

Institute for Christian Studies

FACULTY BULLETIN

Number 3

October, 1982

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The Institute for Christian Studies
1909 University Avenue
Austin, Texas 78705

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	4
THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS: PLURALISM, MORALITY, AND THE CHURCH Michael R. Weed	5
SECTARIAN LIFESTYLE: AN ALTERNATIVE MORAL VISION IN THE FIRST AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES Allan McNicol	17
THE OLD TESTAMENT AS MORAL COMPASS Paul L. Watson.....	36
THE PREACHER: MORALIZER OR MORALIST? James W. Thompson.....	55
DIVORCE: A CULTURAL PROBLEM Tony Ash.....	68
CONTRIBUTORS	81

FOREWORD

In times of moral confusion, sensitive persons are tempted to denounce the perversity of their fellows. Some are tempted to nostalgia for bygone days; others, in despair, simply yield to hysteria. What the present unsettled age needs, however, is neither moralistic condemnation nor pious exhortation to the good. Rather, in the first instance, what is needed today is a clear vision of the good.

In many ways it was in a similar climate that the early Christian movement experienced rapid growth. Men like Justin, Tatian, and Tertullian indicate that the moral earnestness of Christians first commended Christianity to them. It may well be that in the present age that it will be the moral vision of Christian faith--and the faithful lives of individual Christians--that commend themselves to those whose lives are without meaning and direction. These essays are directed toward clarifying that vision and the situation which it illuminates.

A word of thanks is due to groups in Dallas, Houston and elsewhere who aided in the developing of the ideas here presented. Special thanks is also due to Mrs. Nancy Tindel, Faculty Secretary, for her invaluable aid in preparing these manuscripts.

Michael R. Weed, Editor

THE OLD TESTAMENT AS MORAL COMPASS

By Paul Watson

Elsewhere in this Bulletin are essays describing the moral confusion of our times and how the Church, by using the model set out in 1 Peter, might appropriately and effectively respond to this confusion. What will be urged in this study is that the Old Testament provided an orientation to the ethical life that was essential for the early Christians, including those addressed in 1 Peter. Furthermore, this sense of direction found in the Old Testament can and should be used by Christians today in our response to contemporary moral disorientation.

The ethic of Jesus and the early church both reinforced and expanded the patterns of behavior approved for ancient Israel.¹ This ethic was an intrinsic part of the gospel. Time and again Jesus chastised the Pharisees for misapplying an Old Testament standard (thus implying the validity of that standard for Jesus);² or else he extended to the limit the meaning of an old standard in the light of the in-breaking Kingdom of God.³ When Gentiles were admitted to the Church, the moral instruction they received turned out to be in large part that of the Old

Testament, as brought to fuller meaning in Jesus Christ.⁴

It will not be argued that there were no changes at all from Old Testament ethic to New Testament ethic, since manifestly there were. Even in the Old Testament itself one can see such developments, as for example the shift from approval of marriage between an Israelite and a non-Israelite to later disapproval of such marriages.⁵ What will be suggested is that the basic orientation for the ethical life as found in the Old Testament remained the same for the New Testament and should thus be ours today. That orientation can be compared to the points of a compass; and four fundamental compass points for the ethical life as found in the Old Testament will be sketched out in the remainder of this study.

The North Pole: Israel's Covenant with Yahweh as the Basis for Her Ethic

In examining any system of ethics a good place to start is with the question, what is the basis of this ethic? That is, how is it derived? What are its fundamental assumptions? It might be a philosophical ethic, derived from carefully reasoned conclusions as to what constitutes the "good." The ethic of the Old Testament, however, is not of this type. Nor is it an ethic based on prudence, even though adherence to the ethic will ultimately produce the "good life."⁶ Nor, for that matter, is it fundamentally a legal ethic, consisting of a collection of more-or-less arbitrary demands made by an authority (i.e., God). The starting point for Israel's ethic must be sought elsewhere; and that starting point is the very nature and character of

Yahweh himself, as disclosed to Moses privately at the burning bush and subsequently to all the people in the exodus and at Sinai.

The God who so discloses himself is not Perfect Being or Ineffible Transcendence, let it be noted, but is the God who has been closely related to Israel from the beginning. He is “the God of our fathers,” the God “of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” He is marked by his compassion for his people: “I have seen the affliction of my people . . . and have heard their cry” (Ex. 3:7). He is also “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness . . .” (Ex. 34:6). This is Yahweh; and by knowing who Yahweh is, Israel learns who she is and how she ought to act, viz. in ways that are congruent with Yahweh’s nature and actions.

