Faith and Ethics* (New York: Harper, 1961) 74-98.

21.   See further William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity 1979) 189-199.

22.   See G. E. Ladd "Eschatology," *ISBE* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 2:131-33.

23.   See Arthur W. Kac, *The Rebirth of the State of Israel* (Chicago: Moody, 1958).

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2

Jeremiah One and the Unity of Jeremiah

The main plot elements of Jeremiah are established in the book's first chapter. Many writers already have noted the introductory nature of this passage. John Bright comments that

> The material unquestionably derives from the prophet's own reminiscences, and may have been originally brought together by him, perhaps as an introduction to the scroll which he dictated in the year 605 (see ch. 36). Since it provides authentication of his right to speak the word of Yahweh, it would have served that purpose admirably. Subsequently, the chapter was made the introduction of the Jeremiah collection found in chapters 1-25 (the conclusion of which, in 25:1-13a, seems to have been composed as a companion piece to it), and now serves to introduce the book as a whole.[1]

J. A. Thompson[2] and T. R. Hobbs[3] basically agree with Bright's assessment, and all three writers believe the material may have been gathered over a period of years. Harry Nasuti reads 1:1-19 as a literary unit, but focuses almost exclusively on how the text introduces Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations.[4] Robert P. Carroll is not at all sure that Jeremiah has much part in compiling this chapter.[5] Still he affirms its introductory nature. What these authors fail to develop satisfactorily is how this text outlines the *whole* prophecy.

In chapter one the author demonstrates great artistic skill. Several strategic plot elements are put into place. First, the writer unfolds the book's underlying historical framework (1:1-3). The "implied

narrative" that undergirds the whole experience of the plot and its characters emerges in these verses. Second, Jeremiah's structural framework is presented in 1:4-16. Major themes that provide the broad divisions of the prophecy are sketched here. Third, the plot's characterization framework is revealed in 1:17-19.[6] Though Yahweh and Jeremiah are introduced earlier, obviously, how the prophecy's minor figures relate to the major characters becomes apparent in the chapter's closing sentences. As in any other literary work, the way these various elements interact determines Jeremiah's plot and the coherence and unity of that plot.

Historical Framework: Jeremiah 1:1-3

Readers normally skip introductory passages like 1:1-3, believing that the book's message lies in later material. Or a reader may know the general history of Jeremiah's times and hope to date the prophecy's individual portions according to that history. Bland comments on this text like Charles Feinberg's are typical.

> These verses serve as the title for the entire book. They name the man through whom God gave the prophecies and refer to his home (v.1), the period of his main labors, and the chief national event of his times (v. 2).[7]

Such notations lead to a hurried glance at Jeremiah's opening sentences.

But what should this passage stir in the mind of an interpreter? First, Jeremiah's hometown and family do not mark him for greatness. Anathoth is a small town in the midst of Israel's smallest tribe. Saul comes from Benjamin, but he is not a positive image in scripture. That Jeremiah comes from priests alerts us to the fact that if he condemns traditional practices his own guild may be displeased. Second, the fact that "the word of the Lord came" (1:2) to him sets him apart as a faithful preacher of God's message. This mention of

his authentic reception of the divine word suggests further discussions of this topic. Indeed the next two verses repeat this claim that God's word "came" to Jeremiah, which reinforces the probability of this theme's importance in the book.

After these first foreshadowings of the story's larger plot, Jeremiah's historical framework appears. Though scholars debate the issue, the text says he begins to be a prophet about 627 B.C. and continues to receive God's word until the fall of Jerusalem, or about 587 B.C. (1:2-3). Perhaps this account means that the prophet was born in 627 and prophesied later, as Hyatt argues,[8] but the book's writer wants the narrative picture to begin in 627. Similarly, though chapters 40-44 describe events after 587, the author wants Jerusalem's fall to serve as a benchmark in Jeremiah's story. What happens after to the fall is precipitated by that destruction.

That Jeremiah became a prophet in 627 tells the reader that Josiah's reform (2 Kings 22:1-23:25), his most significant achievement, happens after the prophet's call. 2 Kings 22:3 locates the reform in Josiah's eighteenth year (c. 622). So this attempt to repent is duly noted by the prophet's book. Whatever he says about Judah's spiritual condition is not spoken in ignorance of possible claims of righteousness by Israel. But Jeremiah's prophecy indicates the short-lived nature of this revival of religion.

That Jeremiah preached until 587 reveals that his sermons ultimately fail to change his hearers. Not even a prophetic word from Yahweh convinced the nation that they were sinning against God. Ultimately the reader must, then, make a decision about the quality of Jeremiah's work. Or perhaps more to the point, a decision about the quality of the prophet's hearers must be made. The inclusion of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah in this list marks them as important characters, and reminds us that smaller exiles took place in 605 and 597. Leaving out Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin denotes their relative insignificance in the story, though Jehoiachin makes an important appearance in 52:31-34.

During the bulk of Jeremiah's ministry Israel stands between the exile of 722 and that of 587. Judah has every opportunity to see what

happened to Samaria and repent (cf. 3:8-11), but spurns the chance to change. Thus, as Napier says, Judah must prepare to go back to slavery in Egypt,[9] for Jeremiah's hearers fail to learn from history.

Those who read the final form of Jeremiah have a broad implied narrative. To designate 627-587 as Jeremiah's narrative framework is in no way an attempt to settle issues surrounding the book's historicity. Again, the historical outline provides the story's boundaries. The historical setting informs the interpreter at many points. Still, at this point, how the story is told remains to be seen. How the author develops the vital concepts of Jeremiah's reception of the word (1:2-3), his relationship to his hometown (1:1), and the rejection of his message (1:3) will in part determine the quality of the plot.

Jeremiah's Structural Framework: Jeremiah 1:4-16

Not surprisingly, the call and work of Jeremiah dictate the book's thematic concerns and structural shape. After all, this book consists of "the words of Jeremiah" (1:1). In other prophetic books the lives of the prophets figure prominently in the plots. Isaiah and Ezekiel serve as symbols of what God tries to teach Israel. Isaiah advises kings at strategic points (cf. 7:1-27; 37:21-28; 38:4-8). Jonah's disobedience creates the tension in that book. Hosea's marriage is a paradigm of God's relationship to Israel. Habakkuk wrestles with the disturbing events around him, and arrives at a new position of faith (3:1-19). So the relationship between the Lord and the prophet plays a key role in prophetic action.

Three sections comprise this structural segment of Jeremiah's introduction. In 1:4-10 Jeremiah's reluctance to accept the call to be a prophet introduces the dynamic tension that exists between his desire to preach and his desire to be accepted by Israel. He is, quite simply, afraid of his enormous task. As God reiterates the call and reassures Jeremiah, the book's major themes are also introduced (1:10). These themes unveil the prophecy's superstructure. Next,

(1:10). These themes unveil the prophecy's superstructure. Next, God promises to support what Jeremiah preaches (1:11-12). Finally, Yahweh shows the prophet how the motifs sketched in 1:10 will unfold (1:13-16). After this series of texts the whole book is put in much better focus.

1:4-10. To emphasize the personal nature of the prophetic call and to begin to develop the interaction between the story's two major characters, these and the following verses are in auto-biographical form. As a reflection, Jeremiah relates his initial experience with God. This first encounter shapes all that follows in the book. Yahweh speaks most here, but the exchange of speeches signals a dramatic point of view. Much of the rest of the prophecy follows this dialogic pattern.

Using the same nouns and verbs as in 1:1-2, verse four announces the coming of God's message to Jeremiah. To effect this call the Lord claims to have taken three steps. God tells Jeremiah that even before he was born, "I knew you...I set you apart (consecrated you)...I set you (appointed you) a prophet to the nations." Such a three-fold work would overwhelm anyone, and Jeremiah seems astounded. From being an obscure person in a small town he will become "a prophet to the nations!"

Verse six registers Jeremiah's objections to God's amazing statements. He cannot speak. Therefore he cannot prophesy. He is also young, which limits his speaking abilities. The reference to youth may also imply that no one will take his preaching seriously. Perhaps he even feels that he shows proper humility by not responding too quickly to this honor of preaching.

Of course Jeremiah's disclaimers parallel those of Moses in Ex. 3-4. Moses asks, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?" (Ex. 3:11). He fears he cannot represent God before a foreign king. He worries about Israel's response, "What if they will not believe me?" (Ex. 4:1). Maybe his own people will reject him. Finally he claims, "I am slow of speech" (Ex. 4:10). Like Moses, Jeremiah has an awesome task that requires him to have an impact beyond his own people. He excuses himself on the same grounds, then, as Moses.

William Holladay locates Jeremiah's fear in the fact that his call is so much like Moses'. Besides having a call to preach to the nations, Jeremiah's reception of the work as described in 1:7,9 sounds much like Dt. 18:18.

> No other call of a prophet in the Old Testament resembles this
> verse in Deuteronomy so much. There may be other possible
> explanations for the closeness of the wording, but I think it is
> easiest to understand it as Jeremiah's conviction that *he* is the
> prophet like Moses.[10]

Whether or not Jeremiah sees this summons to preach as a demand to be like Moses, he certainly has some difficult tasks to complete. To fulfill Dt. 18:18, and thus be a true prophet, he must be totally faithful to the Lord and totally accurate in all his preaching.

Two ideas important to Jeremiah's plot are foreshadowed in 1:5-6. One is that the author shows Jeremiah to be a significant person by comparing Jeremiah's call to that of Moses. This new prophet will carry on the Mosaic tradition of preaching God's word with accuracy and integrity. Also, Jeremiah's reluctance must be noted. As the chapter progresses a number of assurances are offered the prophet. Why does he need so much verbal coaxing?

Yahweh brushes aside Jeremiah's excuses and repeats the promises made to Moses. Since the prophet must "go" where God sends him and "say" what God commands (1:7) the Lord will "be with" Jeremiah and "deliver"him, and will give him words to say (1:8-9). Moses receives similar promises of presence (Ex. 3:12) and utterance (Ex. 4:12). The goal of a true prophet is to move in God's power armed with God's message.

Echoes of Isaiah's call are added to the story in 1:9. Isaiah thought himself "a man of unclean lips" (Isa.6:5), so God has an angel touch his mouth with a coal from heaven's altar (Isa. 6:7). Thus his lips are purified for prophesying. Likewise God touches Jeremiah's lips (1:9). Now he too can preach. By adding the hint of Isaiah in the story the writer once again stresses the authenticity of Jeremiah's prophetic call.

Sandwiched between the explanation of the prophet's duties (1:7) and power (1:9) lies the implied command to "not be afraid of them" (1:8). Here Jeremiah's "fear" is addressed for the first time, as are "them," or his enemies. God does not say the opponents are non-existent or easy to overcome, but that their defeat is certain.

Now that Jeremiah's hesitancy has been dealt with, the prophet's mission and message are established (1:10). Before this point Jeremiah's call seems fairly standard, with the possible exception of the prohibition of fear. Even then Moses' reluctance must be recalled. A more specific explanation of Jeremiah's ministry now evolves. First, his realm of responsibility and authority is set. Like his master, the prophet's word will extend "over the nations and over the kingdoms" (1:10; cf.1:5). Thus Jeremiah must preach to covenant and non-covenant people alike.

Next, three word pairs introduce the three major aspects of his message. Jeremiah's goal must be

> To pluck up and to tear down,
> To destroy and to overthrow,
> To build and to plant (1:10).

E.W. Nicholson observes that

> ...the terminology here employed to describe Jeremiah's mission centres on one of the main themes of the book, the theme of judgement and renewal or salvation after judgement....Furthermore, combinations of the words here used occur only in the prose and never in the poetry in the book (e.g. 12:14-17). Here, therefore, we have further evidence that this call-narrative has been edited as an anticipatory interpretation of the message of the prophet as presented in the book as a whole.[11]

Nicholson is partially correct. The themes of judgment ("to destroy and overthrow") and salvation ("to build and to plant") are present, though he could add that denunciation of sin appears here too ("to

pluck up and tear down"). These concepts will dominate the book's action, as 1:1-3 has already indicated.

On one level the reader can observe that these themes permeate written, canonical prophecy. After all, sin, punishment, and restoration constitute the main points in the prophetic genre. Once more Jeremiah stands in the center of Israel's prophetic tradition. His call and message coincide with the other prophets. Though he has a unique situation, still he expounds the standard prophetic doctrines.

Beneath this basic level lies the fact that Jeremiah's book may now have an outline. Within the implied narrative sketched in 1:1-3 exists some basic ideas. Before Israel's destruction Jeremiah will denounce sin and urge repentance. Thus 1:10 states that the prophet will "pluck up and break down." The narrative implied includes the fall of Jerusalem (1:3), so 1:10 says Jeremiah will "destroy and overthrow." Because the book itself exists and speaks to a new generation, Jeremiah's other role is "to build and to plant." Basically, chapters 2-29 comprise the "pluck up and break down" section. This command is not identical to the succeeding word pair, since an intensifying of the action is explicit in the text. The first pair leads logically into the second. Next, chapters 30-33 discuss the "build and plant" concept. Why it precedes the destruction material can be discussed later. Finally, chapters 34-51 describe "killing and destruction" quite vividly. Like chapter one, Jeremiah's last chapter is summary in nature. So the book has a super-structure.

Three points need emphasis now. First, by 1:10 the reader learns that Jeremiah's call links him to the great prophets of the past. His summons resembles those of Moses and Isaiah, and he is guaranteed God's presence. Second, despite his strong call Jeremiah has some fear. How this fear may or may not affect the plot remains to be seen. Also, this call awaits definition, either through the prophet's words and actions or through further instruction from Yahweh. Third, the book has an implied narrative (1:1-3) and a super-structure. The structure reflects its place among literary prophecy, the implied narrative spans some vital parts of Israel's history, and the two aspects fit together nicely. Several plot elements are in place,

then, but others need to be added.

1:11-12. God now speaks to Jeremiah a second time (1:11). The same formula as in 1:4, "the word of the Lord came to me," appears here, so the story continues to be told in first person. There is no indication of how much time has passed. Since a prophet was once called a "seer" (1 Sam. 9:9), and since a prophet must "see" events with the insight of the Lord, God asks what Jeremiah "sees." So Yahweh continues the prophet's training. Like a good teacher, God involves the student in the learning process. Also like a good teacher God uses a visual image in the instruction. Jeremiah simply replies that he sees the rod of an almond tree.

Yahweh then uses a play on words. As H. Cunliffe-Jones says, "The answer that came to Jeremiah was, 'I am watching over my word to perform it.' The Hebrew for 'almond tree' is *shaked*, and for 'watching' is *shoked*."[12] While Jeremiah watches and waits for a word from Yahweh, the Lord sends out a message and watches over that word to make sure it comes to pass.

What "word" does the Lord mean? Certainly any word of God will be fulfilled, but what "word" is in force? Several explanations are possible. Perhaps this verse reassures Jeremiah of God's presence and protection (cf. 1:8). That is, if he carries Yahweh's message he need not fear its failure. This expression could serve as a foreshadowing of the doom predicted in 1:13-16. As a threat it warns Israel, or even the prophet, against disobedience. Or the phrase may refer to the covenant God made with Israel. That "word" will be kept. Deuteronomy 27-28 lists covenantal blessings and curses, as do similar texts in the torah, so the text may have a previous "word" in mind. Finally, the "word" may reassure Jeremiah of God's faithfulness by reminding him of great former prophets.

In a way, all four options may coalesce. Jeremiah does not really assert an astounding new message. Rather he applies common prophetic themes to his own historical situation. Therefore, God assures the prophet as he gathers up the tradition to apply to his own day that God will confirm the inspired word. The text certainly seems foreboding. Some message of consequence must loom on the

horizon.

Now Jeremiah has received another necessary dimension of his call. God calls, God gives a consistent word, and God safeguards that word. Thus reassured the prophet can proceed with more confidence. Accuracy has been coupled with authority. Also this passage makes the reader wonder what God's next "word" is, or perhaps reminds seasoned readers of prophecy of past "words." Further, this text makes the reader wonder why Jeremiah needs more evidence of God's power. Is his task difficult, or is he just a weak person? Or will the need for reassurance be a recurring motif in the story?

1:13-16. For the third time God's word "comes" to Jeremiah. However it is the second instruction he receives in a question and answer format. This time the prophet "sees" a pot boiling, tipped away from the North (1:13). God responds that disaster will come "from the north" (1:14). Presently the pot boils, but has yet to spill over. There remains some time to cool the fire. Still, one assumes that the bubbling forth will cause a spilling if the pot stays unattended. But at this point there is still some chance that the disaster can be avoided.

This as yet un-named devastation will affect "all the inhabitants of the land" (1:14). Obviously Jeremiah must relay this warning to the people. Indeed any warning may be a formality, since the pot is already boiling and the disaster may not be conditional. Now the reader knows Jeremiah's message *is not pleasant*. The earlier assurances were needed to prepare the prophet to accept his unwelcome task.

Yahweh further explains the ominous threat in 1:15 . Apparently massive numbers of people will descend from the north to conquer Jerusalem. In fact, the text acts as if every northern king will move against Judah. There is no need to identify a *specific* enemy at this time. After all, whoever comes will triumph. When the conquest is complete foreigners will rule Judah, even sitting in Jerusalem's gates. So Jerusalem will cease to control its own destiny.

Despite the fact that foreign armies defeat Jerusalem, Yahweh

reveals that these non-Jewish judges simply act as messengers for the great Judge. Really God sits at their gates judging them. Why has this punishment fallen? The oldest "word" of all answers this question. Israel has not kept the most basic of commandments, for they have served other gods (1:16). So the curses of the covenant, especially those relating to exile (cf. Dt. 28:36-37), are visited on the people.

Jeremiah now possesses the application of his "word." He must preach the coming fall of Jerusalem, and he must tell the people the disaster occurs because of their sin. We know from the implied narrative that he must preach this sermon of doom for a long time, perhaps for as long as forty years (627-587 B.C.). Like Isaiah before him he has a gloomy theme to proclaim (cf. Isa. 6:8-13). Remember, though, that he will get "to build and to plant," but this portion of his "word" will only come after punishment in written prophecy.

Though this third revelation from God continues, some summary is appropriate. Jeremiah's preaching must focus on repentance in hopes that destruction can be avoided. Maybe the Lord will spare Jerusalem as in Isaiah's time (cf. Isa. 36-37), though vv. 1-3 dim such prospects. Since sharing this information will most likely make Jeremiah unpopular, the reader should understand why he needs confidence. He is linked to the covenant by 1:16. So, this section explains his prophetic task more clearly. Both his commission and "word" are more fully known. But some questions do remain. For instance, the threat and those threatened remain rather general and undefined. Will these items stay amorphous, or will they become plot elements readers can identify? Of course another problem remains. Has Jeremiah's need for reassurance disappeared?

Jeremiah's Characterization Framework: Jeremiah 1:17-19

Every plot needs distinctive characters to enhance its artistry. A *character* is created by an author to be realistic and to fit an individual plot. Edgar V. Roberts suggests:

> We may define *character* in literature as the author's creation,
> through the medium of words, of a personality who takes on
> actions, thoughts, expressions, and attitudes unique and
> appropriate to that personality and consistent with it.
> Character might be thought of as a reasonable facsimile of a
> human being, with all the qualities and vagaries of a human
> being.[13]

On the other hand, *characterization* is how a character is portrayed
in a story. Characterization includes the many facets of the character.
Roberts rightly claims that characterization "is the sum total of typical
qualities and propensities in any given individual that are controlled
by that individual's drives, aims, ideals, morals, and conscience."[14]
In short, a character is a person in a story and the characterization of
that person reveals that individual's true nature.

Unlike some of the other prophetic books, Jeremiah has several
well-developed characters. In all literature when characters interact
within a structured story line plot results. Therefore when Jeremiah
converses with Yahweh or another character plot unfolds. When
Jeremiah and another character or characters act together within a
given scene plot takes place. Quite logically, then, it is important to
identify the main characters in Jeremiah and begin to see their role in
the prophecy.

1:17-19. This session of lessons about Jeremiah's call now ends
(1:17). The student must live out his instructions. God bluntly
orders Jeremiah to "get ready," to take his stand, and to declare what
has been declared to him. Again he is told not to fear his enemies,
and again his enemies are not clearly defined. This time the
reassurance comes in command form, which indicates that this lesson
should be learned by now. In fact, Yahweh threatens to terrify him
before his enemies if he has not learned the lesson. Once more the
interpreter wonders why such attention is paid to the prophet's
enemies. Overcoming them appears vital to his ministry.

Even after this seemingly harsh edict, Yahweh offers Jeremiah
more promises of success. The prophet is fortified, like iron and
bronze, and well able to defeat his enemies (1:18). Nothing can stand

against him. Who are the enemies more specifically? Four are named: kings, priests, officials, and people. Though this list seems broad, each category receives definition in the book. These characters, as well as the situation outlined in 1:1-3 and the message introduced in 1:10 and 1:13-16, will be what causes Jeremiah to need the Lord's special reassurances. When the "nations" from 1:5 are added to this group the prophet faces some formidable opponents.

Jeremiah's victory over his enemies is a certainty (1:19), just as God's word coming true is a certainty (1:12). But the struggle will be fierce. His enemies will "fight," or "make war" against him. God even promises to "rescue" the prophet, which evidently means Jeremiah will suffer some setbacks. Again, it must be God's presence and power that will sustain the prophet. This concluding verse revives the issue of Jeremiah's confidence, which once more alerts the reader to this theme.

After chapter one the text has chronicled Jeremiah's basic prophetic call (1:5), offered an initial outline of his work (1:10), noted the authority for that work (1:11-12), given the content of his preaching (1:13-16), and pointed out the human obstacles to the fulfillment of his task (1:17-19). Throughout these introductory passages the author has gradually unveiled Jeremiah's fear of the task. Just as gradually Yahweh has promised survival and success to Jeremiah. This chapter therefore works as a purposeful and unified construction. There is no need to rearrange it, as some commentators attempt to do. Nothing remains unexplained about Jeremiah's task. All that is needed is for the career itself to transpire.

Summary of Plot Elements

What the reader needs to know about Jeremiah's plot has now been revealed. The book's structure, conflict, and characters are in place. From this introduction some sense of the book's order can be grasped.

The book's implied narrative, based on its historical setting (cf.

1:1-3), and its structure coincide. Because of the times and because of the book's literary type sin, punishment, and restoration will be stressed (1:10). The prophecy's major segments reflect this structure. Few scholars disagree that such a general thematic structuring exists. What causes debate is the ordering of events within this framework.

Because of the historical situation Jeremiah's conflict is fairly simple to determine. God's people have turned after other gods and thereby deserve punishment (cf. 1:16). As the Lord's prophet, Jeremiah is dragged into this conflict. He must tell the nation about God's dissatisfaction with their conduct. Typical of pre-exilic Israel, the people refuse to repent. All that can happen is that God will punish. Beyond destruction lies renewal, but that renewal cannot soften this harsh blow. Most of these items are facets of most, if not all, prophecies.

Perhaps the author's unveiling of the characters has the most impact on Jeremiah's plot. Jeremiah himself has received a call, been given instructions, and will be a true prophet in the traditional sense of the term. He will be like Moses, Isaiah, and the other canonical prophets. He will preach sin, punishment, and restoration. Yet he will be tempted to fear his task (1:7-8) and his enemies (1:17-19). If he succumbs to this temptation Yahweh will not be pleased (1:17), since the prophet has been promised God's presence and protection a number of times. Therefore the reader can expect a good bit of interaction between God and Jeremiah in the story. Surely the introduction prepares us for that eventuality, and that this interaction may not always be pleasant, as chs. 11-20 will eventually reveal.

Other characters help dictate the plot. Most of them are Jeremiah's enemies (1:18). They will define the conflict and attempt to block the resolution. In return, Jeremiah will denounce them and see them suffer punishment. Their actions prove Yahweh's accusations against them are just. The order in which these enemies are dealt with within the broad structural categories will determine how the conflict and resolution unfold. For example, which enemy Jeremiah addresses creates the plot's coherence in chs. 21-29 and chs. 34-51. A few minor characters will help Jeremiah, but they do not

change the book's plot sequence. Most of the enemies and friends come from Israel, but the text indicates some arise from "the nations."

So in the book God empowers Jeremiah to preach the impending doom and ultimate salvation of Israel and the nation. He will exercise an international ministry. His hearers will fight him, thus creating the story line. Some problems may arise between the prophet and Yahweh as well. Each element interacts with the other. From these basic elements other characters and themes may emerge, yet these newer aspects must arise from the foundational ones.

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5.   Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 111.

6.   Cf. Niditch, "A Prophet to the Nations," 235.

7.   Charles Feinberg, "Jeremiah," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) 372.

8.   Philip J. Hyatt, "Exegesis of Jeremiah," *The Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1956) 798.

9.   B. D. Napier, "Prophecy," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplementary Volume* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976) 315.

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1.   John Bright, *Jeremiah* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965) 6.

2.   J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 144.

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11.   E. W. Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25* (Cambridge: University Press, 1973) 26.

