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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>AT</i>	<i>Author's Translation</i>
<i>BAGD</i>	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i>
<i>BDF</i>	<i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament</i>
<i>BibSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>EBC</i>	<i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
<i>ET</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>GTJ</i>	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>MM</i>	<i>Vocabulary of the Greek Testament</i>
<i>NIV</i>	<i>New International Version</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>

CH. 1: INTRODUCTION

Thesis Topic

One of the most helpful tools in interpreting the Bible has been the recognition of literary types or genres. Distinctions have always been recognised between major kinds of writing in Scripture such as narrative, law, poetry, prophecy, epistle, or apocalyptic. Continuing research is giving us a better understanding of literary composition in ancient times. As a hermeneutical tool genre has proven invaluable in the analysis of biblical texts and how to understand them. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart have in large part based their approach to Bible study on the model of literary styles (Fee and Stuart 1983). But genre also provides a helpful guide to application. Differing types of writing will call for a response appropriate to the nature of that style (Goldingay 1995:4-5). Doriani takes a slightly more complex approach and suggests seven ways in which texts give us instruction. The seven ways texts generate applications are not strictly parallel to genre, for while each biblical passage fits into one genre each passage usually generates more than one way of application (Doriani 2001:82-96).

Following this line of research, this thesis will examine how the New Testament epistles use the ethical lists of vice and virtue for moral instruction. They will be treated as sub-genres of the larger epistolary style of writing. This topic has been chosen because of the enormous influence of these virtues on our understanding of Christian identity and living. How do they need to be applied or embodied in the thinking, feelings, actions, values, perspectives, and relationships of Christians at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

Two introductory surveys sketch a background for this study. The first is the Bible's own emphasis upon personal application; the second is the need in our contemporary situation for a theory of application.

The Need for Biblical Application

A survey of Scripture reveals that the authors themselves expected a personal and moral response from those who received their writings. The intention was never to simply address issues in a detached factual environment, but in the context of spiritual decisions and directions.

Obedience was enjoined upon the people of God in both the Old and New Testaments. The root lexical idea in both Testaments is that of hearing or listening. [מִשְׁמָע may refer to the simple act of listening, but often the context indicates an effective listening of response and obedience (TWOT II 1980:938). It is used over a thousand times in the Old Testament. "Hear the word of the LORD" was a common prophetic introduction (1Kings. 22:19;Isa. 1:10;Ezek. 36:1;Amos 7:16). Other synonyms pick up the idea of active response to the message. בִּשְׂמֵעָא is almost identical to [מִשְׁמָע and is often found in poetry. It means "to pay close attention to" (TWOT II 1980:817).

The primary New Testament word for obedience is ὑπακούω. It means "to listen" and so "to submit to" or "obey" one in higher authority (TDNT I 1964:223-224). Similar concepts are carried by πείθω which is used in Acts 5:29, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Πείθω in the passive voice which means "to be persuaded," "to believe," or "to be convinced to follow or obey" (BAGD 1996:644).

In biblical terms true hearing has not taken place until there has been an appropriate response. These concepts are pervasive throughout Scripture and point us to the moral intentions of the Bible.

In receiving the Sinai Law the fledgling nation was told that God would bless and prosper them for their obedience (Exod. 19:5; 34:11; Lev. 18:4; Num. 15:39). A dominant theme of Deuteronomy is obedience. Perhaps this is best summarised in chapter 28 where the first 14 verses outline Yahweh's blessing for obedience and verses 15-68 his curses for disobedience. This covenant relationship became the baseline for God's dealings with the nation throughout the Old Testament.

The expectation of obedience for blessing is continued through the historical books. "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth" (Josh. 1:8). Persistent failure to listen to the word of God through the prophets resulted in the nation's eventual judgment. "All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God" (2 Kings 17:7; cp. 24:19-20 regarding the southern kingdom of Judah).

The Psalms commend personal response to God's Word. The blessed person is the one who delights in the law of the Lord (Psa. 1:3). The wisdom literature gives godly instruction for the everyday activities and relationships of life. *hmk j* is the skill of living. Instructions for biblical wisdom "relate to prudence in secular affairs, skills in the arts, moral sensitivity, and experience in the ways of the Lord" (TWOT I:282).