This can be demonstrated at many levels in the legal sections of the Pentateuch. Before the first of the Ten Words was ever spoken, God identified himself by saying, “I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Ex. 20:2). In other words, these ten fundamental directions for Israel’s behavior are inseparably tied to who God is and how he has behaved. And on this basis, the first three “words” to Israel call for absolute loyalty and submission to Yahweh: No other gods--no manipulation of God through visual images--no manipulation through the use of his name.

In the Covenant Code (Ex. 20:22-23:33) the basis for Israel’s behavior is the same: Israel’s own experience as “strangers” in Egypt whom God had delivered

should restrain Israel from oppressing foreigners herself (Ex. 22:21). God's own compassion for widows, orphans, and the poor is the reason why Israel must be compassionate to these same groups [Ex. 22:22-27]. Israel is forbidden in the Deuteronomic Code to engage in pagan mourning customs. The reason? "You are a people holy to Yahweh your God, and Yahweh has chosen you to be a people of his own possession" (Deut. 14:1, 2). And in the Holiness Code in Leviticus, Israel is reminded time and again that Yahweh's specific instructions all stem from the fact that he is "holy" and wants Israel likewise to be "holy": "You shall be holy to me; for I, Yahweh, am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine" (Lev. 20:26).

A clear example of Israel's actions being determined by the nature and character of Yahweh is found in Joshua 9:1-27 in the story of the ruse used by the Gibeonites to obtain a mutual non-aggression treaty with Israel. When the Israelites discovered that the Gibeonites were near neighbors and not a clan from far away, they wanted to void the covenant and kill the Gibeonites. But the elders of Israel restrained them and called upon Israel to observe the treaty: "We have sworn to them by Yahweh, the God of Israel, and now we may not touch them" (Josh. 9:19). In other words, since it was Yahweh's nature to keep his word, Israel must keep hers.⁷ The other side of the ethical coin is that "wrongdoing" for Israel came not so much from breaking the rules as from violating the relationship with Yahweh and thus denying his nature. This is the essential condemnation of the

eighth-century prophets in both Israel and Judah:

You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. (Amos 3:2)

Call his name 'Not-my-people,' for you are not my people and I am not your God. (Hos. 1:9)

Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who deal corruptly! They have forsaken Yahweh, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged. (Is. 1:4)

Then they will cry to the Lord, but he will not answer them; he will hide his face from them at that time, because they have made their deeds evil. (Mic. 3:4)

This is why the situation in both kingdoms was so desperate in the eighth century: Not merely because a few mistakes had been made, a few laws broken; but because the people had fundamentally repudiated their relationship with Yahweh.⁸ Apart from this relationship Israel simply had no ethical ground to stand on. And this is why Jeremiah envisioned a new relationship--a "new covenant"--as the basis for the people's life in the future (Jer. 31:31-34).

The concept of the ethical life as one which accurately reflects the nature of God would seem to hold true for the New Testament as well, and thus for Christians today. Consider such passages as the following (and note that 1 Peter quotes directly from Leviticus):

You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt. 5:48)

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. (1 Jn. 4:7)

Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. (Rom. 14:3)

As obedient children do not be conformed to the passing of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct, since it is written, 'you shall be holy, for I am holy.' (1 Pet. 1:14-16)

For the Church as for Israel, therefore, who they were (as the people of God) determined how they were to act, and not vice-versa:

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:10)

Thus their whole ethic grew out of their identity and had to maintain congruity with that identity. Furthermore, their relationship with God informed, shaped, and determined their relationship with others, as the remaining three compass points will illustrate.

Due East: Relationships Within the Family

As is true of any people, ancient Israel experienced a variety of what we today would call interpersonal relationships. One set of such relationships was defined by family membership. Within this set of relationships (parent-child, husband-wife, etc.) the over-riding concerns were the proper respect for each family position and the welfare of each family member.