12.   H. Cunliffe-Jones, *The Book of Jeremiah: Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Macmillan, 1961) 49.

13. Edgar V. Roberts, *Writing Themes About Literature* (3rd ed; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973) 45.

14. Ibid., 44.

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3

Ancient Sources and Modern
Theories of Pharisaic Origin

If one makes a serious attempt to find out when the Pharisees originated, sooner or later one realizes how monumental a task one has undertaken. And this is not because the sources are so numerous, but because they are so few--and that their interpretations are so diverse.

In reality there are only four original sources to which one can turn to obtain data about the Pharisees. These are the writings of Josephus, the New Testament, Talmudic literature, and apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings having contents relevant to this question.[1]

Christians have many reasons to be interested in the Pharisees, not the least of which is the dialogue which takes place between Jews and Christians as they attempt to fathom the meaning of their common heritage. Stendahl adds another reason for our interest in the Pharisees:

> Who were the Pharisees? The question is of paramount
> significance to both Judaism and Christianity. It could be
> argued that it is of even greater significance for Christianity,
> since the teaching of Jesus and much early Christian material
> is available to us only in its sharp critique of and contrast to
> the Pharisees. Every misunderstanding of Pharisaism hence
> brings with it a misconception of the aims and intentions of
> early Christianity.[2]

Volumes have been written about the Pharisees in English,

German, French, and Hebrew. Scholars, both Christian and Jewish, have written extensive works on their life and practices. For example, Louis Finkelstein wrote a lengthy two-volume treatise titled *The Pharisees*[3] in which he expounded his theories about the sect. R. Travers Herford produced a classic history which provides a Christian perspective on their development, beliefs about Torah, interactions with Jesus and Paul, and views regarding their theology.[4]

When one reads the work of either of these notable scholars, it seems that our knowledge about the Pharisees is firm and reliable. However, contemporary Jewish scholars are not quite so certain. Elis Rivkin identified several problems pertaining to historiography in any study of the Pharisees:

> Every crucial question which must be answered first, *before* the sources can even be used, still awaits definitive resolution because no source exists which tells us specifically and unambiguously: 1. when the Pharisees emerged, 2. the historical context of that emergence, 3. the course of their evolution and development, and 4. the nature and provenance of their distinctive institutions....The sources...leave us in the lurch. These [Josephus, the Pharisees, and the New Testament] are the only contemporary sources that directly mention the Pharisees, and they do not tell us what we need to know. They do not answer the questions of how, or why, or when. All the other writings that are contemporaneous with the Pharisees, or border on contemporaneity--and this includes the Dead Sea Scrolls as well--can be drawn upon for whatever supplemental data they may contain *only after* we know for certain what the sources that mention them by name are communicating to us....When it comes to the Pharisaic question, there has been no increment to our knowledge, only a proliferation of writings about the Pharisees which may prove to be utterly and *totally* wrong simply because the definition was built on sources that were not referring to the Pharisees at all.[5]

Rivkin is not alone in questioning conclusions based on

fragmentary, if not often unreliable, sources. Jacob Neusner raised similar questions about the rabbinic sources and concluded that "...the large number of students of talmudic and midrashic literature...discern no sequence of development in a given tradition, for, as noted, each version is as good as the next, and all are right."[6] This is because of the pietistic reverence many Jews have toward the Talmud and Mishnah. Rivkin and Neusner further agree that the late development of these Jewish sources makes them less reliable than might be allowed by some scholars. Rivkin concluded that

> the history of Pharisaism is largely non-recoverable because of the nature of the sources. Since the writing down of the Oral Law in the Mishnah and the Tosefta did not take place until the third century or later C.E., and since the Law was continuously undergoing change, and since most of it is anonymous, dating becomes a hazardous enterprise.[7]

One might legitimately ask, then, what makes a paper of this sort worth doing. A response would be that while the precise history of Pharisaism is "largely non-recoverable" recent Jewish and Christian scholarship is not. It is the purpose of this paper to present a report on *twentieth century theories* of the origin of the Pharisees and to conclude by suggesting what is reasonable, in one person's judgment at least, from that scholarship.

The earliest historical references to the existence of the Pharisees are found in Josephus' *Antiquities*. In Book XIII he refers to the Pharisees as one of three Jewish parties (haireseis) active during the high priestly reign of Jonathan Maccabaeus (152-142 B.C.):[8]

> Now at this time there were three schools of thought among the Jews, which held different opinions concerning human affairs; the first being that of the Pharisees, the second that of the Sadducees, and the third that of the Essenes.[9]

A second reference in *Antiquities* (xiii:293-298),[10] which Guttman cites as "the first historical incident in which these names [Pharisees

and Saducees] appear,"[11] records that John Hyrcanus, king and high priest (134-104 B.C.), rejected Pharisaism and became a Sadducee because of a conflict relating to his parentage.

Because these are the earliest known historical references to the Pharisees, some scholars have been prone to suggest that their genesis took place at that time. Others, convinced that their origin would had to have been more ancient for them to emerge in Jonathan's day as a party or sect deserving mention, look for clues to their existence in earlier writings. In a relatively thorough review of the literature in English (journals, monographs, and histories) of the period, I have identified views which may be categorized into six distinct historical periods. The remainder of this paper will focus on those views, period by period, followed by a discussion of "compromise views" and "reasons, not dates."

Roots in Solomon's Day

When Solomon became king, he cleaned his political house. One of those whom his broom swept from office was Abiathar the priest in the line of Eli (1 Ki. 2:26-27). He had been guilty of assisting Adonijah in his attempt to usurp the throne of David which had been promised to Solomon (1 Ki. 1:5, 7, 24, 28-30). In Abiathar's place, Zadok of the line of Eleazar was installed as high priest (1 Ki. 2:35) in recognition of his loyalty to David and Solomon.

According to the views of Tchernowitz and W.O.E. Oesterley, the contest which began with the rivalry between Abiathar and Zadok was the spring from which the Pharisaic and Sadducean parties flowed in later generations. "Tchernowitz supposes that the origin of the two sects is traceable to the rivalry...in the days of Solomon."[12] Abiathar ceased to be high priest at the behest of Solomon; the new Zadokite line of high priests had been anticipated, however, when "a man of God" (1 Sa 2:27) announced to Eli that God would raise up for himself "a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind, I will firmly establish his house, and he will minister

before my anointed one always" (I Sa 2:35). Zadok became that "faithful priest" and his line reigned as high priests until Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) bartered away the priesthood to Menelaus, who was not from the priestly family of Zadok. Tchernowitz reasoned that

> Abiathar, one of the descendants of Eleazer, was the rightful head of the priests but because he objected to Solomon's policy of the centralized kingdom and worship, thus obliterating tribal autonomy and worship, Solomon replaced him with Zadok (1 Kings 2:27), of the younger and smaller clan of Ittamar. In his protest Abiathar was joined by the prophets, who saw in this centralization and urbanization an imitation of Canaanite civilization.[13]

W.O.E. Oesterley similarly maintains that the existence of two opposing parties goes back to Solomon's assignment of the high priesthood exclusively to Zadok. He traces the presence of two priestly lines through the exile to "Ezra the priest," an opponent of the house of Zadok. Further, he sees the antagonism having become more evident in the Greek period (cf. 1 Mac 1:11-15). In his view, the Hasidim, who emerged in the Hasmonean revolt (1 Mac 2:42) as upholders of the law, became the forebears of the Pharisees in the tradition of Ezra and Abiathar. By the time Josephus implicated them in opposition to John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.) (*Antiquities* xiii:288-298), they had become a distinct party and the Hasidim were no longer mentioned.[14]

Reasoning like that of Tchernowitz and Oesterley is characteristic of anyone who cites antecedents for the Pharisees prior to the Hasmonean revolt, because it is only then that the name "Pharisee" appears in any historical document; and that historical source is in the works of Josephus which must be evaluated for any duplicity which may have motivated his writing some 200 years after the Hasmonean revolt took place.

Babylonian Origins

Certain theological views attributed to the Pharisees have given rise to the suggestion that their roots are to be found in the Babylonian Exile.

> The eschatology of Judaism has an unmistakable affinity to that of the Zoroastrian religion in the separation of the souls of righteous and wicked at death, and their happy or miserable lot between death and resurrection, and in the doctrine of a general resurrection and the last judgment with its issues. The resemblances are so striking [asserts historian G. F. Moore] that many scholars are convinced that this whole system of ideas was appropriated by the Jews from the Zoroastrians, as well as that Jewish angelology and demonology were developed under Babylonian and Persian influence.[15]

A significant factor in numerous arguments about the origin of the Pharisees is the meaning of the word "Pharisee" itself and the derivations of its meaning. In the Greek the equivalent is *Pharisaioi*, in Aramaic it is *Perishaya*, and in Hebrew it is *Perushim*. It is commonly understood to mean "the ones who are separated,"[16] and along with that meaning questions are raised as to *when* and *why* they were separated and *from what*.

T. W. Manson expressed the view that the original meaning of the word "Pharisee" was "Persian", and that it was applied to the bearers of new theological ideas in much the same way the term "Romaniser" has been used in theological controversy more recently. In Manson's opinion the etymology which attached it to the Hebrew root meaning "to separate" came much later.[17] His argument assumes that the label "Persian" carried negative connotations designed to single out these theological innovators.

Leo Baeck also believes that the beginnings of the movement reside in the Babylonian Exile. He has maintained that it was "there it started out; it derived its character, its reason, and its meaning from it."[18] He reasons that in Babylonia separation from the heathen was

of utmost importance, as it illustrated in the Daniel (1:4-5). The separatist idea contained in their name takes on historic significance when placed in the context of ancient Babylon. Under the circumstances it would lose its negative meaning. Instead, it would be the source of great religious significance. Its meaning then would be akin to the name "separatist" which has been applied to Christian groups which have sought to be "in the world but not of the world" through the centuries.

> When these men realized that they, and in all likelihood the generations after them, would have to live in Babylonia, they were forced, in the interests of their spiritual self-preservation, to attempt the creation of a world in which they could lead their own lives. This world, this community, had to be created amidst all the seductions the Babylonian civilization offered. Only within a circle of people separated from the others could they remain inwardly secure and preserve in themselves the character they had to have in order to inhabit the realm of Babylonia and the inner realm of Judaism at the same time....Separateness and isolation had to be erected into a principle. This could be done with all the more energy since all thinking and acting...now had a clear goal....So long as it sought to pass beyond the limits of the present moment and its cares, it could find the true home of its spirit in the genius of its religion.[19]

If, in fact, either of these views regarding the derivation of the name of the Pharisees is correct, it would undermine the theories of scholars who have suggested that it meant separation from the *am ha-aretz* who presumably were the "unclean" people of the land,[20] or of others who assume it was a term of derogation leveled at them out of other contexts.[21]

Appearance in the Restoration

However emotionally appealing Baeck's viewpoint is, it has not been accepted by numerous other scholars. More popular is the possibility that the heritage of the Pharisees is to be found in the profound religious developments which occurred when a generation of Jews were granted permission from Cyrus king of Persia to return to Jerusalem and "rebuild the house of the Lord" (Ezr 1:2-3). The strongest proponent for the view that Pharisaism grew out of this period is Solomon Zeitlin, longtime editor of the *Jewish Quarterly Review* and professor at the Dropsie School in Philadelphia. Less vociferous in their claims, but nonetheless champions of this point of view, are Finkelstein and Geiger.

Mantel summarized Geiger's view quite succinctly as follows:

> ...the dispute arose when the High Priest, the sons of Zadok, formed a political alliance with the neighboring peoples, notably the Samaritans; the term "Pharisees" therefore signifies "those who separated themselves," and it is to them that Ezra (6:21) refers when he says, "And all such as had separated themselves...unto them from the filthiness of the nations of the land."[22]

Finkelstein originally took the position that the Pharisees came into being as successors of the Hasidim in the Hasmonean era.[23] A good deal later, however, he revised his views and adopted the idea that they existed at a much earlier date (at least as early as the fourth century B.C.). His later views were published in an article titled "The Origin of the Pharisees Reconsidered."[24] He cited two arguments which had persuaded him to adopt this early date. His first point was that

> A passage in Tosefta Yadaim shows conclusively that the Pharisees existed as a distinct group as early as the beginning of the fourth century B.C.E. For according to it the Tetragammaton [YHWH] was still pronounced by the

contemporary Jews in their prayers.[25]

His second argument questioned why the name Sadducees, a name understood to apply to members of the Zadokite line of priests, would be leveled against a group of non-Zadokites who had originated in the time of Jonathan or John Hyrcanus since Hasmoneans would not claim to be from the line of Zadok. Finkelstein believes a pre-Maccabean origin of the Pharisees is the only explanation for this enigma.[26]

The greatest champion for the emergence of the Pharisees in the post-exilic period, and by far the most vocal of the theorists, was Solomon Zeitlin, who placed the beginning of the Pharisees in the late fifth century B.C. In explaining his view, Zeitlin maintained:

> I advanced the theory that the Pharisees came into being shortly after the Restoration. The name Pharisees is a nickname of contempt applied by their opponents the Zadokites. This group, nicknamed Pharisees, maintained that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is not an ethnic God but the God of all peoples. They also maintained that the Temple which was built should not be called the House of Yahweh as it is designated in the Bible--God had no particular house, He is everywhere. After the Pentateuch was canonized in the year 444 B.C.E. this group maintained that the unwritten laws were as binding as the laws in the Pentateuch. The Zadokites and their followers were opposed to all these ideas.[27]

The views of the Pharisees (Perushim, heretics) that God was a universal God and that He had spoken outside of the canonized scriptures were the cause, Zeitlin contends, for their coming into conflict with the establishment of their day, the Zadokite priestly family. His choice of this context for the emergence of the Pharisees revolves around the canonization of the Pentateuch and their unique doctrinal views: "Those two diverse ideologies could only arise after the Pentateuch had been canonized and the question of the binding nature of the law began to confront the people."[28]

Zeitlin argues that direct reference to the Pharisees did not appear in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah because the Zadokites ignored mentioning any of their enemies (e.g., Samaritans and Judeans who had not gone into captivity). "They passed in silence all those opposed to their views," including the Pharisees.[29] Zeitlin apparently is unconcerned, however, that no direct mention is made of the Pharisees in other Jewish writings for at least 275 years, until they emerge in Josephus.

Ellis Rivkin, a more recent Jewish historian, challenges these views by insisting on a greater adherence to the facts. He acknowledges the widely held view that Pharisaism had its origin in Ezra and canonization of the Pentateuch, but he objects, saying,

> But there exists no direct unambiguous evidence for any of this....The only written record that we have, descriptive of how Judean society functioned after the canonization of the Pentateuch and prior to the Hasmonean revolt is Ben Sira's Ecclesiasticus; and in it, Ben Sira not only affirms that Aaronide priesthood exercised absolute hegemony over the Law (45:15-45:24), but he makes it clear that Soferim, like himself, had no independent authority whatsoever (38:24:39:1-11). Neither Ben Sira nor any other book written prior to the Hasmonean revolt is exegetical in character...[30]

Hellenistic Beginnings

It becomes necessary to think in broad time periods when addressing these theories because the authors frequently speak in such terms. Very often they use such reference points as "before" or "not later than" because it is seldom possible to fix a date with great certainty even for those turning points in history. The period cited above and the hellenistic period are relatively distinct historical units of time. We are quite certain about the pivotal events which took place in 444 B.C. and 332 B.C., but we are much less sure how social or religious movements relate to those dates. Therefore, in this section, and

throughout the paper for that matter, exact dating yields to generalized time frames.

Mantel is the only author identified who gave any review of these theories. His review is not thorough, but he cited numerous German theorists otherwise inaccessible. He summarizes Wellhausen's view as follows:

> Wellhausen believes that the Hellenistic era saw the rise of the two parties. The Sadducean High Priests with their hellenizing tendencies aroused the ire of the scholarly Scribes who, in their turn, became Essenes and Pharisees. As applied to the Hasmoneans, the term 'Sadducees' was a form of mockery: 'they are not better than the Sadducees'.[31]

Roger Beckwith bases his view that "the Pharisaic movement arose not later than 340 B.C."[32] on Qumran literature he has studied. As an outgrowth of his research he has divided the post-exilic period into four eras:

(1) The Era of Separation to the Law: Ezra and the Scribes.
(2) The Era of Lay Revival: proto-Pharisaism.
(3) The Era of Priestly Reform: Proto-Sadduceeism and proto-Essenism.
(4) The Era of Conflict: (a) between Hasidim and Hellenizers
     (b) between Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes.[33]

As the chart suggests, Beckwith holds that the proto-Pharisaic movement is the oldest of the three. He also maintains that they were the traditionalists (i.e., holding on to traditions not incorporated into the written law) and that the other groups were champions of reform.

The "era of lay reform" was in reaction to the gradual decay of the separation movement instigated by Ezra and Nehemiah and in direct response to the marriage of Manasses, the high priest's brother, to a Samaritan princess (*Antiquities* xi:302f). Beckwith reasons that someone else had to provide leadership in the study of the law since the priests were not doing so, and the elders of the Great Synagogue provided that service.

> That this was the character of the body appears from its three
> great utterances: "Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many
> disciples, and make a fence around the Law" (Mishnah, Aboth
> I, 1)....they were elders having the responsibilities of
> judges...they were determined to be teachers...their concern
> was for the Law.[34]

Therefore, Beckwith concludes that this body represents the roots of Pharisaism. "The Pharisees certainly regarded themselves as its [the Great Synagogue's] heirs and their right to do so is proved by the fact that the Pharisaic movement was a movement led by laymen, whereas the Sadducean and Essene movements were led by priests."[35]

Beckwith has acknowledged both that the name of the Pharisees does not occur in literature prior to the time of Jonathan Maccabeus (152-142 B.C.)[36] and that a great change in Jewish society occurred among all three of these parties in the second century B.C., but he is not convinced that this change was of sufficient import to bring these groups into being. That took place much earlier, as his chart illustrates.[37]

One additional scholar clearly identified his theory of the origin of the Pharisees with this period. D.S. Russell in *The Jews from Alexander to Herod* attaches his view to the emergence of the class of scribes who arose in the early hellenistic period. His views do not differ appreciably from those of Beckwith cited above, although the date he settles on may be somewhat more recent.[38]

In the wake of Alexander the Great's conquest of Palestine, an influx of new customs and ideas beset the Judean population.

> [In response] there arose a class of scribes, chiefly lay, who
> applied themselves diligently to the task of interpreting and
> applying the Law in the light of the prevailing circumstances
> of their own day...and in due course appeared as the party of
> the Pharisees.[39]

Other authors allude to the unlikelihood of a sudden emergence of

the Pharisees, especially in the Hasmonean era, but they are slower to set specific dates as to when they must have arisen. Guttman is one of those authors:

> They did not break away at this time [during the Hasmonean era] from the Sadducees. The division and antagonism between the high priest and the aristocratic society around him on the one hand, and the lay teachers and masses led by them on the other, *had been in existence for many centuries.*[40] (Italics mine.)

Thus, Guttman allows, although he probably would not subscribe to a pre-restoration theory of Pharisaic origin, for a much earlier establishment of Pharisaism than the mid-second century B.C.

Hasmonean Origins

When the Seleucids wrested control of Palestine from Egypt in 198 B.C., a long line of Antiochin atrocities was inaugurated. Not the least of these was the sale of the Jewish high priesthood to the highest bidder, a practice which ended the occupation of the high priesthood by Zadokite priests. The last Zadokite to occupy the office was Jason (the Greek name he preferred), who himself began an extensive wave of hellenization of Jerusalem. His brief term as high priest (174-171 B.C.) when Menelaus, a member of the priestly family of Bilga and a non-Zadokite,[41] outbid Jason for the high priesthood (2 Mac 4:23-26).

The significance of the sequence cited above relates to the view of many scholars, and to numerous of the theories mentioned earlier, that the Sadducees are represented in the earlier history, if it is indeed that, of the conflict between priests and lay leaders who are thought to have been the forerunners of the Sadducees and the Pharisees respectively.

Because of the extreme nature of the hellenization policies of the Seleucids, encouraged by those corrupt high priests, and because of

the eventual profaning of the Temple and imposition of idolatrous worship practices by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Jews broke into open rebellion in what has become known as the Hasmonean Revolt (166 B.C.), which eventually introduced another priestly family, the Hasmoneans, to power.

Joining the Hasmoneans in their rebellion against Syria was a group known as the Hasidim, presumed by some to be the forebears of the Pharisees. Their history, too, is clouded in mystery because they are first mentioned in this context. Others see the Hasidim as the predecessors of the Essenes.[42]

Among those theorists who hold that the Pharisees came into being during the Hasmonean era are Rivkin, Lauterbach, Burgmann, and Finkelstein. In the latter case, his earlier view which placed the origin of the Pharisees in this era was modified some years later, as has been pointed out above.

As Moore observes, "It is commonly surmised that they [the Pharisees] were the successors of those who in earlier generations called themselves Hasidim."[43] "Hasidim" is a word which means "pious ones" and has been associated with the separatist tendencies of the Pharisees. Before Finkelstein adopted the position that the Pharisees emerged in the early fourth century, he developed a very complex sociological explanation that the Sadducees were landed patricians opposed by urban plebeians who became known as Pharisees. He wrote a widely heralded two-volume work titled *The Pharisees* in which he expounded these views.

> The social forces which made the patrician landowners of the eleventh century B.C.E. desert the YHWH of his nomadic ancestors and worship the *baalim* of the earlier Canaanite agriculturalists, and had driven his successors of the sixth century B.C.E., to imitate Assyrian and Egyptian manners, dress, and worship, produced the Hellenist in the third century B.C.E., as well as the Sadducee and the Herodian of a later generation. Conversely, the follower of the prophet gave way to the Hasid, and the latter was succeeded by the Pharisee.[44]

Following a line of historical reasoning that could encompass any one of the theories reviewed thus far, Lauterbach adopted the position that the Pharisees did not finally emerge until "during the reign of John Hyran" [Hyrcan?] when "the non-priestly teachers were excluded from membership in the assembly of the Sanhedrin and branded as Dissenters or Separatists."[45] This is the extreme view within the "Hasmonean school" because it ignores Josephus' reference to the existence of Pharisees and Sadducees in the reign of Jonathan (*Antiquities* xiii:171-173) and concentrates on the first clear historical incident in which they were involved in the reign of John Hyrcanus (*Antiquities* xiii:293-298).

The incident between John Hyrcanus and the Pharisees apparently occurred late in his reign. It hardly could have been the beginning point of Pharisaism, given the observation of Josephus that at the outset of his reign Hyrcanus had been a friend and disciple of the Pharisees (*Antiquities* xiii:289).

Arguing from a different vantage point, Guttman also rejects this view on the grounds that "in this incident, the Sadducees and Pharisees appear as established adversaries of each other, meaning they must have been in existence for some time."[46]

Beckwith rejects the notion that the Pharisees were the descendants of the Hasidim, preferring the more recent view that instead they may have been the forerunners of the Essenes. This is a view he shares with Zeitlin, Malik, Jeremias, and Hengel, among others.[47] Beckwith also is supported in this position by Rivkin, who denies the existence of any evidence to support this concept of Pharisaic origin.[48]

One does not need to wonder, however, what Rivkin's position is concerning these origins because, other than Zeitlin, he is among the most emphatic in articulating his views. He argues that Ben Sira (c. 180 B.C.) presents "a world that is in complete harmony with the Pentateuch *literally* apprehended,"[49] i.e., it is a world as yet unaffected by the oral law of a scholar class or of eternal individuation. He stresses that "when we turn from Ben Sira to all other writings that have survived from the pre-Hasmonean

period...the non-existence of the Pharisees, and their distinctive concepts and institutions is confirmed."[50] It is clear that in his view of the non-existence of a scholar class and of practices which anticipated those eventually to be known as Pharisees Rivkin is at odds with all of those cited in the preceding periods in this paper.

Rivkin has held that Pharisaism had to have originated in the brief period between the onset of the Hasmonean revolt (166 B.C.) and the time of Jonathan (160-142 B.C.). At the most this provides a latitude of twenty-four years.[51] Rivkin is convinced that the Pharisees arose in the midst of revolution. He reasons as follows:

> Could anything but a large scale revolution have bridged the gap between two systems of Judaism so logically discontinuous? Is it conceivable that the Aaronides would peacefully yield their supremacy grounded in literal Pentateuchalism to a scholar class trumpeting the sanction of a twofold Law unknown to the Pentateuch or other sacred Scripture?[52]

In response to his own questions, Rivkin placed the cause of the "revolution" in (1) a hellenized priesthood, (2) priestly disregard for the authority of the Pentateuch, and (3) adoption of polytheism, all of which created a "crisis of confidence" in the traditional leadership. In response to a need which presented itself, a new scholar class emerged (from where he does not say) "stirring the masses with a novel concept, the twofold Law (Written *and* Oral), and with a novel promise, eternal individuation."[53]

In a 1972 article in *Revue de Qumran*, Burgmann[54] suggests that Simon the Maccabee (142-134 B.C.) founded the party of the Pharisees to divide the Hasidim in response to their rejection of Maccabean policy when the Judean state was restored in 142 B.C. Mantel, however, has taken exception to this view because he feels there is no connection between the description of Simon's activities in 1 Maccabees 14:4-15, 32-41 and the Pharisaic party.[55] Again, one must ask how Burgmann can ignore the witness of Josephus to the earlier existence of a group whom he called "Pharisees."