Two family-related ethical definitions appear in the Ten Words. The first of these--"Honor your father and mother" (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16; cf. Lev. 19:3)--applies of course to the parent-child relationship. Negative applications of this

principle appear in the Covenant Code, forbidding the striking of a parent (Ex. 21:15) or the cursing of a parent (Ex. 21:17; cf. Lev. 20:9). In an even broader application of parental respect, Deuteronomy 21:18-21 provides for the execution of a son “who is disobedient and out of control” (NEB).

Parents, on the other hand, were responsible for the proper rearing of their children, particularly their religious training (Deut. 6:7; Prov. 22:6). They were also to deal fairly with their children in matters of inheritance, not allowing sentiment to set aside the rights of the first-born (Deut. 21:15-17).⁹ The picture of God as the tender, need-providing father of Israel in Hosea 11:1-4 could be said to be a role-model for all parents in Israel.

Jesus reinforced the command for children to honor their parents by denouncing the Pharisaic practice of “corban” (Mark 7:9-13; Matt. 15:4-6).¹⁰ “Corban” was a legal fiction whereby a person’s assets were tied up in a Temple-trust, thus making it impossible for that person to contribute to the welfare of a needy parent. This practice clearly shows, incidentally, that to “honor” one’s parents meant more than showing them verbal respect; it also included financial support when necessary. Other passages in the epistles, such as Ephesians 6:1-3, Colossians 3:20, and 1 Timothy 5:4-8, underscore this child-to-parent responsibility. On the other hand, Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21 and 1 Timothy 3:4 stress parental responsibility for children.

The second of the Ten Words dealing with familial relationships is, “Do not

commit adultery” (Ex, 20:14; Deut. 5:18). The marital relationship is to be marked and sustained by sexual fidelity. An interesting law exempting a newlywed from military service for one year (Deut 24:5) illustrates the relative importance of the family vis-à-vis national defense. While it is true that the previous paragraph in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 makes provision for divorce, the force of the provision would seem to be to make divorce hard rather than easy and to protect the wife especially.

Divorce was an easy matter for the husband in the Semitic world. There is no law in the O.T. which institutes it because it is simply taken for granted as part of the age-old custom. What the law tries to do is to regulate it, usually in favor of the wife. We infer from this law that a man could divorce his wife (a) only for good cause; (b) the case must be brought before some public official; and (c) a legal document prepared and placed in the wife’s hand. These formalities, involving time and money, would act as a deterrent to hasty or rash action, which end the present law would further serve.¹¹

Malachi later condemned Israel for the marital infidelity of his day (Mal. 2:10-16); and Genesis 2:26 states in a positive way the inseparable bond marriage was intended to produce.

It is this passage in Genesis which Jesus invoked in answering the Pharisees’ question about divorce in Matthew 19:3-9. Jesus allows for divorce in some cases here (and in Matt. 5:31, 32; Mark 10:2-12; and Luke 16:18); but the obvious intent is for the continuation of the marriage.¹² Paul underscores this in his instructions to Christians at Corinth not to initiate divorce proceedings against their pagan mates (1 Cor. 7:10-16). Elsewhere the husband-wife commitment is affirmed in such passages as Colossians 3:18-19, 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6, 1 Peter 3:1-7, and especially

Ephesians 5:21-33.

Other regulations in the Torah further promote respect and proper behavior among family members. For example, sexual relations between family members are ruled out in Leviticus 18:1-30 and Leviticus 20:10-21. Once again, the reason for such sexual propriety traces back to the very nature and character of Yahweh as shown in Leviticus 18:1-5:

And the Lord said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, I am the Lord your God. You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. You shall do my ordinances and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, by doing which a man shall live: I am the Lord.

Family property was to be kept in the family for the well being of future generations; and the sale of such property to an outsider was unthinkable, as the story of Naboth's vineyard vividly illustrates (1 Kings 21:3; see also Mic. 2:1, 2). The Levirate law (Deut. 25:5-10) allowed for the perpetuation of a childless brother's name through children conceived by the widow and the nearest surviving male relative. Finally, the institution of the go'el ("redeemer") provided the means by which the interests and welfare of a family member would be protected vis-à-vis outsiders, even when the family member was responsible for his difficulty (e.g., when he had enslaved himself to pay his debts).¹³ While these specific family duties are not directly reflected in the New Testament, the general concern for the well-being of all family members certainly is. This high regard for the family is

echoed in the designation of the Church as “the family of God” (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 4:17).

Due South; Relations Among Fellow-Israelites

A second set of interpersonal relationships was that of one Israelite to another. This set could take an almost infinite variety of forms: landlord--tenant, buyer--seller, owner of an ox--victim of the ox, neighbor--neighbor, etc. The overriding impression from a wide variety of laws regulating neighbor-to-neighbor relations is that each Israelite was expected to be actively concerned for the well-being of his fellow citizens. Furthermore, these laws are often very specific and practical, perhaps too much so for modern tastes. Yet, as George Mendenhall has observed,

The transcendent value of what may seem to us rather trivial and common experience is thus inseparably bound up with the equally trivial and common kind of morality which is nevertheless necessary for the existence of any tolerable social life: the security of persons from attack, the good faith and honesty between persons in all kinds of negotiations, the love and respect between the generations of humanity, the security of family relationships, and freedom from aggression against the structure of economic and social functions upon which all civilized man is dependent. Perhaps it is only when these fundamentals of social life become unpredictable that they can be properly valued. This is what Sinai meant; the community formed there accepted these not as God-given rights, but as God-given obligations to which they in effect pledged their lives as guarantees.¹⁴

Only a few of Israel's many specific neighbor-to-neighbor laws will be cited to demonstrate this ethic. A neighbor's physical well-being was safeguarded by the seventh of the Ten Words: “You shall not kill” (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17; cf. Lev. 24:17). The basis for this prohibition had already been established in the days of Noah: “He that sheds the

blood of a man, for that man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God has God made man” (Gen. 9:6, NEB).

The so-called lex talionis--”an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”--as found in Exodus 21:23-25 and Leviticus 24:19, 20 sought to protect both potential victims (by assessing a penalty equal to the injury inflicted) and potential aggressors (by limiting the punishment and thus preventing excessive retribution by the victim’s family.) Jesus, of course, deepened the concern for the neighbor’s physical well-being to the point that not only murder but anger was prohibited (Matt. 5:21, 22); and the lex talionis became a positive, non-retributive response from victim to aggressor (Matt. 5:38-42).

The economic well-being of a fellow Israelite was also to be sought. The Ten Words prohibited both theft (Ex. 20:15; Deut. 5:19; cf. Lev. 19:11) and covetousness (Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21).¹⁵ Even lost property, in the form of animals, clothing, etc., was to be returned to its owner or kept until the owner could be found (Deut. 22:1-3; Ex. 23:4). Borrowed property was the responsibility of the borrower (Ex. 22:14, 15). So also negligence which resulted in the loss of property must be appropriately compensated (Ex. 21:33, 34; 22:5, 6).

Wages were to be paid on the day they were earned (Deut. 24:14, 15; Lev. 19:13). Honest weights and measures were to be used in conducting business (Lev. 19:35-35; Deut. 25:13-16). That such economic fair play was not always practiced is evident from Amos 8:4 (“Woe to those . . . who make the ephah small and the

shekel great”) and Hosea 12:7 (“False scales are in merchants’ hands, and they love to cheat” NEB). The latter passage is particularly instructive in that such cheating is directly equated with repudiating Yahweh, “your God since your days in Egypt” (Hos. 12:9).

The legal status of each Israelite was likewise protected. This is the tone of the prohibition of perjury (the ninth of the Ten Words: Ex. 20:16; Deut. 5:20; cf. also Deut. 19:15-20). Exodus 23 further excludes conspiracy, partiality in judgment, and bribery (vss. 1-3, 6-8; cf. also Deut. 16:18-20 and Lev. 19:15). Note also the reason given for fair and impartial judgment: that is the way Yahweh judges (Ex. 23:7).

Finally, the social well-being of each Israelite, in the form of his/her reputation, was to be safe-guarded: “You shall not go up and down as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand forth against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord” (Lev. 19:16). The summary of neighbor-obligations is found in Leviticus 19:18: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.” It is precisely this commandment, of course, which Jesus upheld as one of the pair of commandments which summarized the whole of God’s will for man (Mark 12:28-34). Paul offered a similar summary in Romans 13:8-10:

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Rom. 13:8-10)

A final compass point directs our attention to some particular and special “neighbors.”

Due West: Relations with the Disadvantaged

Of special concern to any society are those members of it who are in one way or another at some disadvantage vis-à-vis the rest of society. How are they to be treated? Are they “fair game” for the powerful? Are they to be “treated as equals” even though in fact they are less-than-equal? Israel’s answer was that they were to receive preferential treatment, and that of a beneficent nature. The reason? Again, the fact that Yahweh was particularly concerned with their well-being.