Herodian Roots

Mantel also attributes the view that the date for the emergence of the sects falls within the Herodian period (37-4 B.C.) to an early twentieth century German theologian named Holscher.[56] Such a late view denies the witness of Josephus about sectarian associations with either Alexander Jannaeus or John Hyrcanus, to say nothing of the reference to their existence in the reign of Jonathan. Further, it hardly seems possible that forces as numerous or as influential as the Pharisees and Sadducees are in the New Testament could have risen to such heights in thirty to forty years, especially in the midst of opposing Roman and Herodian influences.

Compromise Views

It should be evident that there is a certain degree of the "pay your money and take your choice" syndrome at work in all of these theories. No one seems to contend that direct historical allusions to these sects and parties are no more ancient than the days of Jonathan the high priest. On the other hand, most theorists find in apocryphal writings, in canonical Jewish scriptures, or in Jewish tradition "evidence" which points to sufficiently indelible traces of Pharisaic existence (by whatever name) in one of these several historical periods from Solomon to Herod.

In the literature, however, as commonly as not, writers will use such phrases as "whatever the origins," or "regardless of our inability to fix dates," after which they proceed to say something like the following:"

> It is generally agreed that the Pharisees are first noticed in the days of the Second Temple. They, may, possibly, be traced back to the *Hasidim*. We must look for their ideas after the Return, when the School of Ezra and his followers busied

themselves in the *Torah*. They certainly became prominent after the Maccabean fight for liberty, but *it is not unlikely that the ideas for which they stood may be found to be considerably earlier*.[57] (Italics mine).

Even among the theorists cited, it has to be acknowledged that many of them recognized a gradual unfolding of Pharisaism. Even Finkelstein, who modified his view after almost an entire life of scholarly work, felt that the Pharisaism of which he earlier wrote was the product of "a persistent cultural battle, carried on in Palestine for fifteen centuries."[58]

In the past decade, three volumes of the intended four volume revision of Schurer's standard history of Judaism in the Christian era have appeared. The editors wisely, in the presence of the existing facts, have left room for almost any theory of Pharisaic origins by saying that it is "as old as so-called 'legal' Judaism itself," since life organized for continuing fulfillment of Torah is Pharisaism in principle if not in name.[59]

Reasons, Not Dates

It would be almost as possible, and perhaps wiser, to highlight the events or causes which brought the Pharisees into existence as to use chronological time frames in any discussion of their origin, because dates and times are so elusive. Ultimately, *when* is of less consequence than *why*, except as the when illuminates the why. Thus, in his brief summary of the views of some of these theorists, Finkel has tended to use broadly sociological categories rather than historical ones to achieve his ends.[60]

One can identify political reasons, as well as the religious one, in the separation which occurred between Abiathar and Zadok. Similarly, one finds religious grounds in the universalism of the post-exilic period. Finkelstein was convinced that the division which forced the emergence of the Pharisees was the tension between the

rural and urban classes in Palestine. Oral tradition, or the absence thereof, provides sufficient grounds for a rift to have taken place, and secularism in the priesthood has caused splits in religious cultures since the earliest of times.

Conclusions

Understanding the Pharisees is important to Christians, but their history is elusive because the sources are extremely limited and are of varying degrees of reliability. While the earliest references to the Pharisees by name are found in the writings of Josephus, scholars tend to believe that they existed as a group in an earlier era dating back, according to some theorists, even to the time of the monarchy.

To the degree that we trust in the historicity of the biblical record, we can be sure of a rift between Abiathar and Zadok which elevated the Zadokites to the high priestly office. They apparently retained control of the office from then until Jason lost it to Menelaus, a Benjaminite (171 B.C.). This historical development has given rise to the theory that the name "Sadducee" is derived from "Zadok" and that there was an opposing group who became the ancestors of another group known as "Pharisees."

Others suggest that the Pharisees emerged in Babylonia. This theory is obscure and conjectural since there are no concrete facts to support it. True, comparisons can be made between Zoroastrianism and later Jewish theological views which give rise to questions concerning the origin of those ideas. The facts do not, however, in their present state of discovery, establish the theory of Babylonian origin. Separation as a way of life seems to have been a significant issue at several stages of Old Testament history from the Exodus onward and also fails as a sufficient reason to prove their origins in the Babylonian era.

There are strong proponents who favor the view that the roots of Pharisaism are embedded in the soil of the restoration. Canonization of the Pentateuch, which took place then, seems like an essential basis

for the emergence of a (competing?) body of oral tradition. Although facts are sparse to support the theory, the feasibility seems greater than earlier theories.

As the gap of time decreases between the date of any theory and the actual references to Pharisees *per se* as a viable historical group, the reasonableness of the theory is strengthened. In the period of hellenization lay scribes (versus only priestly scribes of the post-exhilic period) appeared. They are thought to be likely predecessors of the Pharisees because of the associations of the latter with the study of the law.

Hellenization was definitely a disruptive force in Judea and no doubt was the occasion for the development of separatist leanings among some Jews. Since it is unlikely, in my opinion, that the Pharisees arose overnight in the Hasmonean period, it seems likely that the forces of hellenization contributed to the solidification of a group like those whom Beckwith called "proto-Pharisees," or paved the way for such a group to develop under Greek occupation.

The easiest theory to justify because of the assertions of Josephus is that the Pharisees came into being in the second century B.C. The facts certainly substantiate the existence of a group known to Josephus as "Pharisees" when he wrote 200 years later. The view that the Pharisees were born in the Hasmonean era is more difficult to justify, however, from the standpoint of how slowly social movements evolve. Furthermore, there also is a similar lack of factual evidence to explain why or from where the Pharisees came into being in this era.

The reasons which would justify the appearance of the Pharisees in the later Hasmonean and Herodian periods are equally as difficult to substantiate as the very early views if Josephus is to be trusted.

Therefore, the safest position is to acknowledge that the Pharisaic spirit existed in germinal form at least as early as the hellenistic era, if not earlier, and emerged as an identifiable and competitive party or sect no later than in the reign of Jonathan Maccabeus (160-142 B.C.).

Reasons constitute as beneficial a basis for identifying movements as does chronology, and may serve to reveal an additional layer of

theorists not included in this brief study. Ultimately, however, the question of Pharisaic origins may require closer consideration of both the cause(s) and the time of their emergence.

NOTES

1.   Jacob Neusner, "Pre-70 C.E. Pharisaism, The Record of the Rabbis," *Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal* 19 (Autumn 1972) 53.

2.   Krister Stendahl, "Introduction" Leo Baeck, in *The Pharisees and Other Essays* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966) xi.

3.   Louis Finkelstein, *The Pharisees* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938).

4.   R. Travers Herford, *Pharisaism* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938).

5.   Ellis Rivkin, "Prolegomenon" *in Judaism and Christianity* (3 vols. in 1; ed. Oesterley, Lowe, and Rosenthal; New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1969).

6.   Jacob Neusner, "From Exegesis to Fable in Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 25 (1974) 263.

7.   Ellis Rivkin, "Pharisaism and the Crisis of the Individual in the Greco-Roman World," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 61 (July 1970) 31.

8.   For purposes of consistency, the chronology of E. J. Bickerman (*Chronology of the Ancient World* [rev. ed.; London: Thames and Hudson, 1980]) will be followed throughout this paper.

9.   Flavius Josephus. *Jewish Antiquities* 13.171-173 (The Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) 311.

10.   Subsequent references to *Jewish Antiquities* will be incorporated into the text.

11.   Alexander Guttman, *Studies in Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1976) 201.

12.   H. D. Mantel, "The Sadducees and Pharisees," *World History of the Jews* (ed. M. Avi-Yonah and Zvi Baras vol. 8; Jerusalem: Massada Publishers, 1977) 100.

13.   Ibid.

14.   W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Jews and Judaism During the Greek Period: The Background of Christianity* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1941; reprint, 1970) 240-245.

15.   George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* (3 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927) 2:394.

16.   Ashner Finkel, *The Pharisees and the Teacher of Nazareth* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974) 1.

17.   T. W. Manson, *The Servant-Messiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961) 19-20.

18.   Leo Baeck, *The Pharisees and Other Essays* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966) 23.

19.   Ibid. 24-25.

20.   Rudolf Meyer, S.V. *"Pharisaios," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* vol. 9; (ed. Gerhard Friedrich; trans. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974) 19-20. See also: ..Friedrich Gerhard, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 9. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974, pp. 19-20. See also: Joachim Jeremias *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (trans. F. H. and C. H. Cave; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969) 259; D. S. Russell, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967) 162.

21.   Solomon Zeitlin, "The Pharisees: A Historical Study," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 52 (1961) 99. See also Oesterley, 24Jews and Judaism, 245; Mantel," Sadducees and Pharisees," 101.

22.   Mantel, "Sadducees and Pharisees," 101.

23.   Finkelstein, *The Pharisees*, 1:76.

24.   Louis Finkelstein, "The Origin of the Pharisees Reconsidered,"
       Conservative Judaism 23 (Winter 1969) 25-36.

25.   Ibid. 25.

26.   Ibid. 32.

27.   Solomon Zeitlin, "The Origin of the Pharisees Reaffirmed," *Jewish
       Quarterly Review* 59 (1968-69) 266-67.

28.   Solomon Zeitlin, *The Rise and Fall of the Judean State* (3 vols.;
       Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), 444h.

29.   Zeitlin, "The Pharisees: A Historical Study," 109.

30.   Rivkin, "Prologemonon," xxiii.

31.   Mantel, "Sadducees and Pharisees," 101. Cf. J. Wellhausen, *Die
       Pharisaër und die Sadducaër* (2nd ed.; Hannover, 1924) 51 ff.

32.   Roger T. Beckwith, "The Pre-History and Relationships of the
       Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes: A Tentative Reconstruction,"
       Revue de Qumran 11 (October 1982), 31.

33.   Ibid. 17.

34.   Ibid. 24.

35.   Ibid. 24.

36.   Ibid. 36.

37.   Ibid. 41.

38. Russell, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 166.

39. Ibid. 116; cf. p. 160.

40. Alexander Guttman, *Rabbinic Judaism in the Making* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970) 131.

41. Martin Hengel. *Judaism and Hellenism* (2 vols. in 1; trans. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 1:279.

42. Russell, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 45.

43. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries*, 59.

44. Finkelstein, *The Pharisees*, 1:3.

45. Jacob Zallel Lauterbach, *The Pharisees and Their Teachings* (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1930) 23.

46. Guttman, *Studies*, 201.

47. Beckwith, "Pre-History," 40.

48. Rivkin, "Prolegomenon," xxix.

49. Rivkin, "Pharisaism," 33.

50. Ibid. 34.

51. Rivkin, "Prolegomenon," xxxii.

52. Rivkin, "Pharisaism," 34.

53. Ibid. 42.

54. Mantel, "Sadducees and Pharisees," 102. Cf. H. Burgmann, "The Wicked Woman: Der Makkobaër Simon?" *Revue de Qumran* 8 (1972), 323-359.

55. Ibid. 102.

56. Ibid. 102: Cf. G. Hölscher, *Der Sadduzäismus* (Leipzig: n.p., 1906) 18 ff.

57. H. Lowe, *Judaism and Christianity*.

58. Finkelstein, *The Pharisees*, 1:107-8.

59. Emil Schürer. *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (3 vols.; rev.ed.; ed. G. Vermes F. Millar, and M. Black); Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973-87), 2:400.

60. Finkel, *The Pharisees and the Teacher of Nazareth*, 3-4.

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4

Paul the Widower and the Spiritual Gift with Reference to Singleness in 1 Corinthians 7:7

Introduction

> Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that (1 Co 7:7).[1]

First Corinthians 7:7 is the only verse in the New Testament where an individual refers to his or her ability to remain unmarried as a gift (*charisma*) from God. What are the characteristics of those who have the gift of remaining single? How did Paul know that this was a God-given gift, and how can Christians today know if they have been given or may be given this gift? This essay is an attempt to find answers to these questions.

I have divided this study into five sections. First, I will survey the structure of 1 Corinthians 7. This will enable the reader to determine which commands or counsels Paul directs to Christians who find themselves in a particular married, formerly married, or single state.

Second, I want to tackle an issue that has plagued the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7, namely the problem of accurately identifying those who are designated as "unmarried" (*agamos*) in the context of verses 8-9. Since the word "unmarried" is used three other times in 1 Corinthians 7 (vv. 11, 32, 34), the identity of the "unmarried" in verse 8 becomes extremely important. Paul's interpreters have failed to realize that *agamos* is a fluid, contextually-defined term in 1

Corinthians 7. One cannot appeal to its meaning in the context of verses 8-9, for example, and then read that meaning into Paul's use of the same term in verses 11, 32, or 34. The contexts are different, and context always determines meaning. Also, Paul's reference to "self-control" or the lack of it in verses 8-9 is presented as a guideline for whether the "unmarried" in those verses should consider marrying. This, in turn, relates directly to Paul's mention of the "gift" related to his singleness in verse 7. Furthermore, the way in which Paul points to himself as an example of those who have "remained" in the situation of the people he advises in verses 8-9 needs to be distinguished from the way he wishes that everyone could "be" like he is in verse 7. I will attempt to argue from Paul's reference to himself in verse 8 that he was indeed a widower at the time he wrote 1 Corinthians.

Third, 1 Corinthians 7:7 contains Paul's reference to the gift that enables him to exercise sexual self-control. I will offer a careful, contextual exegesis of this verse in order to determine under what circumstances Paul came to realize that he possessed this gift, and how someone today may learn that he or she has, or has been given, this gift.

Fourth, I will argue that the background for Paul's counsel in 1 Corinthians 7 comes from his knowledge of the oral tradition that lies behind Matthew's record of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19:9-12. In particular, I want to suggest that Paul viewed himself as a "eunuch who made himself a eunuch because of the kingdom of God" (Mt 19:12). Finally, I will conclude with a brief look at the three reasons Paul gives for remaining single in 1 Corinthians 7:25-38.

The Structure of 1 Corinthians 7

The contents of 1 Corinthians suggest that Paul learned about the various problems in the church at Corinth from three main sources.[2] He felt that he had to respond to these problems--some more severe than others--before he visited there again. In addition to the

information Paul gathered from the reports of Chloe's people (1 Co 1:11) and the arrival of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus from Corinth (1 Co 16:17),[3] Paul had also received a letter from the Corinthians confronting him with their stand on matters of "Christian" conduct.[4] Paul first refers to this letter in 1 Corinthians 7:1 where he begins, "Now concerning the things about which you wrote." With this "now concerning," or *peri de* formula,[5] Paul proceeds to address the Corinthians' questions one-by-one throughout chapters 7-16. Note the following topics that Paul takes up from the Corinthian's letter:

7:1	Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman
7:25	Now concerning virgins
8:1	Now concerning things sacrificed to idols
12:1	Now concerning spiritual gifts
16:1	Now concerning the collection for the saints
16:12	But concerning Apollos our brother

The two uses of the formula in 1 Corinthians 7 indicate that the chapter divides into two major sections: verses 1-24 and verses 25-38.[6] Verses 39-40 at first appear to be an afterthought to verses 8-9 concerning widows,[7] but more likely envision a particular case that was brought to Paul's attention. Apparently a widow's spouse had died (perhaps even a non-Christian spouse), and Paul is giving his counsel about her options for remarrying or remaining single.[8]

The paragraphs or subdivisions of these two major sections are ascertainable by various structural markers and indications of changes in subjects or groups addressed. Note the following:

7:1	Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman
7:2	But because of immoralities
7:8	But I say to the unmarried and to widows
7:10	But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord

7:12 But to the rest I say, not the Lord
7:17 [Note the catchwords "call" (*kaleô*), "remain" (*menô*), "slave" (*doulos*), "free" (*eleutheros*)]
7:25 Now concerning virgins
    7:26 I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is
    7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened
    7:32 But I want you to be free from concern
    7:36 If anyone thinks that he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to (*NIV*)

There is both a formal similarity and a crucial conceptual difference in the way Paul pursues his concerns in these two major sections (vv. 1-24 and vv. 25-38). Note that both begin with a general maxim using the words "It is good for a person" (*kalon [estin] anthrôpô*) (vv. 1b, 26b). However, the saying in verse 1, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman," comes from the *Corinthian's* letter and is immediately qualified by Paul in verse 2: "But because of immoralities, let each man have [sexual relations with] his own wife, and let each woman have [sexual relations with] her own husband." On the other hand, the saying in verse 26, "I think . . . that it is good for a person to remain as he is," comes from *Paul's* heart and is offered as advice (*gnômê*) to "virgins." Paul makes no attempt to contrast his opinion with another's (vv. 1b-2), or appeal to a saying of the Lord (vv. 10-11). Instead he offers his counsel on the matter. But to whom is Paul addressing his correctives and his counsel in these major sections?

To take up the second major section first, three clues indicate that verses 25-38 should be studied as a unit[9] and that Paul is offering his inspired counsel to never-before-married men and women. First, the word "virgin" (*parthenos*) is distributed throughout this section (vv. 25, 28, 34, 36, 37, 38). Virtually all commentators agree that Paul uses it with reference to women only.[10] It is interesting to note that in the rest of the New Testament *parthenos* is commonly used with reference to an engaged or betrothed woman (Lu 1:27; Mt 1:18, 23; 25:1-13; fig. 2 Co 11:2). Second, Paul uses two words for "to

marry" (*gameô* in vv. 28 [2x], 36 and *gamizô* in v. 38 [2x])[11] in this section when he speaks about those who have not yet married and contrasts their situation with those who are married (vv. 33, 34). Finally, Paul makes a threefold effort to tell the men and women in verses 25-38 that it is not a sin to marry (vv. 28[2x], 36). It appears that these "virgins"--and the men who are addressed alongside them throughout this section--have come under some teaching at Corinth that caused them to think that marriage might be sinful or somehow incompatible with being a Christian. In all probability, the Corinthian maxim of verse 1b, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman," is responsible for creating this attitude.

There is now a growing consensus that in verses 25-38 (cf. the *NIV* and *RSV* translations of vv. 36-38) Paul turns to address the concern of some engaged couples. The men were asking Paul whether or not to follow through with their promise to marry (cf. *deô* in v. 27)[12] in view of the ascetic teaching they had come under in Corinth. Paul's initial (vv. 25-28) and final (vv. 36-38) remarks in this section are directed to these couples. Though Paul personally prefers the single state, he wants them to know that it is *not* sinful--as the teaching of the ascetics might suggest--to go through with their plans to marry (vv. 28, 36).

Both engaged couples and non-engaged singles have one thing in common: they are both in the position of being able to decide whether God wants them to marry or remain single. So sandwiched between Paul's specific advice to engaged couples (vv. 25-28 and 36-38) comes Paul's general advice to all singles (vv. 29-35). For a moment Paul steps back from the specific question that he found in the Corinthian letter and puts on his wide angle theological lens. Here he is speaking to any "unmarried man" (*ho agamos*, v. 32) or "unmarried woman" (*hê agamos*, v. 34) who understands that the present form of this world is passing away and who wants to live a life of undistracted devotion to the Lord. This is where Paul gives his three reasons why singles should seriously consider refraining from marriage.

If the men and women addressed in verses 25-38 are considering

whether or not to marry, what is at stake for those whom Paul addresses in verses 1-16?[13] First, no one doubts that Paul is talking about the conjugal life of married couples in verses 3-6:

> [3]Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. [4]The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. [5]Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control. [6]But this I say by way of concession, not of command.

Paul's insistence that husband and wife fulfill their marital duty to one another indicates that spouses were already withholding marital relations from one another. This would have been the largest single group to be influenced by the slogan of the ascetics in verse 1, so Paul addresses the status quo group first.

On the other hand, the *NIV* translation of verse 1--"It is good for a man not to marry"--suggests that in verse 2--"But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband"--Paul is encouraging the never-before-married to take a wife and avoid sexual immorality. But the *NIV* has misconstrued the meaning of the Greek phrase *haptesthai gynaikos* ("to touch a woman") in which "to touch" is used as a euphemism for sexual relations (cf. Gen. 20:6; 26:11; Ru 2:9; Pr 6:29, LXX). There is no hint that the phrase "to touch a woman" ever meant "to take a wife" or "to marry."[14]

A student of the Greek text would immediately notice the concentration of "husband" and "wife" (*gynê/anêr*) terms in verses 2-4. References to husbands and wives drop out of the picture until Paul addresses the groups in verses 10-11 and verses 12-16. The word *anthrôpos* occurs not only in verse 26, but also in verses 1 and 7 with the generic meaning of "a person." *Anthrôpos* is rarely used in the sense of "husband,"[15] but *anêr* frequently means

"husband."[16]   Since both *anêr* ("husband") and *gynê* ("woman" or "wife") occur in verse 2, and there is no doubt that these same words refer to "husband" and "wife" in verses 3-4 and 10-16, it is reasonable to assume that they denote "husband" and "wife" in verse 2 as well.[17]   This means that Paul's counsel to married couples at Corinth has already started in verse 2 and not, as the *NIV* implies, in verse 3.[18]   Paul is addressing those who are married and living under the same roof. This unit of thought extends through verse 6. Since Paul so strongly emphasizes the need for "husband" and "wife" to fulfill their conjugal duty to one another, the whole of verses 2-6 must be understood as directed to married couples who have been influenced by the Corinthian ascetics to think that sexual relations in marriage should be avoided.

The occurrences of *anthrôpos* in verses 1 and 7 in the sense of "man" in general, or simply an indefinite "one" or "a person,"[19] forms a kind of inclusio around the married couples addressed in verses 2-6. The Corinthians were claiming that it was a good thing for a person not to have sexual relations. Apparently those who could follow this rule were viewed as "super spiritual." But Paul cannot agree with this kind of spiritual enthusiasm.

It is at this point in his argument that Paul writes verse 7: "Yet I wish that all people were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that." Paul makes this statement in the form of an unrealizable wish that all might be in the situation that he is in. Unlike the Corinthians, who wanted to apply their slogan to all men and women irrespective of their marital status or giftedness, Paul wants the Corinthians to know that this is neither wise nor possible. Paul has made it clear in verses 2-6 that he is opposed to any notion that *married couples* should live with one another as if they were celibate. Paul is essentially saying that those who are married *cannot* exercise their ability to refrain from marital relations as if they were single, even if they think they possess by birth or by God's gift the ability to exercise sexual self-control. Nevertheless, Paul does recognize, as a concession (v. 6) to the ascetics at Corinth,

that sexual abstinence may have a place within marriage, but only under three conditions: that it be temporary, that it be by mutual agreement, and that it be for prayer. Otherwise, as in the more extreme case of celibate marriages, one may be tempted to seek the fulfillment of one's sexual desires elsewhere, and that would be immoral.[20]

In verses 10-16 Paul addresses another group that had come under the influence of the Corinthian slogan. The terms for "divorce" or "separate" begin in verse 10 and continue through verse 15. A sub-group of words within this section, "brother," "sister," and "unbeliever," begins at verse 12 and continues through verse 15, indicating that Paul wants to include still another group of married couples in his counsel, namely those non-Christian marriages in which one of the partners has become a believer. Apparently marriages between two believers (vv. 10-11) and a believer and an unbeliever (vv. 12-16) were so affected by the verse 1b slogan that spouses were divorcing their mates if they could not refrain from sexual relations within marriage. As G. D. Fee suggests, since the command not to divorce or separate in verse 10 is directed to the wives, "It seems altogether possible that the wives are responsible for 7:1b while at the same time they are urging their husbands to go to the temple prostitutes if they need sexual fulfillment."[21]

With all of the other groups in verses 1-16 identified we can now turn to the identification of those whom Paul counsels in verses 8-9. These "unmarried men" (*tois agamois*) and widows, like the other people in Corinth, also were influenced by the "refrain from sexual relations" slogan found in verse 1b. But who were they?

Who Are the "Unmarried" in Verses 8-9?

After addressing married couples in verses 2-6 and after expressing his wish that all might be like he is in verse 7, Paul gives his counsel to still another group in verses 8-9: "But I say to the unmarried and to widows (*legô de tois agamois kai tais chêrais*), that it is good for

them if they remain even as I [have remained].[22] [9]But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn." The primary problem that has plagued the interpretation of these two verses is the identification of those who are designated "unmarried" in verse 8. Commentators have essentially agreed to disagree over the multiple meanings they assign to this word in the context of verses 8 and 9.

The word "unmarried" (*agamos*) occurs four times in 1 Corinthians 7 (vv. 8, 11, 32, 34). There is little debate about the meaning of "unmarried" (*agamos*) in the context of verses 10-11: those believers who are married, yet divorced or separated from their spouses, are to "remain unmarried" (*menetô agamos*),[23] that is, they are to stay single if they are unable to be reconciled to their mates. As noted above, in verses 32 and 34 the word is used once each of a single, unmarried man and a single, unmarried woman. In all three instances we have allowed the context to determine its meaning. So what does *agamos* mean in the context of 1 Corinthians 7:8-9?