The following specific examples may be cited as proof of this required concern for those disadvantaged ones often referred to simply as “the poor”: No interest was to be charged on money lent to them (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:35, 36). Any clothing taken as collateral for a loan was to be returned by sundown (Ex. 22:26, 27; Deut. 24:10-13; cf. Amos 2:8). Even if a poor neighbor asked to become a slave, he was to be treated as a hired man (i.e., not enslaved; Lev. 25:39, 40). The “leftovers” from harvest were reserved for the poor (Lev. 19:1, 10; Deut. 24:19-22). Justice in court was not to be denied the poor (Ex. 23:6). The positive, active concern for the poor is most eloquently expressed in Deuteronomy 15:7-11:

If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor

brother, but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. Take heed lest there be a base thought in your heart, and you say, ‘The seventh year, the year of release is near,’ and your eye be hostile to your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the Lord against you, and it be sin in you. You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him; because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land.

Of all the prophetic passages excoriating abuses of the poor, none is more instructive for our purposes than Isaiah 3:15: “What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor? says the Lord God of hosts.” Who are “the poor,” after all? None other than “my people,” says Yahweh. And note that in neither Torah nor Prophets is the question raised as to how or why these persons are “poor.” Are they lazy? unlucky? dishonest? No qualifications are made. They are simply “poor”; and that is enough to command the beneficent attention of Israel.

Other special groups of disadvantaged persons are also singled out. Widows and orphans (i.e., those who have no family to protect them) are often mentioned in conjunction with “the poor” and are not to be “afflicted” (Ex, 22:22-24; Deut. 24:17). The elderly are to be accorded special honor (Lev. 19:32). Escaped slaves are not to be returned to their masters but are to be allowed their freedom (Deut. 23:15). The physically handicapped (specifically the deaf and the blind) are not to be abused (Lev. 19:14). Interestingly enough, the alien or sojourner (i.e., the non-Israelite who is residing in the community) is to be protected (Ex. 22:21, 23:9;

Lev. 19:33, 34) and is to enjoy the rest afforded by the Sabbath (Ex. 20:10; 23:12). Why? “For you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Ex. 22:21; Lev. 19:34; etc.).

The New Testament’s concern for the disadvantaged is equally clear. Recall Jesus’ sermon at Nazareth which underscored God’s concern for the poor and the foreigner and which almost got Jesus killed (Luke 4:16-30). Also recall his words in Matthew 25:31-46, summoning his disciples to provide food for the hungry, clothing for the naked, etc., with the understanding that “as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” Paul likewise called for special concern for “the weak” (Rom. 15:1; 1 Thess. 5:14); and James said that one of the two marks of “pure religion” was “to visit orphans and widows in their affliction” (James 1:27).

Summary and Conclusions

We have seen that the foundation for Israel’s ethic was the very nature of God himself. God was constantly, actively concerned for the welfare of his people, as shown most vividly in the Exodus:

And Jehovah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey . . . (Ex. 3:7, 8).

This concern continued in God’s providing food and water for Israel in the wilderness, in his protection of Israel from her enemies, in his giving Israel a land,

etc. Thus, from her own experience Israel could say of God, “Thou hast led in thy steadfast love the people whom thou hast redeemed...” (Ex. 15:13).

Because God was like this, and because Israel was “his people,” Israel understood that this was how she was to behave herself. Israelites were obligated to relate to and act toward one another in ways that were consistent and compatible with God’s actions toward them. This included appropriate, respectful behavior within the family; fair, mutually supportive behavior between “neighbors”; and a going out of one’s way to help those whom we have called “the disadvantaged.”

We have also seen that this pattern of behavior was taken up in a positive way by the New Testament. Sometimes that pattern was reinforced, as in Jesus’ declaration that the two great commandments are love of God and love of neighbor. Sometimes that pattern was modified, as when the lex talionis became “turn the other cheek” (Matt. 5:38-42). And sometimes that pattern was expanded, as when Jesus extended neighbor-love to include love of one’s enemy (Matt. 5:43-48).¹⁶

All this should be of profound importance to the Christian facing the moral confusion of our own day. When faced with ethical decisions today, a person may hear various voices saying, “If it feels good, do it (as long as it doesn’t hurt anyone else, of course);” or “If it’s legal, it’s o.k.,” or “Let your conscience be your guide.” The Christian, hopefully, will hear through this cacophony the voice that says, “You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy.”