Once again, a careless handling of *agamos* in its four occurrences in 1 Corinthians 7 will have far reaching implications for how we apply Paul's teaching to various groups in the church today. C. Brown, for example, notes that "unmarried" in verse 11 clearly means living in a state of separation from one's husband or wife. From this use of "unmarried" in verse 11 he argues that Paul employs this word to refer to "the divorced." In Brown's view the "virgins" (*parthenoi*) of verses 25-28 appear to be a subcategory of the *agamoi*,[24] so he translates "virgins" in verse 25 with the word "unmarried" so that his readers will consider the following line of reasoning: the "virgins" in verses 25-28 also encompass the "unmarried" of verse 11, namely "the divorced."[25] Therefore, Paul's statement in verse 28a, "But if you should marry, you have not sinned," informs us that it is not a sin for divorceés to remarry! But such an analysis violates the context of Paul's remarks in verses 25-38 (he is addressing the never-before-married) and makes Paul in verse 28 contradict Paul in verses 10-11: divorceés are to be reconciled to their mate or remain single. Brown is committing the lexical fallacy

called illegitimate totality transfer.[26] One may not take the meaning
that a word has in a given context and read it into another context that
suggests a completely different semantic content. This would be like
taking the meaning of "trunk" in the sentence "The *trunk* of that tree
is huge" and reading it into the sentence "The *trunk* of my car is
locked."   The respective contexts of the word "trunk" limit the
semantic content the word can carry.   The same is true for the
different contexts in which Paul uses the word *agamos* in 1
Corinthians 7.

Consider also the implications for the church today if the
"unmarried" of verse 8 includes "the divorced." Someone could well
argue that if a divorcée is not able to control their sexual desires Paul
says that they are free to remarry.[27] This, of course, would directly
contradict the Lord's and Paul's command to divorceés in verse 11a:
"let [them] remain unmarried, or else be reconciled."

Confusion over the meaning of "unmarried" in verse 8 also creates
practically unresolvable interpretive issues when the exegete comes to
the uses of *agamos* in verses 32 and 34 of 1 Corinthians 7. We have
already noted that Paul takes up another question from the Corinthian
letter in verses 25-38.   This context must determine the use of
agamos in verses 32 and 34. We cannot take the semantic content of
agamos in the context of verses 8-9 and transfer it to another context
where the boundaries will not permit such a nuance. If the meanings
of the term in verse 8 are read into verses 32 and 34, it will influence
the question of what the whole of verses 25-38 is about. We must
allow the context of verses 25-38 to determine the meaning of
"unmarried" when Paul says: "[32]But I want you to be free from
concern. One who is *unmarried* is concerned about the things of the
Lord, how he may please the Lord. . . . [34]And the woman who is
unmarried, and the virgin,[28] is concerned about the things of the
Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit." H. Olshausen,
however, argues that Paul further pursues the theme of verse 8a in
verses 25-28 and 36-38.[29] F. L. Godet, on the other hand, believes
that the "unmarried" in verse 8 refers to bachelors and to widowers,
but not to virgins. He says of its use in verse 32: "The term,

agamos, unmarried, includes, as in ver. 8, bachelors and widowers."[30]

Thus, it is necessary to determine as precisely as possible the identity of the "unmarried" in verse 8. The proper identification of those whom Paul counsels in verses 8-9 will have two consequences. First, confusion over the identity of the "unmarried" in verses 32 and 34 will be eliminated and context will be allowed to decide the meaning there as well as here. Second, great insight will be gained into the larger question of "singleness" and the situation in which one may learn that he or she "has," or has been given, the gift of sexual self-control or the grace to remain continent in singleness.

In an earlier study[31] I argued that verses 8-9 address one group of people and one group only: widowers and widows, namely those who have lost their spouses through death. I noted that in verse 8 "unmarried," a masculine plural noun form (*agamois*), is used in parallelism with the feminine plural noun for "widow" (*chêrai*). I also pointed out that there is a word for "widower" in Greek (*chêros*), but that it is never used in the New Testament or in the Septuagint. I also noted that Liddell, Scott, and Jones' *Greek-English Lexicon* lists both "bachelors" and "widowers" as potential meanings of *agamos.* Moreover, in verse 8 Paul points to himself as an example of one who is living in accordance with the advice he gives to these individuals. If Paul is indeed addressing "widowers and widows" in these verses, then it may confirm what many believe namely, that Paul himself was a widower.[32] There is only one known instance of an unmarried rabbi, and marriage was obligatory for all Jewish men (cf. *m. Yebam.* 6:6).

Some additional points can be added to the argument that in 1 Corinthians 7:8 Paul turns to address the "widowers and the widows" only and not unmarried people in general (whether bachelors, divorceés, or widowers) and widows. First, Paul's statement that a particular course of action is "good" (*kalon*) in verse 8 follows the same pattern as Paul's statement that something is "good" (*kalon*) in verse 26. This is the language of advice (cf. *gnômê* in vv. 25b and 40).

Second, in verse 2 Paul abruptly corrects the Corinthian slogan in verse 1b that "It is good *(kalon)* for a man not to have relations with a woman." But in verse 8 Paul is saying, "Now you believers at Corinth, with respect to the application of your slogan to the widowers and the widows among you, I say that it is a valuable thing if they remain as I myself have remained." In this context it appears that the men and women are in some situation that *would* permit a partial application of the Corinthian slogan in verse 1.

Third, notice again how the "husband" and "wife" terms abound in verses 2-4 and that husbands and wives are still in view in verses 5-6. But the "one's husband" or "one's wife" terms drop out of the picture from verses 7--where Paul wishes that all could be like he is--through verse 9, only to reappear again in verses 10-16 where separated or divorced married couples are in view. If Paul is addressing the already married in verses 2-6, and the already married, but divorced couples in verses 10-16--the context that surrounds his words to those in verses 8-9--the simplest and most likely interpretation of verses 8-9 is that Paul is giving advice to those who were "once married" and have also come under the influence of the Corinthian ascetics.

Paul says that the widowers and widows, in their particular set of circumstances, have the potential of remaining in the same situation as Paul was in (at the time of writing 1 Corinthians) if they have the grace-ability to exercise sexual self-control. The same type of "better than" *(kreitton . . . ê)* formula is used in verse 38, but with an important difference. In verses 36-38 a marriageable woman is present with whom a man may already be acting improperly,[33] but in verses 8-9 the issue is getting married to someone or continuing to burn with passion[34] if marriage is denied. The implication is that the ones to whom Paul speaks in verses 8-9 are those who have had a lifetime (or at least some time) of sexual experience. Some may be "burning with passion" because they have been deprived of the normal marital relations to which they had grown accustomed. Others may have the ability to exercise sexual self-control and remain unmarried like Paul.

Some have argued that the issue in verse 8--where Paul says he

wishes that the unmarried and widows would remain as he has--refers to the God-given ability to remain single and not to the state of being or remaining a widower. But this interpretation makes the assumption that Paul is saying the same thing in verse 8 as in verse 7. Even C. K. Barrett notes, "In verse 8, . . . both the language and the thought take a different turn."[35] Note the two different ways in which Paul points to his own example:

> 7:7a   Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am
>
> 7:8a   But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I

In 1 Corinthians 7:7 Paul expresses an unlimited wish for all people and uses a term of "being" (*einai*). First Corinthians 7:8, however, is presented as advice ("I say"). His words are addressed to a specific group and a verb of "remaining" (*menô*) is used. The "as I" (*hôs kagô*)[36] in this context probably indicates specifically that Paul was a member of this group who has been able to abide in this condition or calling. Note the other uses of "to remain" (*menô*) in this chapter:

> 7:11a   But if she does leave, let her *remain* unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband
>
> 7:20   Let each man *remain* in that condition in which he was called
>
> 7:24   Brethren, let each man *remain* with God in that condition in which he was called
>
> 7:40a   But in my opinion she is happier if she *remains* as she is

The combination of "to remain" with "to call" (vv. 17, 18[2x], 21, 22[2x])--the calling of someone into a relationship with Christ as Lord (cf. 1 Co 1:9)--along with Paul's desire for believers to be free from distractions so that they may be more devoted to their Lord (1 Co 7:26, 29-35), probably stands behind Paul's belief that the widow in verse 40 would be happier if she did not marry again. This also may

be the basis for Clement of Alexandria's (died c. A.D. 215) notion that the death of a spouse may indicate God's purpose for an individual "by which he has become free from distraction for the service of the Lord."[37]

Thus, it is clear that how Paul wishes others to be like himself in verse 7 is quite different from how he counsels the "widowers and widows" to remain as he has remained in verse 8. The fact that Paul again uses a verb of remaining (*menō*) when he advises the widow in verse 40 to "remain as she is"[38] is further evidence that verses 8-9 and 39-40 address the same group of people: those who have lost their spouses through death.

The proper understanding of the differences between Paul's remarks in verses 7 and 8 also expose the fallacy of Godet's argument against Paul's marital status. He apparently felt that his comments on verse 7 were enough to dissuade anyone from adopting the view that Paul himself was a widower: "From the words, as I myself, it may be inferred with certainty that Paul was not married, and quite as certainly that he was not a widower. For how could he have expressed the desire that all men were widowers!"[39] Once again Godet misses the difference in the way Paul refers to himself in verses 7 and 8. Attention to the terms Paul uses, the different groups being addressed in verses 1-16, and the probability that Paul does not begin addressing the never-before-marrieds until verse 25, all suggest that remarks like Godet's have been made too hastily.

To conclude this discussion of the meaning of "unmarried" (*agamos*) in verse 8, I find it far more reasonable to translate *tois agamois kai tais chērais* as "to the widowers and to the widows." The reasons for doing so may be summarized as follows. *Agamos* is masculine and plural in verse 8 and is clearly coordinated (*kai*) with "the widows." Why would Paul give the same counsel to an undefined male category of unmarried men--bachelors, widowers, or divorced men[40]--as he gives to widows?[41] And if Paul desired to speak to widowers and widows in this context, what term was available to him to do so? Since neither the Septuagint nor the New Testament nor Josephus uses the Greek word for "widower," there is

nothing unusual about the fact that Paul does not employ it here. All of the evidence in verses 1-16 suggests that this section addresses the married and the formerly married. Verses 1-7 concern those who are living in married conjugal life (vv. 2-7), and verses 10-16 speak to those who are married but separated or contemplating divorce. This includes marriages where both partners are Christians (vv. 10-11) as well as mixed marriages (vv. 12-16). Finally, since the female half of the group that Paul addresses in verse 8 is clearly widows, nothing stands in the way of contextually defining the fluid term "unmarried" (*agamos*). Thus, *tois agamois* should be translated "to the widowers," and *gamêsatôsan* in verse 9a, as might already have been suggested by the presence of "the widows," should in this context be translated "let them marry *again*."

A principle of doing word studies is to look for the least semantic content of a word or phrase that makes sense of the passage. To suggest that "unmarried" (*agamos*) in verse 8 means anything more than "widower" throws not only this section into confusion, but also verses 25-38. "Unmarried" occurs twice in that section, and if conjectured meanings in verse 8 are allowed to open the door for any and all meanings in verses 32 and 34, that section will suffer the exegetical consequences. It is far better to state as precisely as possible the meaning of a term *in a given context* and not read into it other meanings the same term takes on in contexts dealing with different matters.

In summary, the preceding two sections have been devoted to determining, as much as is possible, details about the structure of 1 Corinthians 7 and the identity of the various groups Paul addresses in this chapter. A deliberate attempt has been made to avoid straying too far into the available exegetical tools. The first major section in 1 Corinthians 7 addresses different groups who fall under the category of marrieds and formerly marrieds (today's "single again" category). The second major section addresses a fairly large group at Corinth who are considering one of two things: (1) whether or not to enter into marriage, or (2) whether or not to go through with a marriage that has in some way already been planned. Finally, verses 39-40

appear to deal with a specific case that could not be addressed in verses 8-9. Thus, it was withheld for comment until the end of the chapter. This brings us to the most important section of this study: the nature of the gift that Paul identifies in 1 Corinthians 7:7.

The Gift in 1 Corinthians 7:7

First Corinthians 7:7 may well be the most important statement by Paul for the present study. He writes to the Corinthians: "Yet[42] I wish (*thelô*) that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God (*charisma ek theou*), one in this manner, and another in that (*ho men houtôs, ho de houtôs*)." When Paul says he wishes that all men were as he himself is, what point of comparison does he want his readers to draw? Is Paul thinking about his situation of singleness,[43] the gift of "continence" that he feels he has been given (v. 7, *charisma*; v. 9, *enkrateia*),[44] or the fact that he was free from *both* matrimonial ties and the need to fulfill his sexual desires?

Remember that Paul has just finished speaking to married couples who were withholding sexual relations from one another. One of Paul's major considerations at this point is whether or not someone has the ability to control one's sexual appetite. The Corinthians were applying their slogan ("It is praiseworthy and desirable for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman") without qualification to the Christians in the church at Corinth. Especially dangerous was their attempt to press this standard of behavior upon married couples (vv. 2-6). True, one of the partners in a marriage may be able to live continently even within marriage and have no real need or desire for sexual relationships, but the other partner must be taken into consideration. Unfulfilled sexual needs may encourage the other spouse (even as it happens today) to seek fulfillment of their needs elsewhere (cf. v. 2: "since there is so much immorality"). This, and the nature of marital love itself, is the reason why couples are to render to one another their proper conjugal right (vv. 2-4), with only

limited times of interruption (vv. 5-6).

Furthermore, widowers and widows, who have been freed from marital ties through the death of their spouse (v. 8a), are in a position, unlike married couples, to determine if they should remain single or marry again. Paul knows by experience the benefits of the single state. He knows that there are far fewer distractions and that there is far more freedom to be devoted to the Lord (vv. 32-35). Not only that, but the times in which Christians live demand that one not see marriage as the primary concern of one's life, but rather one should live in obedience to God (vv. 29-31). So as a widower himself, who has experienced and knows the grace of God in his own life,[45] he advises Christians who have lost their spouses to remain in a state of freedom from matrimonial ties (v. 8b), for in this condition they will have more freedom to serve their Lord.

Yet Paul is a realist. He knows that even though one's *context* or marital state might be suitable for remaining single (single or widowed), one's *constitution* or capabilities may not be so. Thus if widowers and widows, who have had prior sexual experience, lack self-control (*ei . . . ouk enkrateuontai*), they really ought to marry: it is simply better to marry than to burn with passion (v. 9). The one who tries not to marry and burns with passion will probably be more distracted than those who decide to marry.

The Corinthians probably knew about Paul's own marital status (cf. 9:5),[46] and if the interpretation of verse 8 put forth in this study is correct, there is little doubt that the Corinthians knew that Paul was a widower. This point deserves far more attention than it has received in the past.

Therefore, when Paul wishes that everyone could be in the situation that he was in (v. 7), he has two things in mind: (1) his freedom from matrimonial ties, and (2) his ability to remain continent in singleness. This enabled him to serve the Lord to the fullest measure possible. This is why Paul wishes that everyone might be able to share in his situation, both his *context* (free from matrimonial ties) and his *constitution* (able to master sexual desires).

But what is Paul calling a "gift" (*charisma*) in this context? Some

have argued that no extraordinary spiritual gift is meant, but only a natural gift, one that the mercy of God imparts.[47]   Yet "gift" in 1 Corinthians 12 is used with reference to gifts that God's Spirit imparts to every member of the body of Christ.   Others have suggested that Paul thinks of both marriage and continence as gifts of God.[48] Though there is probably some truth in this view--Abraham's servant was well aware of God's miraculous provision of Rebekah for Abraham's son, Isaac (Ge 24)--it is not altogether satisfactory. "While charisma could refer to marriage, it is usually reserved for special supernatural gifts and not merely duties of the natural order."[49]

The answer to this question is tied to the end of verse 7 and the idea that should be supplied in the clause "one in this manner, and another in that" (*ho men houtôs, ho de houtôs*). Whenever a word or thought is elided (i.e., omitted) the exegete should look to the immediately preceding context to see what the Greek reader would have readily supplied. First Corinthians 7:7b reads: "However, each person has his own gift from God" (*alla hekastos idion echei charisma ek theou*). Paul does not specifically name the gift or gifts he refers to here. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify at least one of them: "self-control" (*enkrateia*), or, in this context, a degree of sexual self-control that would enable one to live apart from normal marital relations. This can be ascertained from the tenor of Paul's preceding discussion of the need for married couples to fulfill one another's sexual needs. Paul notes that short periods of sexual inactivity are permissible on three conditions, but then exhorts the Corinthian couples to "come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your *lack of self-control*" (v. 5b). He concludes his directives with a concession (v. 6).

Paul's reference to limited self-control in verse 5 and in his following counsel to widowers and widows (v. 9) makes it fairly certain that Paul classifies *enkrateia* as one of the gifts that God gives to believers. Paul's identification of God as the giver of the gifts, the individualizing terms found here in verse 7b, the term "gift" (*charisma*), and the "on the one hand . . . on the other" (*men . . . de*)

construction all occur in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. There is no doubt that chapter 12 identifies God the Spirit as the one who "gives" (*didōmi*) to each one a particular gift. Thus, it appears that both passages have the same types of gifts in view, that is, gifts bestowed by the Spirit.

What, then, is the significance of Paul's saying that people have gifts "one in this manner, and another in that" (v. 7b)?   Barrett seems to have caught the significance of this "on the one hand . . . on the other hand" construction when he says that Paul's "point here seems . . . to be that some have the gift of celibacy, and others, who lack this gift, and are therefore well advised to marry, have some other compensating gift or gifts."[50] J. Héring writes along the same line: "'*Houtôs-houtôs*' certainly does not set out an alternative, but refers to the multiplicity of grace-gifts in the Church . . . ."[51]

The tone of 1 Corinthians 12 reveals that many of the Christians in the congregation at Corinth were depressed over the fact that they did not possess what appeared to be the more significant gifts (cf. vv. 15-20).   This situation was made worse by those Christians who possessed outwardly "flashy" gifts like tongues. They no doubt looked down their noses at those who did not have the such gifts (vv. 21-26).   The whole of 1 Corinthians 12-14 is an attempt on Paul's part to downplay these attitudes.   Paul wanted to teach them that whatever they have in the way of gifts and ministries and personal abilities comes from the Spirit of God. All the parts of the body are necessary irregardless of one's vocation or situation in life. Each person stands where they do because God has given them of his Spirit (12:13), and by his Spirit God "gives [gifts] to each one, just as he determines" (12:11, *NIV*; cf. Mt 7:11//Lk 11:13).

The ascetics at Corinth, in all probability, "appeared" to possess a measure of the Spirit which indicated an exalted spiritual condition. This type of person is a model by example, a living apologetic for the kind of ascetic life he or she may well be exhorting others to adopt for whatever motives.   First Corinthians 7:7, in effect, is a foreshadowing of the line of argument that Paul will adopt in chapters 12-14 to correct the distorted Corinthian idea of what constituted a

truly "spiritual person" (cf. 1 Co 2:13[?]; 2:15--3:4; 12:1[?]; 14:37). The truly spiritual person (*ho pneumatikos*), Paul will say, recognizes Christ's lordship (cf. 4:1-5; 7:19b; 12:2-3) and realizes that gifts are given in accordance with the divine choice (12:4-11). All the members of the body are interdependent because God is the one who composes the body for his purposes (12:12-30). The spiritual person--the normal Christian--does not exalt or flaunt their particular gift, but seeks to exercise it for the edification of the body. The truly spiritual person recognizes that any gifts or abilities he or she possesses have come from God (cf. 4:7). Love that focuses on the benefit of another is to take preeminence in the Christian's life and in the exercise of one's gifts (12:31-13:13).

Thus, the way in which a person in the Christian assembly devotes himself or herself to the advancement of the claims and interests of God's kingdom depends on one's *context* (marital status) and one's *constitution* (gifts). And for whatever reasons the Corinthians were teaching that it was necessary to avoid sexual relations, this teaching could not be applied indiscriminately to all alike. Only those Christians who have or receive the gift of continence may consider living a life devoid of sexual relations, and only those in this group who are free from matrimonial ties (widowers, widows, and the never-before-married)[52] may actually make the choice to remain single.

Before discovering the basis for Paul's own understanding of the gift that he had received, I would like to say something about the word I have used to describe Paul's ability to control his sexual desires. The use of the word *constitution* might suggest that "gifts" are given innately, as part of the package that constitutes what one is from birth. The reality of this cannot be denied,[53] for God is everyone's creator, and in a sense every person is his workmanship. But this should not be emphasized to the exclusion of gifts given at conversion or special enablements which God gives to Christians in certain situations, which may also be called "gifts."

For example, God will certainly give grace to the believer who endures a particularly difficult situation in life, because to do

otherwise would be to violate the teaching of God's word. Paul's advice to widowers and widows also leads me to believe that one should not think of one's potential ministry or gifts strictly in terms of something given at the point of conversion and at no other time.[54] Since widowers and widows were once married, this suggests that they probably did *not* have the gift of continency. Yet Paul views their changed status in life as a new opportunity for decision about how they may best serve Christ. To say that the gift Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 7:7 is the gift of being "completely free from any need of sexual fulfillment"[55] is perhaps to put Paul's ideas in a straitjacket. Even married couples must exercise sexual self-control. Those who do not marry must be constituted or equipped to exercise it to a greater degree. And if through some accident or illness one of the marriage partners is unable to engage in marital relations, God will enable them (cf. Mt 19:26) to exercise self-control in much the same way that a single person is enabled.

First Corinthians 7:7b and Matthew 19:11-12

Apart from Galatians 5:23, which includes *enkrateia* ("self-control") as one of the results of the Spirit-controlled life, 1 Corinthians 7:7b is the only passage in the New Testament which matter-of-factly labels sexual self-control a gift from God. How does Paul know that the kind of "self-control" that is needed to live a single life is a gift given by God, and when did he come to this realization?

More than once Paul refers to his illustrious background within the Judaism of his pre-Christian days (Ga 1:13-14; Php 3:5-6; cf. Ac 7:58; 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 22:3).[56] He was a zealous follower of the laws of the Jewish people. One of those laws was rooted in God's command to humankind found in Genesis 1:28: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." This was the duty to marry, and for Paul it would have been a "command" (*epitagê*). Paul shared in and loved these traditions of the elders which he learned at the feet of Gamaliel (Ac 22:3). It is virtually certain that he was himself once

married. We will never know whether the death of his spouse occurred before or after he became a Christian. We do know, however, that Paul chose to remain single. He wishes that all might be both free from matrimonial ties and enabled to exercise sexual self-control so that one might be more fully devoted to the Lord. What caused this dramatic change in Paul of Tarsus, a Pharisee of Pharisees?

Paul's Epistles show that he had an intense interest in the gospel tradition.[57] Even more significant "is the fact that he seems to know gospel traditions peculiar to Matt."[58] First, Matthew is the one Gospel common to the three explicit references to the words of Jesus recorded in 1 Corinthians: (1) 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 = Matthew 19:9 or Mark 10:11-12; (2) 1 Corinthians 9:14 = Matthew 10:10 or Luke 10:7; and (3) 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 = Matthew 26:26-29 or Mark 14:22-25 or Luke 22:15-20 (closest to Paul). Second, the Matthean special material on church discipline in 18:15-20 is quite similar to Paul's procedure for dealing with the immoral man in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5.[59] Third, many of the commentators who discuss 1 Corinthians 7:7 state that its parallel in the gospel tradition is found in the Matthean special material in 19:11-12.[60]

> But He said to them, "Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given. [12]For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this let him accept it."

Assuming that Paul had married in accordance with the Jewish duty to marry and procreate, what caused this Pharisee of Pharisees to choose the single state after the death of his spouse? Note also that if Paul was a widower he was certainly free to remarry on the basis of his own teaching (1 Co 7:39-40; cf. Ro 7:2-3). Yet he chose to remain unmarried.

There should be little question that a saying of the Lord like that

found in Matthew 19:11-12 would have had an impact on Paul if he knew of it. The eunuch saying was radical in the face of current marriage customs in first-century Judaism. But this saying did not originate in rabbinic debates, but was uttered by the Messiah of Israel. To change Paul's outlook on such a matter would have required an authoritative teacher of the magnitude of Jesus (cf. Mt 7:28-29). And Paul, by his own admission, was so captivated by this teacher that he determined the following for his own life: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Ga 2:20).

One might ask why Paul does not refer more straightforwardly to the eunuch saying in Matthew 19:12 if he knew of it. This type of question must be put in perspective, however, for only rarely does Paul refer to a saying of the Lord now found in the Synoptic Gospels.[61] Nevertheless, there are good reasons to believe that when Paul addresses the various Corinthian people-groups in chapter 7 and gives advice as well as commands (cf. vv. 10-11, 12-13), not only does he have the saying of the Lord now found in Matthew 19:12 in mind, but in all probability he knows about the whole tradition that stands behind Matthew 19:3-12.[62]

Elsewhere I have made the case that Matthew 19:11--"Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given"--considers two groups of people: the unbelieving outsiders who do not make room in their lives for the words and works of Jesus, and the faithful disciples of Jesus who have been granted the ability to make room for Jesus' teaching on the indissolubility of marriage just conveyed in verses 4-9.[63] The statement in Matthew 19:11 finds a closer linguistic and conceptual parallel in Matthew 13:11 than it does in 1 Corinthians 7:7b. The three texts are set out below for comparison:

> 13:11 To you is has been granted (*hymin dedotai*) to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has

not been granted (*ou dedotai*)

19:11   Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given (*hois dedotai*)

7:7b   However, each person has his own gift from God

In both Matthew 13:11 and 19:11 the same two categories of people are in view: the unbelieving outsiders and the faithful followers of Jesus. First Corinthians 7:7b, however, only has believers in view. The case will be made below that the conceptual parallel of 1 Corinthians 7:7 is not Matthew 19:11 but rather Matthew 19:12d. I will argue further that Paul has in mind not just the isolated eunuch saying with the call for fruitful acceptance following it, but the eunuch saying in the context of the argument that undergirds and precedes it in Matthew 19:9-12.

The argument of Matthew 19:9-12 may be summarized as follows. The problem for the disciples begins when Jesus makes his forceful pronouncement on the indissolubility of marriage in verse 9 ("And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."). This concluding pronouncement from the debate that had transpired between Jesus and the Pharisees in verses 3-8 says divorce for immorality may be conceded, but there must be no remarriage lest adultery be committed. The disciples then react in disbelief at the thought of a life of singleness apart from marital relations. They think if a man cannot get out of a marriage so as to marry another it is probably better not to marry at all (v. 10). Jesus then responds by saying that his standards on divorce and remarriage are indeed difficult to understand and to live by,[64] but that his disciples have been given the ability to understand, and will be given the grace to endur should they face a divorce they cannot prevent (v. 11). He then explains (*gar*) how this is possible by way of the eunuch saying: not only is continence in the face of a broken marriage possible (by God's grace), but consider those who never marry because they are born eunuchs or are made eunuchs by men. These men live apart from marital relations unaided by the special grace of God. Then there are

even some who have renounced the possibility of marriage altogether because of the claims and interests of God's kingdom. These have a special gift or calling from God. Upon introducing the possibility that some may choose not to marry because they have been so seized by the kingdom of God (cf. Mt 13:44) and its claims upon their lives (cf. 1 Co 7:17-24), Jesus finally concludes with a call to faith: "He who is able to accept this, let him accept it (*ho dynamenos chôrein chôreitô*)." This call is directed to two groups of people: (1) those disciples who might be so inclined--as Paul apparently found himself to be (cf. 1 Co 7:7a, 8b, 25-26, 28b, 29-35, 40)--to forego marriage because of the claims and interests of God's kingdom, and (2) those followers who find it difficult to accept and live by Jesus' teaching on the lifelong permanence of marriage.

Note that it is in Matthew 19:12d, not Matthew 19:11, that a call to another category of Christians is made. This is a call to those Christians who are able (*ho dynamenos*), because they have been enabled by the giver and bestower of all divine gifts,[65] to accept the new possibility introduced here for the first time by Jesus, namely the possibility that the call of God upon one's life may be so strong that one desires to forego marriage and conjugal life "because of the kingdom of heaven."[66] "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible (*para de theô dynata*)" (Mt 19:26).[67]

If this description of the function of the eunuch saying in its present context in Matthew's Gospel is correct, it would go a long way to explaining many aspects of Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 7. What if the saying found in Matthew 19:12 stood isolated in some list of sayings perhaps available to Paul.[68] Would it have communicated the idea of "continence as a gift" as clearly, if at all, as it does in its present context in Matthew's Gospel? This is unlikely. A. H. McNeile and T. W. Manson[69] maintain that Matthew 19:12 now stands in a context that is foreign to the historical occasion that produced it. They state that the eunuch saying is best classified with those sayings that have to do with self-denial for the sake of the kingdom, which might include the renunciation of marriage. If this were true, however, it is difficult to imagine how the idea of

continence as a gift could be derived from the isolated eunuch saying.

I maintain that it is precisely in its context in Matthew that the eunuch saying presents the idea that continence in singleness is not impossible in the face of pressing human sexual needs or desires. The eunuch saying is Jesus' response to the disciples' reaction to his prohibition of remarriage after divorce. Along with the concluding "He who is able to accept this let him accept it," the eunuch saying is Jesus' response to disciples who, should they face divorce, are troubled about the prospect of living a life of singleness apart from marital relations--marital relations to which they have grown accustomed. Jesus seems not to permit remarriage to his disciples. Thus, he attempts to encourage their questioning faith in this new lesson of discipleship by letting them know that God will enable those whom he has called to be obedient to the Messiah's precepts. God will provide the grace necessary to be true disciples, faithful to their Master's ruling in verse 9, and continent in the singleness that comes as a result of a broken and irreconcilable marriage. "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Mt 19:26).

Jesus mentions the "eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom" to let the disciples know that God can do even more impossible things than the impossibility they have just found in Jesus' teaching about no remarriage after divorce. He does not intend to convey the idea that celibacy is a qualitatively superior state than marriage, but one cannot "ignore the qualitatively superior state of the faithful Christian over against the one who falls away. This is certainly the point of Matt. 19,12."[70] Jesus does everything possible to encourage faithfulness in his followers.

If Paul understood the argument of the tradition that stands behind Matthew 19:9-12 the way it has been presented here, it would explain why he so matter of factly tells divorcées to remain in a state of singleness if they cannot be reconciled to their mate (1 Co 7:11a). There is no evidence in 1 Corinthians 7 that Paul somehow felt this course of action would contradict his advice that sexually experienced widowers and widows may go ahead and remarry if they are not able to contain their sexual needs or desires (vv. 8-9). The differences in

the two cases lies in their situation (context) before God and the demands of discipleship. There is no barring of remarriage after the death of one's spouse (Ro 7:2-3; 1 Co 7:8-9, 39), but if Jesus taught that remarriage after divorce amounts to adultery (because the marriage bond is indissoluble during the life of both partners together), then the disciple must avoid remarriage at all costs--even to fulfill sexual desires.

At this point, God's "gifts" of enabling grace become available to the believer. This thrust in the argument, which appears to be assumed by Paul, is evident in the combination of the eunuch saying with Jesus' saying on divorce. Paul also quotes and makes use of Jesus' saying on divorce (1 Co 7:10-11) as he continues in his role of directing the Corinthian church to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Co 4:16; 11:1).

To summarize this section, I am arguing that *charisma* (1 Co 7:7b) in the context of Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 refers to the ability to remain continent in singleness to the glory of God. It is a gift or enablement that is granted by God (*ek theou*) to some who never marry, to some who are widowed, and to those who must remain obedient to the commands of God (cf. 1 Co 7:19b) when they find themselves in a situation which calls for this (vv. 10-16). Paul's knowledge of this grace-gift and the diverse people groups who may receive it stems from his knowledge of the tradition that stands in or behind Matthew 19:3-12. Further evidence that he knew the whole of this pericope as it is recorded in Matthew's Gospel is the fact that Paul quotes a portion of Genesis 2:24 (cf. Mt 19:5) in 1 Corinthians 6:16 immediately preceding chapter 7. Paul's commands and counsel to those married and unmarried (whether widowed, divorced, or never-before-married) and who have come under the influence of the ascetics at Corinth thus stems from his knowledge and application of the sayings of Jesus to those situations to which they apply.

First Corinthians 7:25-38

The value of 1 Corinthians 7:25-38 for the present study lies in understanding what Paul says in verses 26c, 28c, 29-31, and 32-35. In these verses Paul offers his reasons for remaining single. Exegetes are divided over the issue of whether or not Paul's counsels are fully applicable to the present era or limited by the historical situation in which they were uttered. Yet it should be noticed that the reasons Paul offers for adopting the single life are the same reasons given for why married couples (v. 29b) should not live as if their marriage was the most important thing in life. Whatever one's station in life, it can only be a means to a greater end, the end of obeying the Lord and serving him to the fullest extent possible.

When Paul turns his attention to the second issue that he found in the Corinthian's letter (7:25-38), he states in verse 25 that he has no commandment (*epitagê*)[71] of the Lord on this particular matter. Many discussions of Paul's disclaimer begin with the assumption that the verses which follow speak about celibacy. Then interpreters ask why Paul, if he knew of it, did not refer to Matthew 19:12 (which they are confident is a saying of the Lord on the subject of celibacy). Even those who recognize that the Matthew 19:12 saying is a "counsel" and not a "command" go on to say that "we should expect Paul to have alluded to it, had he known it."[72]

Does it follow that if Paul knew of this saying he would have to apeal to it here? If Paul had invoked to a saying of the Lord that suggested refraining from marriage, it could easily have been used by the sexual ascetics at Corinth to support their extreme practices. First Timothy 4:1-3 and the Corinthian position reflected in chapter 7 are evidence that those who frowned on marriage and sexual relations did not wait to make their appearance until the apostles passed away. We know that Gnostic heretics later used Matthew 19:12, along with other passages, as proof texts for their depreciation of marriage.[73] So if Paul knew of the counsel of the Lord in Matthew 19:12, and if verses 25-38 of 1 Corinthians 7 concern the question of engaged couples considering whether or not to go through with their promise

to marry, it is by no means certain that Paul would have brought Matthew 19:12 into the discussion. It could have been used against him. Thus, Paul states that he knows of no saying of the Lord that speaks specifically to the question the Corinthians had raised in their letter.

Paul was aware of the bewildering problem confronting engaged couples at Corinth: they too had come under the influence of the Corinthian maxim that it was probably best not to have sexual relations with a woman. But engaged couples find themselves in a different situation than those Paul has addressed so far (vv. 1-16). They have never been married. They are not like married couples who need to render to one another their full conjugal duty; they are not like widowers and widows who have had sexual experience and may desire another marriage partner; nor are they like the married couples who are divorced or separated for one reason or another. Engaged couples are, for all practical purposes, still "single," and apart from any promises to marry that have been made to a fiancée, their lives, more than others, have the potential to be fully devoted to pleasing the Lord.

Paul offers three considerations for those who would seek to get married or go through with their engagement. These concern (1) the present distress (v. 26); (2) the shortening of the time (v. 29); and (3) the simple fact that the married state brings with it cares and concerns for the things of this world (vv. 32-34).[74] Paul's supreme desire in all of this is brought out in verse 35: "And this I say for your own benefit (*symphoron*); not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord."

Many in the past have felt that when Paul refers to "the present distress" (*tên enestôsan anankên*, v.26) he expected the parousia to arrive within a few years,[75] a view that neither this phrase nor New Testament eschatological teaching as a whole demands.[76] Others, particularly those in evangelical circles, see in this phrase a pressing care, a set of unusually difficult circumstances that existed at Corinth at the time of Paul's communication to the church there.[77] But this view, as a study of the terms "distress/calamity" (*anankê*),

"tribulation/distress" (*thlipsis*), "distress/difficulty" (*stenochōria*), and "persecution" (*diōgmos*) in the New Testament indicates (particularly in Paul; 1 Co 7:26, 28; 2 Co 6:4; 12:10; 1 Th 3:7), flounders on the evidence that Paul is simply referring to the "afflictions which derive from the tension between the new creation in Christ and the old cosmos."[78] Paul's statement that "the time has been shortened (*ho kairos synestalmenos*)" in verse 29 indicates only that which Jesus himself understood about his own ministry and parousia. The time between his first and second coming--however long it may appear to be from an earthly vantage point (cf. 2 Pe 3:8)--would pass quickly.[79]

Thus, it becomes clear that one of Paul's primary reasons for remaining single was for the sake of the Lord's work. This is clear from verses 32-35. In Paul's teaching, Jesus' messianic reign began with his resurrection and exaltation. So the Christian lives in the tension of the *already* of Christ's resurrection, in which the blessings of the age to come are now partially realized, and the *not yet* of his parousia, when the fullness of our promised salvation will be realized. The fact that members of the church today live in the last times[80] means that things of this world order *must not* take priority over the concerns and interests of God's kingdom.

The reasons Paul sets forth in 1 Corinthians 7:26-35 for remaining single cannot be relegated to the first century church at Corinth. These reasons are ever present in this age between the times, this age of the last days (Heb 1:2) when the claims and interests of God's kingdom must take priority in the Christian's life, whether single or married.

Conclusions

Some Christians, like Paul, will find themselves so impressed with the person and work of Christ that they will choose a life of singleness because of the freedom they have to advance the claims and interests of God's kingdom in the present age. This choice is a

very real possibility for those who have never married and for those who have lost their spouse through death. Paul was a realist, however, and knew that singles and singles again can live this way only if they have been given, or feel they already possess, the grace-ability to exercise sexual self-control.

The life of singleness chosen for the sake of more effectively pursuing one's calling in Christ did not originate with Paul. The motivation to pursue this calling came from Jesus himself. I have tried to show that not only was Paul familiar with Jesus' eunuch saying (Mt 19:12)--and that he thought of himself as one who had "renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven" (*NIV*)--but that his commands and counsels in 1 Corinthians 7 are guided by his knowledge of the tradition of Jesus' teaching on marriage, divorce, and singleness that is now recorded in Matthew 19:4-12. The parallel to 1 Corinthians 7:7 is not Matthew 19:11, but rather Matthew 19:12d, especially as it derives its meaning from the preceding context. It is in Matthew 19:12d ("He who is able to accept this let him accept it.") that one finds a call to another category of believers. This is a call to those disciples who are able, because they have been enabled by God, to accept the possibility of a life apart from marriage for greater devotion to the Lord.

The single person devoted to the Lord is certainly not a second-class citizen in the church, as is sometimes implied today.[81] On the contrary, the single person, especially the one who feels called to a life of singleness for the sake of serving the Lord more fully and without distraction, may even be thought of as an eschatological sign that Christians are living between the times, the time of Christ's resurrection and the time of Christ's parousia. The single person reminds married people that a fourth and final period in the history of marriage is coming (cf. Mt 19:3-12; Mk 10:2-12), a time when people neither marry nor are given in marriage (Mt 22:30 and par.). Marriage has an eschatological limit, but one's relationship with and devotion to the Lord does not. Uppermost in every disciple's mind ought to be the urgency of obedience to his or her Lord and the claims and interests of God's kingdom.

NOTES

1. *NASB* translation and so throughout unless indicated otherwise.

2. Cf. J. C. Hurd, Jr., *The Origin of I Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 1965; reprinted with a Preface to the new ed., Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983) 47-50.

3. Paul refers three times to oral information he has received about the Corinthians: 1:11; 5:1; 11:18b.

4. Cf. Hurd, *Origin of I Corinthians*, 65-74, 114-209.

5. BAGD (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [ed. W. Bauer; trans. W. F. Arndt and W. Gingrich, 4th rev. ed.; 2nd ed. rev. and aug. by F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker from Bauer's 5th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979]) s.v. *"peri,"* 1h: *peri hôn = peri toutôn ha.* Cf. *peri hôn ean hairête grapsate moi* = "Write to me about any matter that you choose" (dated 95 B.C.) (*Select Papyri* [trans. A. S. Hunt and C. C. Edgar; Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932], 1:292-93).

6. *The NIV Study Bible* (ed. K. Barker; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985) fails to note the change in subject which this formula indicates at 7:25 and 16:12 (p. 173).

7. Hurd, *Origin of I Corinthians*, 154. The problem of whether formerly married (widowers and/or divorceés) or never-married individuals, or a combination of both, are in view in v. 8 will be addressed in the next section.

8. Paul's appeal to the presence of the Spirit of God in his life (v. 40b) appears to be a defense of his own counsel (*gnômê*) in this particular situation. This may only mean that Paul writes as one who is convinced and guided by the Holy Spirit. But it may also be true that "Paul is here taking a stand against others, perhaps those Corinthians who boasted that they possessed the Spirit of God (cf. chs. 12-14)"

(F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1953] 185). H. Conzelmann (*1 Corinthians* [trans. J. W. Leitch; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975] 136) remarks: "It is a subtle thrust at the pneumatics in Corinth."

9.   Hurd (*Origin of I Corinthians*, 169-78) also argues that the concern in vv. 26-28 is the same one addressed in vv. 36-38.

10. N. Baumert, *Ehelosigkeit und Ehe im Herrn: Eine Neuinterpretation von 1 Kor 7* (Forschung zur Biebel; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1984) 164-65, n. 301.

11. It is now generally recognized that *gamizô* ("to give in marriage") in this context has the same meaning as *gameô* ("to marry"). Cf. F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (trans. and rev. R. W. Funk; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961) §101. s.v. *"gamein;"* J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (4 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908-76), vol. 2: *Accidence and Word Formation* by W. F. Howard (1928) 409-10.

12. Cf. J. K. Elliott, "Paul's Teaching on Marriage in 1 Corinthians: Some Problems Considered," *New Testament Studies* 19 (1973) 219-25.

13. Vv. 17-24 convey the general principle of remaining in the state or condition one was in when he or she became a Christian. Cf. J. R. Fischer, "1 Cor. 7:8-24 - Marriage and Divorce," *Biblical Research* 23 (1978) 26-36; G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987) 307.

14. Cf. G. D. Fee, "1 Corinthians 7:1 in the *NIV*," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23 (1980) 307-8.

15. BAGD (s.v. *"anthrôpos,"* 2bβ) only lists one example under this subsection: Mt 19:10.

16.   A. Oepke, s.v. *"anêr,"* *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (9 vols.; ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich; trans G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-74), 1 (1964) 362-63. Hereafter referred to as *TDNT*.

17.   BAGD (s.v. *"anêr,"* 1) lists 1 Co 7:2-4 under the meaning of "husband." Note also the concentration of "each one" and "one's own" terms in v. 2, similar to the reciprocity required in vv. 3-4.

18.   Note the asyndetic connection of v. 3 to v. 2. The asyndeton functions like the explanatory conjunction *gar* and gives a reason for Paul's words in v. 2: Why should a spouse have sexual relations with his or her partner? V. 3: Because this is a spouse's duty.

19.   BAGD (s.v. 2bα, 3aζ, 3aχ) translates *anthrôpos* in 1 Co 7:1, 7, 26 by "man," "everyone" (with *pantas*), and "one" respectively.

20.   V. P. Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979) 36.

21.   Fee, "1 Corinthians 7:1 in the *NIV*," 314.

22.   The *NIV*'s "as I am" in v. 8 imports the verb of being from v. 7 and tends to confuse the two different ways that Paul points to himself as an example in v. 7 and v. 8. The translators should have supplied the immediately preceding verb *menô*: "as I remain/have remained."

23.   Cf. *Hermas*, Mandate 4. 1. 6 answers the question of what a husband should do after divorcing his adulterous wife by saying: "Let the husband remain single (*ho anêr eph' heautô menetô*)." Paul gives the same command to remain single in 1 Co 7:11.

24.   Brown may have derived this idea from certain comments found in G. Stählin, s.v. *"chêra,"* *TDNT* 9 (1974) 452, n. 110, and Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 132 and n. 15.

25. C. Brown, s.v. "Separate, Divide: 4. *Divorce, Separation and Remarriage,*" *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (3 vols.; ed. C. Brown; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975-78), 3 (1978) 537. Hereafter referred to as *NIDNTT*.

26. J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: University Press, 1961) 218.

27. The thesis by G. R. E. Brown ("An Exegetical Analysis of Paul's Ethic in 1 Corinthians 7:8-9" [Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984]) does not actually approve of this course of action across the board, but he does say that the statement "It is better to marry than to burn" applies to (1) those who have never married; (2) widowers and widows; (3) those deserted by an unbelieving partner (cf. 1 Co 7:15); (4) those who have divorced their spouse for a variety of sexual sins and "immorality" inclusive of child abuse or wife battering; (5) and those who cannot be reconciled to their spouse because he or she has since remarried. Brown would consider other situations as well.

28. In v. 34 I follow the textually better reading of B which distinguishes between the betrothed woman, the specific issue Paul began to discuss in vv. 25 ff., and the never-before-married single woman. For a full discussion of the variants see Fee, *First Corinthians*, 334-35, n. 4 and 345-46.

29. H. Olshausen, *A Commentary on Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1873; reprint ed., N.p.: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883) 118.

30. F. L. Godet, *Commentary on First Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1977) 380.

31. W. A. Heth and G. J. Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce* (London: Hodder & Stoughton; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984) 144-45.

32. Cf. J. Schneider, s.v. *"eunouchos,"* *TDNT* 2 (1964) 767. J. Jeremias
     ("War Paulus Witwer?" *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche
     Wissenschaft* 25 [1926] 310) says that 1 Co 7:8 permits this
     possibility as well as the possibility that Paul was single all his life.
     This writer will argue that 1 Co 7:8 is the most important NT piece
     of evidence that Paul was, in fact, a widower, and not just that 1 Co
     7:8 permits this possibility.

33. My understanding of vv. 36-38 is that Paul is advising young engaged
     men to marry their fiancés if they are not able to channel properly
     their sexual desires for them (cf. G. Schrenk, s.v. *"thelêma,"* *TDNT*
     3 [1965] 60-61; H. Chadwick, "'All Things to All Men,'" *New
     Testament Studies* 1 [1954-55] 267-68). Sexual desires improperly
     channeled are the common factor to Paul's teaching in 1 Co 7:36-38
     and in 1 Th 4:3-8.

34. Cf. F. Lang, s.v. *"pyroô,"* *TDNT* 6 (1968) 949-50. M. L. Barré
     ("To Marry or to Burn: *pyrousthai* in 1 Cor 7:9," *Catholic Biblical
     Quarterly* 36 [1974] 193-202) attempts to argue that this is an
     eschatological context and so the meaning is "to be burned in the fires
     of judgment or Gehenna" (200). In response to this, there is an
     eschatological backdrop for Paul's remarks in vv. 26-38, but not
     here. Furthermore, the immediate context is talking about sexual
     self-control or the lack of it, not a matter of obedience that affects
     one's eternal destiny.

35. C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New
     York: Harper & Row, 1968) 158.

36. See n. 22 above.

37. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3. 12. 82 (Library of Christian
     Classics 2:79).

38. E. Stauffer (s.v. *"gameô,"* *TDNT* 6 [1968] 652, n. 25) takes special
     note of Paul's advice here to argue that Paul was an *agamos* and not
     a widower. He says: "Note the *houtôs*. If Paul were a widower, we
     should expect a *hôs kagô*, as in 7:7 f. There, however, the *agamoi*

are to the fore, so that it is most likely that he himself was an *agamos*." Note that Stauffer is also not careful to distinguish the two different statements (vv. 7, 8). E. Fascher ("Zur Witwerschaft des Paulus und der Auslegung von I Cor 7," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 28 [1929] 64-65) similarly argues from vv. 1-7 that Paul was never married. All of this points out the fallacy (illegitimate totality transfer) of giving *agamos* more meanings than a proper understanding of the context would suggest.

39. Godet, *First Corinthians*, 327. Also R. N. Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980) 237; *The Ministry and Message of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971) 24.

40. So F. Stagg, "Biblical Perspectives on the Single Person," *Review and Expositor* 74 (1977) 17-18.

41. Godet (*First Corinthians*, 330) answers: "The reason why widows are mentioned separately, while widowers are confounded with bachelors, is this, widowhood creates, in the case of the woman, a more special position than in that of a man; a widow differs much more socially from a virgin than a widower from a young man." This may well be true, but the arguments presented above outweigh Godet's special pleading in support of a view the alternative to which he felt was "certainly" wrong.

42. The variant reading *gar* basically assumes the concession of v. 6 is to marriage (an understanding shared by virtually all of the early fathers) and makes v. 7 the explanation for the concession. The *de* reading is preferred, suggesting a contrast to vv. 2-6.

43. Longenecker, *Ministry and Message*, 24; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 118.

44. H. Alford, *Alford's Greek Testament* (4 vols.; London: Rivingtons; Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, & Co., 1871-77; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 2:522; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the*

Corinthians (N.p.: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937; reprint ed., Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1946) 281; Grosheide, *First Corinthians*, 159; and L. Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (TNTC; London: Tyndale Press, 1958) 107.

45.   This means that Paul's advice to the widow in 1 Co 7:39-40 cannot be used as evidence to prove that Paul was "down" on marriage. Paul knew by experience the blessedness of his present state of singleness and the freedom this gave for full devotion to the Lord and his work (cf. Php 1:21-26).

46.   Grosheide (*First Corinthians*, 159) also believes the Corinthians knew about Paul's marital status, but he does not argue that Paul was a widower.

47.   Olshausen, *First Corinthians*, 118. He also notes that "In Matt. xix. 12, the Lord expresses the same thought."

48.   Godet, *First Corinthians*, 328; Morris, *First Corinthians*, 108; W. H. Mare, "1 Corinthians," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (ed. F. E. Gaebelein; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 10:229; E. M. Yamauchi, "Cultural Aspects of Marriage in the Ancient World," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (1978) 250; and D. K. Lowery, "1 Corinthians," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck; Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983) 518. "In this context it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that sexual life in marriage is the 'gift of another kind'" (Fee, *First Corinthians*, 285).

49.   J. M. Ford, *A Trilogy on Wisdom and Celibacy* (COHS 4; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967) 69.