Notes

- ¹ “Jesus consciously accepted the ethical traditions of his people” and “The ethical teaching of Jesus is not only a reaffirmation of the ethical tradition of Judaism, but also is the concomitant of his overwhelming conviction that the kingdom of God was ‘at hand’.” So W. D. Davies, “Ethics in the New Testament,” Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), vol. II, 168. Davies goes on in this article to affirm the continuity between the ethic of Jesus and that of the early church. Schrage says, on the other hand, that “it is not proper to speak of the NT ethic” and insists that we “treat the various NT writings and authors separately.” W. Schrage, “Ethics in the New Testament,” Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible Supplement (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 281.

For a judicious appraisal of the ethics of Paul, see Victor Furnish, Theology and Ethics in Paul (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968). Note especially “The Sources of Paul’s Ethical Teachings,” 25-67; and “The Assimilation of Traditional Material,” 81-92.

- ² See, e.g., Jesus’ denunciation of the practice of “corban” (Mark 7:9-13), which is examined later in this study.
- ³ Thus, “do not kill” becomes “do not be angry”; and “do not commit adultery” becomes “do not lust” (Matt. 5:21-30).
- ⁴ Note such specific examples as honesty; chastity and marital fidelity; the avoidance of idolatry; and concern for a neighbor’s welfare. Of course, other Jewish laws such as the observance of Jewish festivals and the dietary laws (kosher) were not made binding on Gentile converts to Christianity.
- ⁵ Moses and his Cushite wife are an example of the former (Num. 12:116); Nehemiah’s laws, an instance of the latter (Neh. 13:23-27).
- ⁶ As the book of Proverbs particularly stresses.

- ⁷ Note that this excludes other bases for honesty, such as prudence (“honesty is the best policy”), fear (“God punishes liars”), etc.
- ⁸ Hosea expresses it as Israel’s having “forgotten” God (Hos. 4:6; 8:14; 13:4-6) and no longer “knowing” him (Hos. 4:1; 5:4; 6:6) in a personal, relational sense.
- ⁹ The place of “love” (in the sense of “sentiment”) in interpersonal relationships deserves more extended treatment than is possible here. Suffice it to say that for the Old Testament sentiment is appropriate; but it is not to be the controlling factor in behavior, as Deuteronomy 21:15-17 clearly shows.
- ¹⁰ Jesus’ words about “hating” father and mother in Luke 14:26 would seem to contradict this. However, as most commentators note, Jesus is using a vivid example to underscore the radical decision in favor of the Kingdom which must sometimes be made. See the parallel saying in Matthew 10:37.
- ¹¹ G. Ernest Wright, “Deuteronomy,” The Interpreter’s Bible (Nashville: Abingdon, 1953), vol. II, 473, 474.
- ¹² For a fuller treatment of the issue, see the work of a former professor (now deceased) of the Institute for Christian Studies, Pat Harrell: Divorce and Remarriage in the Early Church (Austin: Sweet, 1967).
- ¹³ See further R. C. Dentan, “Redeem, Redeemer, Redemption,” The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), vol. IV, 21, 22.
- ¹⁴ G. E. Mendenhall, The Tenth Generation (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1974), 66.
- ¹⁵ Note, too, that the Hebrew verb hamad “does not only mean ‘covet’ as an impulse of the will, but that it also includes the intrigues which lead to the taking possession of that which was coveted.” J. J. Stamm and M. E. Andrew, The Ten Commandments in Recent Research (London: SCM, 1967), 103. In this regard, see Micah 2:1, 2.

- ¹⁶ The non-Israelite could be enslaved (Lev. 25:44-46) or charged interest on a loan (Deut. 15:3); but a female non-Israelite taken captive in war was to be treated honorably (Deut. 21:10-14). On a larger scale, Ammonites and Moabites were to be permanently excluded from “the assembly of Yahweh”; but neither Edomites nor Egyptians were to be “abhorred” (Deut. 23:3-8). From this varying response to the “enemy,” the trajectory of the Old Testament leads toward the love-of-enemy promulgated by Jesus.

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