50.   Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 158-59.

51.   J. Héring, *The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (trans. from 2nd French ed. by A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock; London: Epworth Press, 1962) 50.

52. What about divorcées who cannot remarry because they are unable to be reconciled to their spouse (1 Co 7:11a) or because they have been deserted by an unbelieving spouse (1 Co 7:15)? They, like the widowers and widows whom Paul allows to remarry if they have unmet sexual needs (vv. 8-9), have also had sexual experience and might desire further sexual intimacy. Yet Paul does not permit them to remarry. The next section will offer an explanation for what Paul's attitude may be toward this apparent contradiction in his teaching.

53. Cf. L. Goppelt, *Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times* (trans. R. A. Guelich; N.p.: A. & C. Black, 1970; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977) 183; G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974) 535.

54. It is reasonable to believe that people are born with certain capabilities, that Christians indwelt by God's Spirit are given certain gifts or capacities, and further that the Christian's continuing relationship to the Spirit leaves open the possibility of God's bestowal of grace-gifts or enablement in times of need.

55. Fee, "1 Corinthians 7:1 in the *NIV*," 312.

56. Cf. B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (trans. E. J. Sharpe; ASNU 22; Lund: Gleerup, 1961) 289.

57. For an insightful overview of the whole question of Paul's relationship to the gospel tradition see Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 288-323.

58. Ibid. 302.

59. Cf. C. H. Dodd, "Matthew and Paul," *Expository Times* 58 (1947) 294-96.

60.   A. H. M'Neile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1915; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980) 275; Stauffer, *TDNT* 1:652; H. B. Green, *The Gospel according to Matthew in the Revised Standard Version* (NCB; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) 169; E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew* (trans. D. E. Green; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975) 383. See also: Godet, *First Corinthians*, 328; G. G. Findlay, "St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians," *Expositor's Greek Testament* (5 vols.; N.p.; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 2:824; A. Robertson and A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* (2nd ed.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911) 136; Lenski, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 281. Most recently D. Wenham ("Paul's Use of the Jesus Tradition: Three Samples," *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels* [GP 5; ed. D. Wenham; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985] 9) has called attention to the similarity between 1 Co 7:7 and Mt 19:11. A number of commentators, however, do not consider this parallel, and this writer knows of no one who discusses the parallel in depth.

61.   Cf. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 301-23; Longenecker, *Apostle of Liberty*, 188-90; cf. pp. 136-38; W. Foerster, s.v. "*kyrios*," *TDNT* 3 (1965) 1092; D. L. Balch, "Backgrounds of I Cor. vii: Sayings of the Lord in Q; Moses as an Ascetic *theios anêr* in II Cor. iii," *New Testament Studies* 18 (1972) 353; W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (4th ed; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980) 140-42; and J. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity* (OBS; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 19-20. Cf. also C. Lattey, "How Do You Account for the Lack of Direct Quotations in the Epistles from Our Lord's Sayings?" *Scripture* 4 (1949) 22-24.

62.   It is conceivable that earlier editions or drafts of Matthew's Gospel circulated before the whole appeared, though there is no hard evidence for this supposition apart from Papias' *Logia* (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 3. 39. 16). And if Matthew's Gospel originated around Syrian Antioch, Paul's missionary base (Ac 13:1-3), Paul would have known about the Lord's sayings early in his career. Cf. J. A. T.

Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976) 97.

63. Heth and Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce*, 57-61, 65-68.

64. They are in keeping with what is taught about the nature of marriage in Ge 1:27 and 2:24. Marriage involves both a covenant relationship and a kinship relationship that comes into being when the marriage is consummated. See further W. A. Heth, "Divorce and Remarriage," in *Applying the Scriptures: Papers from ICBI Summit III* (ed. K. S. Kantzer; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987) 222-26.

65. Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 3. 18. 105) writes: "Celibacy (*tên eunouchian*) may lawfully be chosen according to the sound rule with godly reasons, provided that the person gives thanks for the grace God has granted (*eucharistounta men epi tê dotheisê chariti*), and does not hate the creation or reckon married people to be of no account. . . . Let both give thanks for their appointed state, if they know to what state they are appointed" (Library of Christian Classics 2:90). Cf. Mt 7:11//Lk 11:13.

66. The compelling experience of a doctor or lawyer who becomes a Christian and becomes so committed to Christ and the spread of the gospel that he or she leaves a lucrative profession and many comforts to pursue the ministry is perhaps somewhat comparable to the "call" that results in the adoption of a single lifestyle for more freedom to be devoted to Christ.

67. W. Grundmann, s.v. "*dynamai/dynamis*," *TDNT* 2 (1964) 305-16.

68. So M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (trans. B. L. Woolf in collaboration with the author; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, [1971]) 39, 242, and Davies (*Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 140-41), who quotes Dibelius' suggestion with approval.

69. M'Neile, *St. Matthew*, 275; T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus as Recorded in the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Luke* (London: SCM Press, 1937; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, MI:

Eerdmans, 1979) 214-16.

70.   F. J. Moloney, "Matthew 19,3-12 and Celibacy. A Redactional and
       Form Critical Study," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 2
       (1979) 59, n. 30.

71.   Cf. G. Delling, s.v. "*epitagê*," 8 (1972) 37; Gerhardsson, *Memory
       and Manuscript*, 311-14, esp. p. 314 on 1 Co 7:25.

72.   R. Kugelman, "The First Letter to the Corinthians," *The Jerome
       Biblical Commentary* (2 vols. in 1; ed. R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer,
       and R. E. Murphy; Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968),
       2:265; Q. Quesnell, "'Made Themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom
       of Heaven' (Mt 19,12)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30 (1968) 341,
       n. 10.

73.   Cf. W. A. Heth, "Unmarried 'for the Sake of the Kingdom'
       (Matthew 19:12) in the Early Church," *Grace Theological Journal* 8
       (1987) 82-86.

74.   "It is not that celibacy is a peaceful state in which one lives far from
       the world's worries; it is just a question of choosing between a life
       exclusively devoted to the cares of the Christian ministry . . . and a
       life divided between two sorts of preoccupations, both willed by God,
       that of the cares of marriage and that of the cares of the Church"
       (Thurian, *Marriage and Celibacy*, 106-7).

75.   Cf. W. G. Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament* (trans. J. E.
       Steely; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973) 143; Davies, *Paul and
       Rabbinic Judaism*, 71; Zeisler, *Pauline Christianity*, 112-15, esp. pp.
       115, 133.

76.   Cf. C. E. B. Cranfield, "Thoughts on New Testament Eschatology,"
       Scottish Journal of Theology 35 (1982) 497-512; A. L. Moore, *The
       Parousia in the New Testament* (NovTSup 13; Leiden: Brill, 1966)
       115-17.

77. Cf. Moore, *Parousia*; Morris, *First Corinthians*, 116; Findlay, "First Corinthians," 831; and Mare, "1 Corinthians," 235.

78. W. Grundmann, s.v. "*anankê*," *TDNT* 1 (1964) 346. Cf. L. Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers* (trans. M. P. Ryan), vol. 1 of *History of Christian Spirituality* (New York: Desclee, 1960) 87-88.

79. Jesus "understood that the whole period between his first ministry and his Parousia as the last days or end-time, which, however long it might last, must be recognized as short time, interval-time, in which disciples have always to be ready for the coming of the Lord" (Cranfield, "New Testament Eschatology," 509).

80. Cf. Kümmel, *Theology*, 142-51; Ladd, *Theology*, 369-73, 479-94; H.-C. Hahn, s.v. "Time," *NIDNTT* 3 (1978) 839.

81. Cf. J. Bayly, "Saved, Single, and Second Class," *Eternity*, March 1983, 23-26; J. Duin, "We Must Learn to Celebrate Celibacy," *Christianity Today*, March 21, 1986, 13.

Part II

Christian Education

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5

The Motivation of the Saints and the Interpersonal Competencies of Their Leaders

Practically speaking, every church worker is a volunteer.[1] Church leaders are equippers and enablers[2] in ways similar to leaders in other voluntary organizations. Without minimizing the theological distinctions between the Church and other voluntary organizations, the Church can learn a great deal from the field of volunteerism.

Smith, the founder and first editor of the *Journal of Voluntary Action Research*, states that "failure of cross-fertilization of knowledge from voluntary action research in part hampers the optional use of volunteers in churches."[3] The Church has no reason to be defensive in the field of volunteerism. "Gallup's Survey on Volunteering" (1981) found that 19% of the total adult population or 37% of the adult volunteers in America, volunteered for a church or religious organization.[4] As a prominent volunteer organization, the Church has a responsibility to get more involved in volunteerism research.

Geraghty, the President of the Association for Volunteer Administration, expressed the need for researchers to develop standard competencies for leaders and administrators working with volunteers. She states that "although we work in a diversity of settings, many of our responsibilities as volunteer administrators are similar, as are the skills, talents, and experiences needed by those chosen to perform these responsibilities."[5]

Volunteerism research has identified "interpersonal competency" as one of the most significant skills necessary for a leader of

volunteers.[6]   Loth's research found that five of the twelve competencies for trainers of church volunteers identified by leaders, and six out of ten competencies for trainers identified by volunteers, are related to interpersonal competencies.[7]

Clapp concludes from his research on the church that a "reasonably high ability to relate positively to other people is one of the basic requirements for the ministry."[8]   In another study by Brekke, Strommen and Williams involving Lutherans, the interpersonal aspect of ministry was ranked second in importance only to "expressed-in-life-faith."[9]   Interpersonal competence is a primary skill needed by leaders working with volunteers.

The field of business administration and leadership has made a significant contribution in establishing the value of leaders possessing a high degree of interpersonal skill.   For example, Argyres demonstrates a relationship between the interpersonal competency of leaders and organization effectiveness in his study of top executives.[10] He defines interpersonal competence as "the ability to cope effectively with interpersonal situations, relevant variables and their interrelationships, and the ability to solve interpersonal problems."[11]

Mann identified two specific human relations skills needed by a manager: First, the ability to apply general knowledge about interpersonal relationships and motivation to practical work situations; and, second, the ability to integrate the motivating factors of individuals with the objectives of the institution in a way which will benefit both. One needed management skill related to the type of job the manager is overseeing. Although he found that human relation skills are needed at every level of management, they were most important at the middle-management level.[12] In a similar survey of 217 corporations, Alexander Alpander found that managers rated oral communication ability as the most important supervisory skill.[13]

Hersey and Blanchard's theory of "situational leadership" states than in order to be effective the leader must change his style of leadership "utilizing various degrees of direction and support as followers increase or decrease in maturity or developmental

levels."[14] The researchers suggest that such an ability would require flexibility, adaptability, and a high level of interpersonal skill.[15]

After commenting on Hersey and Blanchard's research, Lassey and Sashkin conclude that the one skill necessary in almost every context is the ability of a leader to co-ordinate the participation of all persons involved in a particular task.[16]

Research from the fields of leadership and business administration indicates that both leaders and managers need a high level of interpersonal competency.[17] In comparing the concerns of managers with the concerns of leaders of voluntary organizations, Rawls, Ullrich, and Nelson found that leaders in voluntary organizations were even more concerned with interpersonal relationships than were managers in profit-making enterprises.[18] In a similar study done by Gatewood and Lahiff, they also found that leaders in voluntary organizations rated the importance of interpersonal relationships significantly higher than did the managers of profit-making organizations. They concluded that "the voluntary and nonprofit manager has very little tools available to influence worker behavior other than the personal relationship he establishes with them."[19] Because of the distinctive nature of the church as a voluntary organization, the interpersonal competency of leaders is even more crucial.[20]

Research from the field of volunteerism also emphasizes the importance of a high level of interpersonal competency for leaders of volunteers. Likert shows that in the most effective voluntary organizations, the leaders show keen interest in the workers. They initiate communication and interaction and share power with workers.[21]

Schindler-Rainman and Lippitt identify several interpersonal competencies from their research that are instrumental in the motivation of volunteers.

1. The ability to give emotional support.
2. The ability to show appreciation.
3. The ability to communicate trust.

4.   The ability to share decision-making responsibility.

Negative interpersonal experiences were also cited by volunteers:

1.   Leaders were blocking their creativity.
2.   Leaders were unable to give helpful advice.
3.   Leaders put unrealistic demands on the volunteers.
4.   Leaders made them feel guilty.

The researchers explain that although a volunteer's motivation comes from within, a leader can do a great deal to activate a volunteer. "Much of the motivation and commitment of volunteers depends upon the values, attitudes, and behaviors of their professional supervisors and coordinators, and upon the policies and psychological atmosphere of the agency or organization," for which the leaders are often responsible.[22]

Gallup has identified four interpersonal skills of a leader necessary for the effective management of a voluntary program.[23]

1.   Ability to recruit.
2.   Ability to empathize with volunteers' problems.
3.   Ability to show consideration for volunteers ideas.
4.   Ability to recognize and reward them for work.

Ilsley and Niemi have found that "the eventual success of a volunteer-based program rests largely upon the ability of a volunteer co-ordinator to communicate effectively."[24] Communication skill in volunteer service involves:

1.   A sensitivity to other people's needs.
2.   A realization of how leadership style affects others' behavior.
3.   An ability to detect and break down communication barriers.

4.   An ability to manage conflicts.[25]

Lynch, in his overview of the process of volunteer program management, identifies three processes involving specific interpersonal skills:

1.   "Interviewing and screening"-"The process of determining the suitability, strengths and interests of the potential volunteers and of matching them to the jobs that need to be done."

2.   "Training"-"The process of providing volunteers with skills and information they do not already have which are necessary to carry out their responsibilities."

3.   "Enabling"-"The motivating, delegating, counseling, coordinating, encouraging, recognizing, working out of volunteer-staff conflicts, and other supportive daily acts of managing an effective volunteer program."[26]

Research also indicates that there is a distinction between the reasons for a volunteer's initial involvement and the factors sustaining his involvement.[27] It would follow that there is a good probability that the leadership style of a leader of a new volunteer may not always help sustain a volunteer's continued involvement.

Trapp suggests several qualities of an effective leader of volunteers that relate to interpersonal skills. He designates these as qualities of an enabler, a term that is used extensively in volunteerism literature. Some of the qualities of an enabler are compassion, mutuality, respect, empathy, openness, support, and confidence.[28]

Volunteerism provides us with a valid data base from which to identify specific interpersonal competencies of leaders in the Church, since it is a voluntary organization. Yet the Church has theological distinctives that make it unique among other voluntary organizations.

Schaller and Tidwell label one of the tasks of church leaders as "enabling." The enabling they do is "the human part of a partnership

which coupled with the enabling of the Spirit, comprises the leadership quotient in the church context."[29] The enabling task of church leaders is sociologically very similar to the task described by leaders in other voluntary organizations. As McDonough explains, "motivation comes from within. A person is led through the prompting of the Holy Spirit working through his needs. A Christian leader's role is to build a climate in which a person can fulfill his needs in a way that brings joy and wholeness."[30] As he states in another book, a "leader's role in motivation is to be sensitive to the needs and gifts of persons, to help persons understand their needs and gifts, and to help them live out their Christian Calling in satisfying and fulfilling ways."[31] The leader works in cooperation with the Holy Spirit in helping church volunteers utilize their gifts within the church.

There are two major studies that deal specifically with the problem of this study--the identification of specific interpersonal competencies of leaders in churches as they relate to the motivation of volunteers in ministry. The first study, by Clapp, involved over 3000 people in churches. Personal interviews and surveys were used in an attempt to find out how ministerial skills meet local church needs. Competency in personal relationships was defined as:

1. The ability to get along well on a daily basis with the members of the church and community.
2. The ability to show warmth and concern as part of the on-going life of the church.
3. The ability to help other people feel at ease.[32]

Clapp found that the interviews with lay people were more successful than the written surveys in "making clear just how much importance persons place on personal relationships and personal integrity as areas of competency." He concluded that a "reasonably high ability to relate positively to other people" is a basic requirement for the ministry.[33]

The second study, by Loth, involved evangelical trainers of

volunteers and volunteers themselves. One of the purposes of this study was to determine the primary competencies necessary to train church or religious volunteers. The Delphi technique was used to conduct the research. Both trainers and volunteers participated.

The five interpersonal competencies identified by the trainers of volunteers were, in order of importance:

1. Ability to communicate with people.
2. Willingness to work with volunteers to see them reach full potential.
3. Vision for potential for volunteers serving the church.
4. Ability to motivate volunteers.
5. Belief that people are more important than positions or programs.

The six interpersonal competencies identified by volunteers were, in order of importance:

1. Ability to communicate.
2. Love for the volunteers.
3. Ability to lead.
4. Knowledge of how to effectively train volunteers.
5. Belief in the abilities of volunteers.
6. Desire to help volunteers develop.[34]

This study indicated not only the importance of interpersonal competency for leaders of volunteers, but also some specific interpersonal skills needed for leaders of volunteers. Loth recommends that further research be done to study the "role of a trainer in motivating volunteers."[35] This present study is an attempt to build on Loth's research and to analyze in more detail interpersonal competency of church leaders and the motivation of volunteers in ministry.

Research Design and Results

In this study, volunteers in four Wesleyan churches in central Indiana were interviewed by telephone. Churches were chosen through an interview with the Indiana North District Superintendent of the Wesleyan Church, and subjects were chosen through interviews with the pastors of the four churches. To insure a balance between the types of ministries volunteers were involved in, pastors picked five persons from each of the following categories of ministries:

1. Leadership
2. Teaching
3. Club, small group, committees
4. Helping - mechanical
5. Serving people

Twenty-five people from each of the four churches were contacted by letter to invite their participation in a telephone interview. Of the one hundred volunteers contacted, 88 participated in a telephone interview (88% response rate). The questions asked during the interviews encouraged the volunteers to respond in as much detail as possible concerning the skills, behaviors and characteristics of persons instrumental in their motivation in ministry.

Responses were classified according to a system validated by a panel of five experts. Data were classified according to intra-personal characteristics, interpersonal characteristics, integrity, spirituality, support behaviors, communication skills and specific leadership skills relating to recruitment, delegation, organization, supervision, and team building. Responses were categorized in the most specific category possible with the two more general categories of interpersonal and intra-personal characteristics reserved for responses that did not fit the more specific categories.

CATEGORIES	DEFINITION	SPECIFIC RESPONSES (In subject's own words)	
		Positive	**Negative**
1. Support Behaviors	Behaviors related to the support and encouragement of other people	encourages affirms prays for/with others shows concern counsels meet needs shows appreciation	ignores never praises makes you fell unwanted stingy with funds scolds
2. Communication Skills	Skills relating to interpersonal interaction	Listening sharing personally speaking tactfully	talks critically gossips doesn't listen talks too much sarcastic communicates poorly
3. Leadership Skill: Recruitment	Skills relating to a person's ability to become involved in using their gifts and talents to accomplish tasks	match gifts with tasks respect volunteer's time asks people tactfully to help	pushes too hard when asking for help doesn't match gifts with tasks
4. Leadership Skill: Delegation	Skills relating to a person's ability to transfer tasks, responsibilities, and authority to others	gives a clear description of task gives people freedom to do their jobs themselves equip, enable	doesn't give you freedom gives you too much to do won't delegate doesn't give you authority
5. Leadership Skill: Organization	Skills relating to a person's ability to plan and organize	plans ahead sets goals creates a vision	no organization no goals no follow through no plans always late no schedule

(continued)

6. Leadership Skill: Supervision	Skills relating to a person's ability to oversee the responsibilities of others in a way that helps them to do their best	directs without pushing challenges motivates brings out the best in people	bosses people around looks over your shoulder tells but doesn't help monopolizes your job
7. Leadership Skill: Team Building	Skills relating to a person's ability to get people to work together as a group	shares decisions with participation in the work as a team member learns from others in the group	won't accept others ideas doesn't allow others' input in decisions has too much personal power unsupportive of group decisions
8. Integrity	Specific personality characteristics relating to the internal consistency of a person's character	consistent, genuine committed, pure	no integrity dishonest, insincere unethical
9. Spirituality	Specific personality characteristics relating to a person's relationship with God	sensitive to God close to God spiritually mature	inconsistent spiritually carnal
10. Other: Intrapersonal Characteristics	General personality characteristics describing a person <u>inside</u>	enthusiastic relaxed, wise creative, humble industrious	negative wishy-washy proud, dogmatic political legalistic incompetent
11. Other: Interpersonal Characteristics	General personality characteristics describing how a person relates to <u>other people</u>	friendly cooperative open, accepting understanding patient, caring	critical unconcerned uncooperative untrusting disrespectful abrasive

Characteristics, Behaviors, and Skills of Persons
Identified by Volunteers as Significant in
Their Continued Motivation

Interpersonal Competencies	Number of Volunteers Citing Each	Percentage of Total Volunteers	Rank
Support Behavior	66	75	1
Other: Interpersonal Characteristics.	49	56	2
Other: Intro-personal Characteristics	46	52	3
Communication Skill . . .	38	43	4
Integrity	32	36	5
Spirituality	29	33	6
Leadership Skill: Supervision	25	28	7
Leadership Skill: Team Building	24	27	8
Leadership Skill: Organization	20	23	9
Leadership Skill: Delegation	17	19	10
Leadership Skill: Recruitment	15	17	11

Conclusions

The fact that 75% of the volunteers identified specific support behaviors of leaders as having a significant impact on their motivation points to the importance of church leaders being competent in their ability to encourage, affirm, pray with others, show concern for others, counsel, meet needs, and show appreciation to others.

The category ranked second by volunteers, interpersonal characteristics, although somewhat general, emphasizes the need for church leaders to be characterized as friendly, co-operative, open, accepting, understanding, patient and caring. These top two categories show the importance volunteers place on both the character and behavior of their leaders.

In light of these findings it is interesting to observe how proportionately little of the typical seminary curriculum relates to areas of need identified by the volunteers. The characteristics and behaviors of leaders that seem to affect volunteers' involvement in ministry most are related to the leader's character and ability to relate positively to volunteers. If church leaders are to play an optimum role in equipping saints for ministry and subsequently facilitating their maturity, they must be trained to do so. Training for both lay leaders and the clergy must not only include the finest theological education, but also the highest level of character training and interpersonal skill development.

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Part III

Theology and Philosophy

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6

Thus Saith the Lord?
Study Papers, Church Pronouncements
and the Concept of Divine Revelation
in Mainline Protestantism

Upon joining Taylor University's Department of Biblical Studies in 1988, I discovered that I had something in common with the department chairman, Dr. E. Herbert Nygren: Both of us are members of large "mainline" (some would say "oldline" or even "sideline") denominations whose leaders tend to hold theological convictions much less traditional and more latitudinarian than our own. In addition, each of us has been supportive of grassroots renewal movements which have sprung up in our respective churches, Herb Nygren in the United Methodist Church's "Good News" network, and I in organizations such as Presbyterians for Democracy and Religious Freedom and the Presbyterian Lay Committee.

The problems faced in our respective denominations, while not identical, do share significant common ground. For example, both the United Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA) have in recent years witnessed a steady decline in membership. While the causes for this downward turn may be somewhat complex, many of us would attribute such numerical erosion to a simultaneous erosion of our leadership's commitment to the Bible as the Word of God. In addition, the increased politicizing of our denominations, as exemplified by church pronouncements dealing with everything from El Salvador to acid rain, has alienated many who believe that their offerings should not be used to support the ecclesiastical equivalent of a political action committee.

The following essay is based upon a speech delivered in December 1987 to a West Coast Chapter of the Presbyterian Liaison Network. In that speech I endeavored to address the twin problems of theological latitudinarianism and political intolerance which were increasingly becoming the trademark of many official (and sometimes unofficial) statements coming out of the denominational bureaucracy. Church pronouncements of this sort are not confined to the Presbyterian Church (USA), however. Methodists, Episcopalians, Lutherans and other members of the so-called mainline denominations face similar situations. What follows, then, should be seen as a "case study" which may be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the situation confronting evangelical Christians in any number of denominations whose leaders promulgate theological and political agendas out of keeping both with biblical revelation and the wishes of the average church member.

The Problem Defined

Whoever first observed, "The more things change, the more they remain the same," was pretty much on target. Consider, for example, Ecclesiastes 12:11-12:

> The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails--given by one Shepherd. Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.

This text could be seen as applying to the myriad of study papers and church pronouncements published by our denomination in recent years. Such "study" can indeed be "wearisome to the body!" Yet our Reformed faith calls us to examine all of life in light of the Gospel. And since history does not stand still, issues which have

previously come before the Church sometimes merit fresh examination.

At the same time, some recent Presbyterian study papers and church pronouncements have caused quite a stir within the denomination. The most notorious, *Presbyterians and Peacemaking: Are We Now Called to Resistance?*,[1] is but one of several such documents. Other studies and church pronouncements deal with theological issues such as the nature of divine revelation, feminist theology, and Jewish-Christian relations, as well as public policy matters such as nuclear weapons, South Africa, and Central America. The sheer number of such documents is enough to confuse anyone who is not a full-time member of the denominational bureaucracy, which churns out study after study faster than we can keep up with them. How can the average congregation evaluate all of these statements when they seem to be coming at us from all angles, so to speak?

It is just this concern I wish to address in this essay. So while I shall be dealing with theology, my chief concerns are not theological, but rather pastoral. Specifically, I want to do three things. First, I want to describe what I see as a pattern common to many (if not all) of these study papers and church pronouncements. Second, I want to point out and illustrate the single most important flaw inherent in so many of these documents. And finally, I want suggest how local churches might begin to deal with these matters.

An Ironic Pattern

There is a certain irony to the pattern I see developing as more and more of these study papers come out. On the one hand, those studies which deal with theological themes seem increasingly "inclusive," while those which make public policy proposals are often quite "exclusive" in nature. Let me explain.

Recent theological documents sent to the churches for study share a common penchant for defining Christian faith in the broadest

possible terms. For example, the recent study entitled "A Theological Understanding on the Relationship between Christians and Jews"[2] says in effect that Christians and Jews should not be too concerned about their differences, since both are "in covenant" with God. And a study paper dealing with "Theologies Written from a Feminist Perspective"[3] challenges Presbyterians to commit themselves to what its author calls an "ever-expanding inclusion of human experience," including lesbian and gay sexuality and religious rituals characteristic of ancient and modern paganism. All of this is done in the name of "inclusiveness."

On the other hand, those study papers and church pronouncements dealing with public policy seem increasingly *ex*clusive. Many of us are familiar with such statements, which all too often fly the banner of "prophetic" or "authentic faith" in order to justify their divisiveness. *Presbyterians and Peacemaking* is a good example of this tendency. Its calls to various forms of civil disobedience are wrapped in religious rhetoric which seeks to claim the high moral ground for activities which many Christians would regard as unwise or even criminal. In like manner, certain activist Presbyterians have labeled as "Christian" Nicaragua's Sandinista party. The message is clear: If you and I judge matters differently, we are not only mistaken, we may not even be Christians--or at least not "good" Christians.

This double irony comes close to what Jesus called "straining gnats and swallowing camels." That is to say, such church pronouncements all too often put first things second, and second things first.

Camels slide down ecclesiastical gullets when the truths which distinguish Christianity from Judaism, Islam, or neo-paganism become buried beneath a banner of "inclusiveness," to the point where the Gospel of Christ is diluted beyond all recognition. Jesus's command to "preach the gospel to every creature" so as to "make disciples of all nations" becomes instead a call to endless dialogue in order that everyone might just get along, regardless of spiritual commitment. In this way Jesus becomes a sort of celestial guru who

says in effect, "Hey man, everything's groovy," as opposed to "Repent, and believe the Gospel!" (Mark 1:15).

But this sort of "inclusiveness," like nature, abhors a vacuum. So when the church swallows the camel by refusing to put first things first, it will find something else to assume the top spot. In our day it is not "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," but rather political gnats like "boycott South Africa" which all too often sound like the new orthodoxy. Thus, we have the remarkable phenomenon of a simultaneous increase in religious tolerance on the one hand, and political *in*tolerance on the other.

Divine Revelation: The Breakdown of Consensus

Behind this phenomenon lies a crisis of authority within the Presbyterian Church (USA). Specifically, our pluralistic church has for some time now been unable to reach any consensus as to what constitutes divine revelation. And this in turn has led to confusion in the areas of biblical interpretation and theological authority.

I will pursue this point by examining key portions of yet another theological study paper currently before the Church, entitled "The Nature of Revelation in the Christian Tradition from a Reformed Perspective."[4] This paper reflects the current confusion within the PC(USA) on this subject of divine revelation. For while it contains much of value, all too often it delivers with one hand what it ends up taking back with the other. In short, it is so inclusive that it lacks the sharp focus necessary to bring about any sort of theological consensus within the denomination.

On the positive side, the paper begins the debate at the proper point. The basic question for theology is not one of biblical authority or interpretation, but rather of what constitutes divine revelation. My own doctoral studies at Fuller Seminary, which dealt specifically with different methods of biblical interpretation, confirmed this for me. That is, I discovered that the various perspectives on biblical interpretation and authority which I studied ultimately rested on

differing concepts of divine revelation.[5]

Our Reformed heritage bears this out. For example, during the Middle Ages Roman Catholic theologians saw divine revelation as vested not only in the Bible but also in the teaching office of the Church. The rationale for this position was that the same Holy Spirit which inspired the writers of scripture was still at work today in the Church. If the Spirit could reveal Christ back then, they reasoned, why not now? Thus the teaching office of the Church (which originated with the apostles) was viewed as a parallel authority to scripture, though not in contradiction to it--at least theoretically.

The Reformers, on the other hand, saw in the Bible a revelation so unique as to be normative for all that followed. Only scripture, they argued, could be regarded as binding in matters of doctrine and Christian living. No subsequent tradition could supersede scripture, or even be placed on an equal footing with Holy Writ. In this way the Reformers located the gospel in scripture alone, rather than in the teaching office of the Church. As the Swiss Reformer Zwingli put it, "All who say that the Gospel is nothing without the approbation of the Church err and slander God." The gospel of Christ, as found in scripture, was thereby placed over the Church, rather than vice-versa.

For this reason the classical Reformed confessions, up to and including the Westminster Confession of Faith (hereafter WC), speak of the Bible as "the Word of God." By this they do not mean that God cannot and does not reveal himself in other ways. The Second Helvetic Confession, for example, says specifically that "the preaching of the Word of God [i.e., of scripture] is the Word of God." But the consensus is clear: scripture alone is the final authority for Christians. Any other "revelations" must be evaluated in light of the Bible. This is the meaning of *sola scriptura*, "scripture alone."

Today this consensus has broken down. The "Nature of Revelation" study paper (hereafter NR) reflects this breakdown in a number of ways. For instance, the authors of the study paper specifically reject the Westminster Confession of Faith's contention

that the writings of scripture were uniquely inspired by God (NR 28.215; see WC 6.003). Instead, they have this to say about "inspiration":

> [T]he uniqueness of the biblical authors is not to be found in their inspiration, which they share with later generations of Christians. The New Testament seems to expect that the fullness of the gift of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost will continue until the return of Christ at the end of the age. It does not restrict inspiration to the apostles, nor does it predict an irreversible loss or [decrease] of the gift of the Spirit in post-apostolic generations.

This is but one example of how the "Nature of Revelation" study paper makes statements which seem plausible on the surface, but which in fact contain difficulties which undermine the uniqueness of biblical authority. I will return to this statement a bit later to demonstrate that while the gift of the Holy Spirit does indeed continue in the Church until the return of Christ, the biblical authors were nevertheless uniquely inspired as vehicles of authoritative divine revelation. For now, I want to illustrate some consequences of such a denial of *sola scriptura*.

Revelation as a "Continuing Process"

Consider, for example, the "Nature of Revelation" study paper's paragraph 28.167, entitled "Revelation Is a Continuing Process." The first half of the paragraph reads as follows:

> Revelation is a continuing process. It includes historical events, such as the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt and the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus; interpretations of those events by prophets and apostles; formation of traditions of wisdom and worship; the telling and retelling, writing and editing of these things by those who

shaped the Holy Scriptures; the gradual selection and acceptance of the canonical Scriptures in the Christian community....

Up to this point the authors are describing the formation of scripture itself. The fact that they see revelation as comprised not only of events such as the Exodus and the resurrection of Jesus, but also of the prophetic and apostolic interpretations of those events, is a promising beginning. Many modern theologians would confine God's revelation to His acts in history, and label as mere "witness to revelation" (and therefore fallible) the interpretations of those events by the prophets and apostles. To their credit, the authors of the study paper do not do this. So far, so good.

The second half of the paragraph, however, expands the definition of revelation to include the following:

...the reading of the Bible and preaching based on it; the understanding of the Gospel received by Christian individuals and communities under the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit and the transformation of their lives in conformity with it; and the interaction of the historic understanding of the Gospel with the ever new needs and experiences of human beings.

Now no one would want to deny that God has revealed himself, and continues to reveal himself, through such means as preaching and transformed lives. People do encounter God through these means. But are such encounters normative *in the same sense* as are the teachings of Holy Scripture? The classical Reformed answer to this question has been a resounding *NO*. The most eloquent preaching, the most profound understandings of the Gospel, the most deeply-felt experiences of our lives--all must bow the knee to Holy Writ should they be found at odds with the plain meaning of its words.

The authors of the study paper do not make such a distinction, however, in their definition of revelation as a "continuing process."

And it is precisely this failure to make necessary distinctions between the biblical revelation and non-biblical "revelations" which nullifies the value of the first half of the paragraph quoted above. For if almost everything can be called "revelation," then in reality nothing is revelation. It all becomes a matter of subjective experience, a series of judgment calls based on individual intuition. This is what I meant when I said that the study paper all too often gives with one hand what it then takes back with the other.

This is particularly true when revelation is said to include "the interaction of the historical understanding of the Gospel with the ever new needs and experiences of human beings." Which shall prevail: the historic understanding of the Gospel, or my "experience"?

Experience, Revelation and Authority

For many modern theologians, it is experience which sets the standard. The Presbyterian study paper entitled "Theologies Written from a Feminist Perspective" (hereafter FP) bears this out. A basic assumption of much feminist theology, the paper notes, is that the experience of women today must be a key factor in biblical interpretation.

> This conviction about women's experience and the nature of the human condition leads many feminists to formulate a principle of interpretation applicable both to the scripture and to Christian doctrine: where scripture and tradition do not speak to women's experience, or speak in such a way as to demean women, they are not authoritative. (FP 42.089)

Such a principle of interpretation has obvious implications for the authority of scripture. For if "women's experience and the nature of the human condition" may indeed exercise veto power over scriptural teachings concerning, say, male-female relationships, then anyone else's "experience" may likewise lay claim to revelatory status and thereby cancel biblical imperatives it finds offensive. This is

precisely the sort of "experience-centered" interpretation engaged in by many militant homosexuals, for example.   Paul's view of homosexuality was "culturally conditioned," such gay activists tell us, and does not conform to our experience, and is therefore not normative for us. The fact that such activists, be they gay, feminist, or whatever, do not consider that their *own* experience is likewise "culturally conditioned" does not seem to bother them in the least.

The "Nature of Revelation" study paper thus extends revelation beyond the history of the Bible into the present history of the Church, thereby relativizing the authority of scripture in much the same way the Roman Catholic Church did prior to the Reformation.   In addition, the study paper goes beyond anything Rome ever contemplated by suggesting that divine revelation extends not only beyond the time of Christ, but also beyond the boundaries of the Church.   Specifically, the paper includes arguments supporting the notion that God has savingly revealed himself in religions other than Christianity.   (The paper also recapitulates, albeit briefly, the traditional Christian position that there is no name other than that of Jesus by which people must be saved. Of course, the fact that both views are represented only underscores the lack of consensus on this subject within the denomination.)

Consequently, the concept of "revelation," according to this study paper, may be so broad as to include not only the Church's extra-biblical theological reflection, but even elements of non-Christian faiths. Furthermore, the study paper does not limit the possibility of such non-Christian "revelation" to what the Reformers called "general revelation." To the contrary, the study paper states that God may be revealing himself *savingly* in these other religions (see e.g. NR 28:251ff.) This sort of "universalism" obviously denies the need for missionaries to cross cultures in order to call people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. The fact that such views are held by many within the PC(USA) undoubtedly has contributed to our denomination's rapid retreat from traditional missionary evangelism these past 25 years. It is also, in my judgment, an important factor

in recent efforts within our church to reject our evangelistic obligation to the Jews.

Such a retreat underscores what I noted at the outset of this paper concerning church pronouncements which are so inclusive that they reduce Christianity to a sort of warmed-over humanism. *Whenever the church extends the concept of normative and saving revelation beyond the bounds of Scripture, it risks losing the uniqueness of the gospel.*

At the same time, such a broad view of revelation can be used by church officials to make pronouncements which exclude certain people or groups on the basis of their political views. This is generally done under the label of the "prophetic." For example, we recently witnessed such quasi-prophetic exclusiveness courtesy of the Advisory Council on Church and Society's study paper *Presbyterians and Peacemaking*. Certain General Assembly policy recommendations are no less exclusive, however. According to some of these pronouncements, not only the Nicaraguan contras, but even Campbell's soups may be hazardous to our spiritual health.

Perils of the "Prophectic"

Many Christians respectfully disagree with the content of some of these pronouncements. Even more troubling than what they say, however, is the fact that as *Church* pronouncements they possess, albeit implicitly, a kind of prophetic quality in the eyes of many. In other words, they are viewed as "revelation" of a sort. Thus it is that the wide-ranging "inclusive" view of divine revelation can lead to exclusive, as well as inclusive, pronouncements. It all depends on the disposition of the one receiving the "revelation."

Of course, church officials will insist that such pronouncements speak only for the General Assembly *to* the Church, and not *for* the Church of God. Sometimes, however, they let the cat out of the bag. For example, some time ago I shared with a group of Presbyterian pastors and elders my conviction that the Church should be very

reluctant to issue recommendations on specific matters of public policy. One man in the audience then asked, "Are you saying that Amos should not have said 'Thus saith the Lord!' to the king of Israel?" His question revealed that as far as he was concerned, the Church should exercise a "prophetic" function by issuing just such specific public policy statements.

(I would add, parenthetically, that my response to the gentleman's question went something like this: The king of Israel should be seen as parallel not to the United States government but to the leaders of the Church. For Israel was not a modern secular state but rather the Old Testament expression of God's covenant community, which today finds expression in the Church. The word of God spoken by Amos was therefore confronting the *ecclesiastical* power structures of his day, since religion and politics are of a piece in a theocracy. Thus, the lonely voice of Amos has little if anything to do with committee-sponsored pronouncements which come down to church members from the ecclesiastical power structures of our day.)

Now when the General Assembly makes such "prophetic" pronouncements, it is saying in effect that the Church *as the Church* ought to endorse thus and so. Frankly, this makes me a bit nervous. What prophetic insight does General Assembly possess to discern, for example, that economic sanctions are the "Christian" approach to removing the heinous evil of apartheid from South Africa? Sanctions may or may not end up fulfilling that objective, but there is no way they can be labeled the only possible option for Christians of good conscience to employ in the struggle against apartheid. In like manner, to assume that unilateral nuclear disarmament is the only moral policy alternative for Christians, as does *Presbyterians and Peacemaking*, is to claim an authority which our Reformed tradition says belongs to God alone.

We must therefore be careful about surrounding our prudential policy judgments with the rhetoric of "thus saith the Lord." To succumb to this temptation is to subscribe to the view that God has somehow revealed infallible truth to us apart from biblical revelation.

In addition, it is tantamount to accepting what the Apostle Paul described to the Galatians as "a different gospel." Sociologist Peter Berger puts it this way: "Whenever a political agenda is seen as constitutive of the church, all those who dissent are excluded from the Church. In that very instant, the Church is no longer [universal]; indeed, it ceases to be the Church."[6] And this is precisely the direction many Presbyterians feel their denominational leadership is taking the Church: into non-existence.

We have seen, then, that all too often Presbyterian study papers and church pronouncements are overly-inclusive in matters of theology, but overly-exclusive in matters of public policy. And behind this apparent inconsistency lies a view of divine revelation which extends beyond the bounds of scripture so that both non-Christian religions and radical political ideologies can be baptized with revelatory status.

Now since politics by its very nature is divisive, such political baptisms divide Christians who would otherwise be united by their common faith in Jesus Christ. On the other hand, baptizing humanistic cultural values and non-Christian religions with revelatory status relativizes the biblical call to absolute, exclusive commitment to Jesus Christ, thereby making Christianity superfluous. In either case, the gospel is lost because the Bible has been moved from center stage as the only infallible rule of Christian faith and conduct.

Biblical Inspiration and Authority

But what of the biblical truth that the Holy Spirit is indeed alive and well, and working within the Church today? Can He not reveal Christ to us as He did to the prophets and apostles? This is, as we have seen, precisely the position taken by the "Nature of Revelation" study paper, which sees revelation as going beyond the bounds of scripture. These are valid questions, and need to be answered. What follows is my attempt to do so.

The problem with the study paper's view of inspiration is that

while it recognizes the Holy Spirit's work in the lives of the biblical writers, it completely ignores two other factors: (1) For Christians, the Old Testament gains it authority from the fact that Jesus Christ Himself considered it the Word of God, and (2) the New Testament gains its authority by virtue of its being *eyewitness* apostolic testimony to the person and work of Christ. The first point needs no elaboration; the second one, however, merits some explanation.[7]

When the early Church began having problems with false teachings and spurious "sayings of Jesus" which were floating around some 125 years or so after Christ's death and resurrection, Christians soon realized that the presence of the Holy Spirit within the Church was by itself no guarantee of faithfully preserving the gospel. What was needed in addition was the testimony of the *apostles*: that is, those who had been *eyewitnesses* to the resurrected Jesus and had been *commissioned by Christ* to be mediators of divine revelation.

For this reason the Church, as it slowly reached a consensus as to which books belonged in the Bible, used apostolic authorship as the criterion for accepting a book into the canon. Books written by apostles (such as Peter, Paul and John) or their close associates (such as Mark and Luke) were deemed authoritative because in addition to being guided by the Holy Spirit, these authors were either eyewitnesses of the risen Jesus or were in constant close contact with such eyewitnesses. The revelations any apostle received could therefore be "checked out" against other apostolic eyewitness recollections of the words and deeds of the incarnate Jesus, so that one could be sure that such revelations were indeed from the Spirit of Christ, and not some other spirit.

In formulating the New Testament canon, then, the Church placed itself beneath the authority of the eyewitness apostolic testimony. In so doing the Church recognized an important theological truth: namely, that while the Holy Spirit continues His saving work in the Church until the second coming of Christ, the Spirit's work as giver of normative revelation ceased with the end of the apostolic age. That is because the apostles shared a relationship with Christ that no

Christians of subsequent generations could possibly share: that of *eyewitnesses to the central events of salvation history--the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ--who were then directly commissioned by the risen Lord as mediators of divine revelation.* And since the New Testament consists of their testimony, it must be regarded as belonging not merely to the history of the Church following the resurrection of Jesus, but to *the very center of salvation history itself: the incarnation of Jesus Christ.*

It is for this reason that Scripture stands alone as the norm by which all subsequent theological reflection must measure itself. Jesus himself endorsed the Old Testament in its entirety, and commissioned as agents of revelation those whose testimony forms the basis of the New Testament. In this way the entire Bible is inextricably linked with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus--in other words, with the incarnation. Thus the divine authority of biblical revelation rests not only upon the transcendent work of the Spirit, but also the historical eyewitness of those closest to Christ. Scripture can therefore, in a sense, be compared to the incarnate Christ: both divine and human.

Thus, any view of revelation which appeals only to the work of the Spirit in the Church while failing to consider the eyewitness quality of biblical revelation may be justly considered a form of *Docetism.* Docetism was one of the earliest false doctrines in the Church. According to this teaching, Christ was not truly human, but only *seemed* to be human (the Greek word for "seem" is *dokéo*; hence, "Docetism"). Not surprisingly, those who adhered to Docetism did not look to the incarnate Jesus for guidance, but rather to the heavenly Spirit. They viewed divine revelation as a sort of "hotline to heaven." In the same way, those who seek direct access to the Holy Spirit by making an end run around the eyewitness apostolic testimony--that is, the New Testament--are practicing a form of Docetism, since the New Testament, as we have seen, belongs to the central event of salvation history: Christ's incarnation.

The Reformers understood this well. That is why they emphasized the inextricable bond between the Word and the Spirit. To concentrate on the Word without the Spirit leads to dead orthodoxy,

while seeking the Spirit without the guidance of the Word results in unrestrained subjectivism. The former error is the temptation of extreme fundamentalism; the latter is the mark of an anthropocentric liberalism.

To summarize: Study papers and church pronouncements are of two general varieties, theological and political. In recent years the theological documents have been increasingly inclusive in their perspective, while the political statements have been implicitly exclusive of differing viewpoints. Yet both theological and political statements reflect a view of divine revelation which removes the Bible from the center of the theological enterprise, in favor of a doctrine of "continuing revelation"--a doctrine which in practice allows almost anything to be considered as "revelation." This, I believe, is the source of what former Princeton Seminary President James McCord once called the "theological amnesia" which plagues the Presbyterian Church (USA). As a church, we have forgotten the Reformers' *sola scriptura*.

What Shall We Do?

What, then, can we as individual believers do within our local congregations to reduce the debilitating effects of this confusion?

Since a flawed concept of divine revelation lies at the heart of our theological amnesia, a logical starting point for renewal is a reaffirmation of *sola scriptura*: the historic Reformed position that the Bible is our canon, or measuring rod, for all subsequent theological statements. Such a view will not settle all of our theological disputes, to be sure. For even if two people agree on the meaning of a particular text, they might disagree as how best to apply that meaning to the present. But if Christians adhere in principle to the final authority of the teachings of scripture, they will at least have common ground upon which to conduct their debate. Without such common ground, the theological enterprise becomes like a sea full of ships

sailing past one another in the night. Each is guided by its own compass, not knowing where the others go.

I would therefore urge each of you to obtain a copy of the "Nature of Revelation" study paper, read it thoroughly, and approach your pastor with your concerns about its contents (and put your concerns in writing; that will force you to think more clearly). In addition, organize a group of fellow church members to study and discuss the "Nature of Revelation" document. If you can have such a study group commissioned by your church's session, so much the better. This group could then function as a "task force" and bring back findings and recommendations to the session for its approval. Such findings and recommendations should include a specific statement on the nature of biblical revelation. One good way to handle this process would be to recommend that your session reaffirm its commitment to Article One of the Westminster Confession of Faith, which is already a part of our Church's constitution, and which affirms *sola scriptura* in no uncertain terms.[8]

In addition to attacking the root problem, we should also deal with some of the symptoms. The wave of protest against the *Presbyterians and Peacemaking* study paper is an example of what I have in mind.[9] Similar critiques of the current "study papers" on Feminist Theologies and the Theological Relationship between Christians and Jews should also be launched. In each instance, we need to be calling the church to reaffirm that salvation comes through Christ alone, and not through conformity to the spirit of our present age.

In line with these steps, churches can take specific actions which endorse Jesus's call to "make disciples from all peoples," as well as seeking renewal within the denomination. A good example of such specific action is the recent decision by one congregation in the Los Angeles area to redirect budget dollars which had originally gone to the denomination's General Mission Fund. As a protest against the way these monies are being used, the session of this church notified the Stated Clerk of its intention to redesignate this portion of its budget to three organizations: the U.S. Center for World Mission, the Presbyterian Lay Committee, and Presbyterians for Democracy and

Religious Freedom. Of course, different churches will choose their priorities differently. But good stewardship requires that the denominational bureaucracy be held accountable for the way it handles its members' tithes and offerings.

Let me also encourage you to become as involved as possible whenever your church seeks to fill a position on the pastoral staff. If you are a member of the search committee, inquire carefully into all prospective candidates' views of revelation and biblical authority. Be particularly wary of a prospect who overwhelms you with theological jargon. If you cannot understand what a candidate tells you about his or her view of the Bible, chances are that the candidate is not really sure what he or she believes. And that makes it unlikely that he or she will clearly affirm the authority of Scripture once in the pulpit.

Finally, we must remember that all of our activity will be less than worthless if our own lives do not reflect the grace, as well as the truth, of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is relatively easy to speak the truth. Speaking the truth in love, however, is quite another matter: it is a gift of the Spirit, and requires a close, moment-by-moment walk with our Lord. Without the Holy Spirit in our hearts, "truth" becomes harsh and "love " becomes sentimental. Let us therefore be as wise as serpents but also as harmless as doves, realizing that our call is not so much to win battles as it is to demonstrate by our lives the riches of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

NOTES

1. This document, a self-described "study paper," was in fact the first salvo in an attempt by the denominational hierarchy to place the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on record as supporting various forms of political resistance (such as withholding a portion of one's federal taxes) in order to protest United States defense policy, in particular its possession of nuclear weapons. This attempt to make the PC(USA) into a "nuclear pacifist" denomination met with such outrage and *resistance* on the part of the laity, however, that the denomination's eventual official statement on the subject (entitled "Christian Obedience in a Nuclear Age") was a watered-down version of *Presbyterians and Peacemaking* which ended up neither offending nor pleasing anyone.

2. Submitted to the 199th General Assembly (1987) by the Council on Theology and Culture. See *Minutes Part I: Journal*, sec. 27.032ff. As of this writing, this document had not been officially adopted by the denomination. The vote is tentatively scheduled for the General Assembly of June 1991.

3. Submitted to the 199th General Assembly (1987) by the Council on Theology and Culture. See *Minutes Part I: Journal*, sec. 42.032ff.

4. Submitted to the 199th General Assembly (1987) by the Advisory Council on Discipleship and Worship. See *Minutes Part I: Journal*, sec. 28.137ff.

5. I have set forth this thesis extensively in my forthcoming book, *The Hermeneutics of Oscar Cullmann*, due to be published in the fall of 1991 by the Edwin Mellen Press.

6. Peter Berger, "Different Gospels: The Social Sources of Apostasy." *This World* 17 (Spring 1987), 15.

7. A thorough treatment of this subject may be found in Oscar Cullmann's essay "The Tradition," in Cullmann, *The Early Church* (ed. A. J. B. Higgins; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 55-99.

8.   Of course, non-Presbyterians reading this essay should endeavor to find analogous expressions of biblical authority within their own church's confessions and other traditions.

9.   See e.g., *Peacemaking? or Resistance? Presbyterian Perspectives* (Nashville: 1986), published by Presbyterians for Democracy and Religious Freedom as a response to *Presbyterians and Peacemaking*.

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7

Meister Eckhart and the Paradox of Good Works

One of the perpetual thorns in the flesh of the late medieval Church was the quasi-monastic lay movement known as the Beghards for men and the Beguines for women, which was loosely associated with the so-called Brethren of the Free Spirit. The ecclesiastical hierarchy see-sawed in its attempts to deal with this tangential branch of the Church by alternately trying to suppress it or to control it through reabsorption into the mainstream of the Church.[1] Neither strategy worked too well. What made these groups particularly galling was that they rarely lapsed into overt heresy, thereby depriving the authorities of the easiest tools for suppression. What worked for the Waldensians would have worked for the Beghards if only sufficient cause could be found - or created.

But when good reason to claim heresy could be invoked, the Church pounced. Such was the sad case of Margaret Porette, to whom Edmund Colledge has referred as the "high priestess" of liberty of the spirit.[2] In 1310 in Paris Margaret was burned at the stake as a relapsed heretic for publishing her book, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, after it had been condemned. The articles of condemnation included the propositions:

1. "That the Soul Brought to Nothing takes leave of the virtues, nor is she any longer in their bondage."
2. "That such a soul has no regard for the consolations or the gifts of God, nor should she nor can she have such regard, for she is wholly intent upon God, and her intention upon God would be so hindered." To understand the import of this proposition, one must know that one of these consolations

would have been the Eucharist along with the other sacraments.[3]

In the eyes of the authorities these statements constituted rank antinomianism, and Margaret was condemned accordingly.

Now compare the following statements brought against Meister Eckhart in his bull of condemnation, *In Agro Dominico*:

> **Article 4**: "In every work, even in an evil, I repeat, in one evil both according to punishment and guilt, God's glory is revealed and shines forth in equal fashion."
>
> **Article 6**: "Also, anyone who blasphemes God himself praises God."
>
> **Article 14**: "A good man ought so to conform his will to the divine will that he should will whatever God wills. Since God in some way wills for me to have sinned, I should not will that I had not committed sins; and this is true repentance."[4]

Although no direct reference was made in the bull, it is clear that the inquisition saw Eckhart as uncomfortably close to the free spirit movement and on the verge of promoting the same antinomianism. It is interesting to note here that there is good reason to believe that Eckhart was in Paris at the time of Margaret's condemnation and that he was familiar with the *Mirror of Simple Souls*.[5]

The first question we may want to raise with regard to these propositions is whether Eckhart did indeed state them. The answer is "yes." Of the three propositions I have cited, the first two come from his commentary on the Gospel of John. The third one is stated in his treatise, *The Book of Divine Consolation*, and anticipated in the *Talks of Instruction*.[6]

The next logical question seems to be whether Eckhart meant to exclude proper Christian righteousness from his understanding of the Christian life. The answer now is a resounding "no." Eckhart was no antinomian.

The point that on the issue of good works Eckhart was essentially orthodox has been demonstrated well.[7] If one were to force Eckhart

into the stereotype of an other-worldly mystic, one might think that he would prefer the contemplative life to a life of active good works. But in actual fact, the opposite is true. Rudolf Otto, who attempted a point by point parallel between Eckhart and the Hindu Shankara, saw the great difference in exactly this area: whereas for Shankara there was no higher good than mystic realization, for Eckhart mystical reality had to issue in Christian works.[8]

Eckhart makes this point most dramatically in a sermon on Martha.[9] If we pick up an English Bible, in Luke 10:38 we read that Jesus entered a certain village and Martha came to meet him. Then follows the story of Martha's bustling about to prepare for dinner with Jesus while Mary sat at his feet and listened. In the combination of Vulgate Bible and medieval allegory, Eckhart quotes the text as: "Jesus came to a certain castle and was welcomed by a virgin who was also a wife." Thus Martha represents a highly paradoxical kind of person - the epitome of Eckhart's ideal Christian.

Martha is a virgin, viz. she is free of all encumbrances and attachments. This state includes liberation from all images. Eckhart states,

> It had to be by a *virgin* that Jesus was received. The word *virgin* means a person who is free of all false images, and who is as detached as if he or she did not yet exist.[10]

In many mystical systems that kind of detachment might be the highest attainable state. Quotations such as the above one have given rise to the many comparisons of Eckhart to Eastern religions, some of which border on the incredible.[11]

But Eckhart now says that there is a higher state, namely that of a wife. He says, "The word *wife* is the noblest term that we can attribute to the soul; it is far nobler than *virgin*."[12] The reason is that a virgin does not bear fruit, but a wife does. To quote again,

> It is good for a person to receive God into himself or herself, and in this receptivity he or she is a virgin. But it is better for God to become fruitful within the person.[13]

Thus the highest state is not the state of contemplation or union with God, but the life in which the person responds to God in gratitude with good works.

A little known fact about Eckhart is that classical mystical experience, perhaps as described by Stace and James,[14] plays no particular role in his writings, except maybe as something to be disparaged.[15] Blakney translates a passage in the following way:

> Supposing, however, that all [rapturous experience] were really of love, even then it would not be best. We ought to get over amusing ourselves with such raptures for the sake of that better love, and to accomplish through loving service what men most need, spiritually, socially, or physically. As I have often said, if a person were in such a rapturous state as St. Paul once entered, and he knew of a sick man who wanted a cup of soup, it would be far better to withdraw from the rapture for love's sake and serve him who is in need.[16]

Eckhart is concerned with mystical realities, the birth of God in the soul. However, he definitely places the active life of Martha ahead of the contemplative life of Mary.

This point is brought out even more strongly in a second sermon on the same text.[17] Here Eckhart majors on the contrast between Mary and Martha, but again by leaving traditional interpretations in the dust. A traditional interpretation of the episode might take the following form: Mary sits in contemplation at Jesus' feet, while Martha is running about doing many useful things. Finally Martha is fed up with the fact that Mary is not helping and appeals to Jesus to get Mary moving. But Jesus reproves Martha for her activism and praises Mary for having chosen the better alternative.

In Eckhart's preaching the whole episode looks very different. While Martha is living out the spiritual realities which have changed her life, Mary is stuck in a pattern of seeking useless rapturous experiences. Finally Martha is overcome in her concern for Mary's spiritual welfare and appeals to Jesus to direct Mary into the greater levels of spiritual maturity. Jesus responds by reassuring Martha that

Mary too is on the right path and will eventually reach the same level as Martha. Thus, once again the active life of good works is made out to be superior to the life of mystical contemplation. And so we see that the need for good works is a very important ingredient in the thought of Meister Eckhart.

David K. Clark has shown how this ethical phase of Eckhart's fits into his thought at large.[18] He points out two areas of concern: the distinction between outward actions and inward motives and the role of detachment.

First of all, the statements quoted earlier which appear to disparage external actions need to be understood from the point of view that it is the internal motives which count. This point applies to sacramental works, acts of devotion, and ethical deeds. In each case, if the heart and being of the person is not right, the action is worthless and God is not interested in it. But if the slightest action is done out of the proper motive, then it carries all of the moral worth of even the greatest of deeds. Furthermore, the inner motive must be based on a personal change of character of the person. Clark notes that "the inner change that must take place is a giving up of self-will and being in deference to the divine will and being."[19]

Clark emphasizes that Eckhart's ideal of detachment plays an integral role in this conception. Detachment (*Abgescheidenheit*) is Eckhart's word for the attitude which is requisite for true communion with God and true inward action, namely to be rid of all attachment to anything but God. Clark states, "A person who cultivates detachment will have certain definable characteristics. Such a person lacks a desire for things, rewards, or results for self."[20] Ultimately such a person will love God only, and only for God himself. But the important point here is that this attitude of detachment does not give rise to a world-denying asceticism which causes the devotee to close himself or herself off against the world and the needs of the world. To the contrary, as we have already seen, according to Eckhart only the person who has reached this state can truly minister to the world. And so Clark's appraisal is that "the moral dimension stands at the very heart of Eckhart's thought."[21]

Thus, a strong case can be made that Eckhart was no antinomian. To the contrary, Eckhart was always concerned with right actions and good works. To quote Clark once more,

> There can be no doubt that Eckhart's defense of the life of good works is an organic part of his mysticism and not a concession to orthodoxy tacked onto his theology as an afterthought. This is clear from the fact that the Meister makes the active life not just a stage on the way to something higher as in the Augustinian model, but part and parcel of the highest stage of Christian living.[22]

In this way Clark and many others have made the case that when it comes to the issue of morality, Eckhart is thoroughly Christian. Clark made this point in order to show that a genuine mysticism need not lead to quietism because each mystical tradition has an integrity of its own. Others have made the similar point to show that the inquisition was wrong to condemn Eckhart, at least in this area.[23]

Nevertheless I want to raise the question: **What's wrong with this picture?** Even though there seems to be nothing incorrect with the above line of argumentation, somehow there still is room for doubt as to its final persuasiveness. Did Eckhart really intend to do no more than to restate a traditionally orthodox position, except maybe with hyperbolic expressions? If such a clear case for Eckhart's orthodoxy can be made, why was he nonetheless condemned on these points? Clark says concerning the external act/inner motive distinction, "Though it ruffled the feathers of his accusers, this approach is a perfectly orthodox rendition of the act/intention relationship."[24] But why then should any feathers be ruffled? Although Eckhart's initial accusers in Cologne were apparently not particularly astute, the same cannot be said for his final prosecutors in Avignon who were no theological lightweights.[25] The answer to the puzzle lies in the larger setting of Eckhart's ethics without which his ethics cannot be understood. At the same time it is this larger context which made it impossible for the Church to reconcile herself to whatever attempts at amelioration of the inflammatory statements could be made. For in the final analysis, the argument was not about

ethics, but about authority.

Josef Quint asserts that Eckhart had only one fundamental thought,

> towards which all others are oriented, that . . . of the birth of the
> Word in the soul. Whoever has not grasped that the birth of the
> Son through the divine father within the spark of the soul
> constitutes the single reason, the goal, and the content of Eckhart's
> sermons and gives all of his expositions, I am tempted to say, a
> grandiose monotony, such a person does not recognize Eckhart at
> all.[26]

Here we encounter Eckhart's mystical realities, and here we have the starting point for understanding all of the rest of his thought, including what he says on ethics.

Matthew Fox has pointed out, I believe accurately, that this very doctrine had ethical and revolutionary content.[27] In the treatise, *The Nobleman*, Eckhart announces that true aristocracy consists of the fact that God himself resides in the human being. Fox points out the radical connotation of this claim insofar as it redefines nobility, the most cherished social concept of the late Middle Ages, so as to make it applicable to even the commonest of people. Second, it directs us to the individual human being, rather than the institution of the Church, as the primary locus of the divine presence.

Even without extrapolating from here to various further social agendas, as Fox does, we can see how Eckhart, right in his starting point, comes close to flirting with the kind of individualism which made the Brethren of the Free Spirit odious in the eyes of the Church. All further pronouncements by Eckhart on matters of Christian works need to be understood from this vantage point, viz. they are done, not out of obedience to the Church, but as an acting out the reality of the indwelling of God.

To amplify this point, let us look at some of the other issues for which Eckhart was condemned.

1. Statements concerning the eternity of creation, and thereby the eternity of the soul. Karl G. Kertz has made the convincing case that such propositions must be understood from the perspective of the

eternality of divine ideas.[28]

2.   Statements disparaging prayer in order to obtain something, whether it be a material or spiritual boon.   Eckhart referred to result-oriented Christianity as merchant or huckster mentality,[29] which we can contrast with the above idea of the nobility inherent in true Christianity.

3.   Statements on the deification of the Christian human being. These are notoriously the most controversial of his assertions; they are also among the most misunderstood. At the heart of what Eckhart teaches is first of all the indwelling of God (the Holy Spirit) in the Christian.   Second, and this is the part that gives rise to the confusion, is his unrelenting insistence that this indwelling is not merely a secondary or derived presence of God, but that it is God himself, in all of his infinity, who lives in that part of the soul which alone is capable of receiving an uncreated infinite presence.   This is the faculty of the soul which he calls the spark or castle and many other picturesque terms.[30] There is only one God, and wherever he abides, he abides in his one true nature.   And thirdly, Eckhart contends that this birth of God in the human soul cannot possibly leave the human person unaltered. *Insofar* as a person participates directly in the divine nature, *to that extent* he or she is privileged to possess the very attributes of God and Christ.   McGinn has pointed out that a fundamental flaw in the case against Eckhart was that his prosecutors never would come to terms with this *insofar* limitation which Eckhart put on these statements.   They kept insisting that Eckhart was referring to pure human nature, which he was not.[31]

This misunderstanding comes out in the way in which one of his propositions is represented in the bull of condemnation.   Eckhart stated, "I am so changed that he produces *his* being *in me* as one. By the living God, this is true!   There is no distinction."[32]   In the articles this appears as: "I am so changed into him that he makes *me* his one existence, and not just similar.   By the living God it is true that there is no distinction there."[33]   The difference is subtle, but tells the story of the inquisitors' misunderstanding.   Eckhart was referring to the fact that when God indwells us, he is still the same

one God, not some secondary divine presence. The inquisitors understood this as saying that we become God in the same way as God has always been God, which Eckhart did not teach.

But again, the fact that we can construe these statements as orthodox in both their intention and meaning, does not mean that they would have been palatable to the hierarchy, even if they had completely grasped such true meaning. Even with the intended meaning, Eckhart's statements are far too revolutionary. What we see here is a man whose thoughts are completely absorbed by the notion that (a) he is now and has from eternity been in the mind of God, and that (b) this same God in all of his infinity dwells within him. This man will live out this truth in a life of righteousness and deeds of love to all beings; but such a man will always feel that mere external commandments, outward ceremony, and ecclesiastical requirements are a paltry substitute for the genuine spiritual realities.

We can confirm this point further by referring once again to the aforementioned two sermons on Martha. In the first sermon, Eckhart introduces another metaphor in addition to virgin and wife, viz. that of the married couple. The married couple represents the person who is laboring diligently to produce fruit. They "egotistically cling to prayer, fasting, vigils, and all kinds of external practices and mortifications."[34] However, just as a married couple only produces fruit at the rate of maybe one a year, and then a very small one, so this person, in contrast to the one represented by the "wife," will never bring about much fruit in his or her life. Thus we see that in the differentiation we looked at earlier, between the person who produces fruit and the person who does not, it is not sheer activity by itself and not even just a changed attitude that makes the active life superior.

The difference lies in exactly this matter of God being inside of the "wife"-person. Eckhart says, "She bears much fruit, and the fruit is of good size. It is no less nor more than God himself."[35] Then follows one of his strongest statements in which he affirms the dwelling of God within the "castle" of the soul. Thus, when Eckhart elevates Martha, when he says that the life of fruitful works is

superior to the life of passivity, he is also saying that it is premised on the life of God himself within the person, and that, in comparison, a life of action without this basis is paltry at best.

This same point also comes out in the second sermon to which we referred above. It is true that Eckhart makes unequivocal statements to the effect that Martha's life of action is superior to the sweet contemplations of Mary. But again, who Martha is, is crucial. If it had been merely a matter of Martha doing things, while Mary was not, Jesus could have just told Mary to get busy. But Mary, being younger that Martha, still needed to grow to the point which Martha had attained. And Eckhart wasted no potential allegory to describe Martha's elevated state. For example, Jesus says, "Martha, Martha." He used Martha's name twice, once to indicate that she is in complete harmony with God, the second time to show that she is in proper relationship to the world. Again, Jesus says, "*One* thing is needful." This indicates that the true relationship to God is based on recognizing the non-duality of God, viz. the ultimate lack of all distinctions in God.[36] Whatever we may think of this typically medieval interpretation, again the point becomes clear that it is only because of Martha's special standing within the spiritual realities that her life of fruitfulness has any meaning at all.

Thus, we must sum up the situation with regard to Eckhart and good works in this way. We began by citing some blatant statements in which Eckhart appeared to be antinomian, those which were condemned by the inquisition. Then we showed on the basis of some other texts that Eckhart did in fact advocate good works. It seemed we could breathe easy; Eckhart turned out to be orthodox after all. But just as the inquisition did not accept things that easily, neither should we. For Eckhart's position on good works is in fact based on his mysticism. The kind of life of good works he advocates is premised on some definite spiritual realities, not just a blanket endorsement of Christian ethics.

Because Eckhart thereby left the motivation for good works within the Christian's soul rather than with the authority of the Church, the Church could not countenance his conciliatory statements after all.

Eckhart would have to have been right on his description of mystical realities (as I believe him to have been on the whole[37]) to have been acceptable on his ethics. Each time he talked of Martha, he was not making friends with the establishment, he was losing them. And, to complete the circle of this paper, just as Eckhart did not advocate antinomianism, but put personal spirituality ahead of the law, such was also the case with the unfortunate Margaret Porette.[38]

To close with Eckhart, "May God help us to be such a 'castle' to which Jesus will come and where he will be received and where he will remain eternally in the way I have said! Amen."[39]
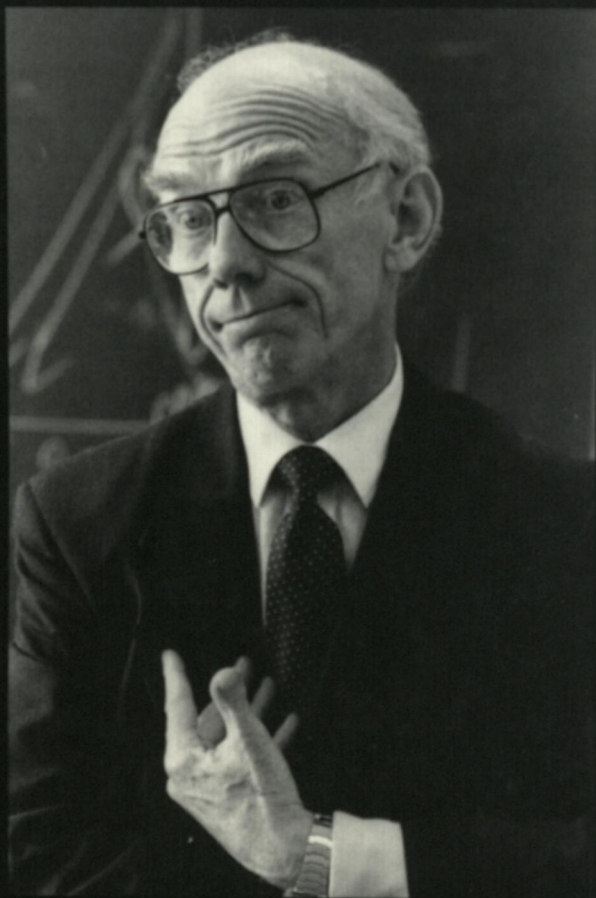
NOTES

1. Cf. the following four different analyses: E. H. Broadbent, *The Pilgrim Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan-Pickering, 1931) 103-106; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millenium* (Fairlawn, NJ: Essential Books, 1957) 149-94; Gordon Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), 1:308-407; Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press) 1972.

2. Edmund Colledge, "Historical Data," *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense* (trans. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn; New York: Paulist, 1981) 8. Hereafter referred to as *Essential Sermons*.

3. Margaret Porette (note numerous spelling variations, e.g. Marguerite Porette), *Mirouer des simples ames*, ed. Romana Guarnieri, *Archivio Italiano per la storia della pieta* 4 (1965) 351-708. *The Mirrour of Simple Soules: A Middle English Translation*, ed. Marilyn Doiron. *Archivio Italiano per la storia della pieta* 5 (1968) 243-356. Edmund Colledge and Romana Guanieri accumulate the charges against Margaret in their appendix, "The Glosses by 'M. N.' and Richard Methley to the 'Mirror of Simple Souls,'" 357-382. A more accessible version of the same piece is the dissertation on which this published edition is based: M. Marilyn Doiron, *The Mirrour of Simple Soules: An Edition and Commentary* (Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham University, 1964). This edition also contains invaluable historical sources in the Appendix A, 214-218. Recent translations into modern English are by Clare Kirchenberger, *The Mirror of Simple Souls* (London: Orchard Books, 1927) and by Charles Crawford, *A Mirror for Simple Souls* (New York: Crossroad, 1981 and revised [to include Margaret's authorship], 1990).

4. Colledge and McGinn, *Essential Sermons*, 78-79.

5. Ibid. 8.

6.   Eckhart, *Reden der Unterweisung*, chapter 1. The authoritative edition of Eckhart's German works is edited by Josef Quint, *Die Deutschen und lateinischen Werke: Die deutschen Werke* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936 -). Universally cited as *DW*. Much of the fruits of this labor is found in Josef Quint, *Meister Eckhart: Deutsche Predigten und Traktate* (Munich: Hanser, 1955). Hereafter: *Deutsche Predigten*. *Reden der Unterweisung* found in *DW* 5, 185-309, *Deutsche Predigten*, 51-100. *Buch der göttlichen Tröstung*, chapter 11; *DW* 5, 3-61; *Deutsche Predigten*, 101-139.

7.   E.g., David Clark, "The Relation of Tradition to Experience in Mysticism Illustrated in Meister Eckhart" (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1982) 214-44; McGinn, "Theological Summary," *Essential Sermons*, 57-61.

8.   Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism East and West: A Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism* (trans. Bertha L. Bracey and Richenda C. Payne; New York: Collier Books, 1962) 207-35.

9.   *Intravit Jesus in quoddam castellum*; *DW* 1:21-45; *Deutsche Predigten*, 159-64.

10.   As translated in *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality in New Translation* (ed. Matthew Fox; New York: Doubleday, 1980) 273. Hereafter cited as *Breakthrough*.

11.   E.g. Joseph Politella, "Meister Eckhart and Eastern Wisdom," *Philosophy East and West* 15 (1965) 117-34; Reiner Schürmann, "The Loss of the Origin in Soto Zen and in Meister Eckhart," *Thomist* 42 (1978) 281-312. After reading such treatments, I tend to ask myself what they could conceivably prove, even if they were accurate. There certainly is no reason to suppose that Eckhart was somehow "influenced" by Eastern thought. And there are too many differences to legitimately treat Eckhart and Eastern thought as two manifestations of a "perennial philosophy." Cf. my treatment of this issue in chapter 3 of my forthcoming *Mysticism: An Evangelical Option*? (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991).

12. *Breakthrough*, 274.

13. Ibid.

14. W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (New York: Lippincott, 1960); William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Collier, 1961) 299-301.

15. Unfortunately on occasion writers simply assume that because Eckhart is known as a mystic, he must promote the traditional idea of a mystical experience. Then such writers may wind up deducing all sorts of untruths about Eckhart from this presumption. This methodology becomes tragic when it shows up in a widely used reference work. Cf. Ninian Smart, "Eckhart, Meister," in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

16. "Talks of Instruction," chapter 10, translated in *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation* (trans. Raymond B. Blakney; New York:Harper & Row, 1941), 14.

17. *Intravit Jesus in quoddam castellum*, DW 3; 481-92; *Deutsche Predigten*, 280-89.

18. Clark, "The Relation of Tradition," 226-235.

19. Ibid. 231.

20. Ibid. 232.

21. Ibid. 237.

22. Ibid. 243.

23. Cf. McGinn, "Theological Summary," *Essential Sermons*, 57-58.

24. Ibid. 229.

25. Cf. Colledge, "Historical Data," *Essential Sermons*, 11-12.

26.   Quint, "Einleitung," *Deutsche Predigten*, 22.

27.   Matthew Fox, "Meister Eckhart and Karl Marx: The Mystic as Political Theologian," *Listening* 13 (1978) 233-57.

28.   Karl G. Kertz, "Meister Eckhart's Teaching on the Birth of the Divine Word in the Soul," *Traditio* 15 (1959) 327-64.

29.   *Intravit in Jesus templum*, DW 1:3-20; *Deutsche Predigten*, 153-58.

30.   Cf. Matthew Fox, "Searching for the Authentically Human: Images of Soul in Meister Eckhart and Teresa of Avila," in (ed. Francis A. Eigo) *Dimensions of Contemporary Spirituality* (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1982) 1-39.

31.   McGinn, "Theological Summary," *Essential Sermons*, 54.

32.   *Iusti vivent in Aeternum*, *DW* 1:97ff.; translation from *Essential Sermons*, 188.

33.   *Essential Sermons*, 78.

34.   Trans. in *Breakthrough*, 274.

35.   *Breakthrough*, 275.

36.   *Deutsche Predigten*, 282.86.

37.   Thus these present comments amplify or supersede my response to Eckhart in *Mysticism: An Evangelical Option?*.

38.   Cf. my discussion of Margaret in "The Gospel According to Margaret" forthcoming in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*.

39.   *Breakthrough*, 278.

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