Prophetic books strongly emphasise repentance from sin and a return to obedience.

The LORD was very angry with your forefathers. Therefore tell the people: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Return to me,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'and I will return to you,' says the LORD Almighty. Do not be like your forefathers, to whom the earlier prophets proclaimed: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Turn from your evil ways and your evil practices.' But they would not listen or pay attention to me, declares the LORD (Zech. 1:2-4).

In the New Testament true spiritual life is build upon the application of divine teaching in the believer's life. Jesus illustrated this point with the parable of the wise

and foolish builders (Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 6:46-49). The crux of the issue was not hearing only, but taking the next step and putting it into practice. The obedient life is the life on a solid foundation. James adds the further thought that failure to obey amounts to self-deception (James 1:22-25). The blessing of God is not in hearing or knowing by itself, but in living out its truth and implications (v. 25).

Several general observations are necessary to put this brief survey of obedience into a fuller biblical perspective. First, obedience was expected in the context of a personal relationship with God. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). It was this prior relationship of faith that gave meaning to his works (Rom. 4:1-5, 18-25; James 2:14-24). For all of the practical and detailed moral instruction of the book of Proverbs, wisdom begins with the fear of the LORD (1:7; 9:10), a phrase which can sum up man's relation with God (Ecclesiastes 12:13; Levenson 1996:149). The wisdom required for a truly ethical life comes from Yahweh (Prov. 2:6). The prophets did not exhort first to moral behaviour, but to repentance and a right relationship with God. Jesus instructed his followers to first make disciples and then to instruct them in the Christian life (Matt. 28:20). The motivation for a godly way of life is the grace of God received in salvation (Titus 2:11-14). Indeed, the first call of obedience is to embrace the Gospel in saving faith (Rom. 15:18; 2 Thess. 1:8; Heb. 5:9; 1 Pet. 4:17). The pattern of Christian moral behaviour is governed by God's relation to His people. We love because he first loved us (John 13:34; 1 John 4:11, 19). We forgive as in Christ we ourselves have been forgiven by God (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).

This first observation leads to the conclusion that there is no Christian ethic without Christian faith. The truly Christian life can only be the result of a man or woman who has been justified in his/her relationship with God. The outward life demonstrates

the inward reality. “Jesus replied, ‘If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching’” (John 14:23; see also 2 Cor. 9:13; Rom. 1:5; 1 John 2:29). The intent of biblical instruction is more than external conformity or humanitarian assistance. The testimony of a redeemed life brings glory to God. Improving people’s lives and making our existence more comfortable are worthy goals as far as they go. “But lessons that forget Jesus are sub-Christian, for they never transcend the goal of living well” (Dorani 2001:54).

Second, the concept of obedience was not fulfilled in simple ritual performance. In a passage central to Old Testament ethics Samuel rebuked King Saul, “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22; see also Isa. 1:10-20; Psalm 51:16-17). Samuel was not calling for the cessation of public worship, but worship which represented trust in God. Leonard Coppes calls this the “central principle of OT religion” (TWOT II 1980:817). The prophets constantly called the nation back to a proper observance of true worship. The liturgy and sacrifice often continued long after their hearts had turned from God (Isa. 29:13; Mark 7:6-7; Ezek. 14:1-3)

Third, biblical obedience was total obedience. God was looking for whole-hearted devotion to his ways. Though human obedience could not be perfect in any absolute sense, compliance that was half-hearted, partial, divided, selective, or occasional was considered no obedience at all. “You cannot serve both God and Money” (Matt. 6:24; see also Deut. 6:5-6; 1 Kings 18:21; Psa. 119:2; Matt. 28:20).

Fourth, moral application included the inner responses of thought, motive, and values as much as the outer responses of word and deed. The classic New Testament passage on obedience exhorts us to be doers of the Word and not merely hearers (James 1:22). But that “doing” is not simply external conformity or pragmatic compliance. The Word accomplishes more than changing our behaviour. It convicts of

sin (Psa. 119:11) and leads to saving faith (2 Tim. 3:15); it reveals the character and plan of God; it evokes worship and joy (Neh. 8:6,10); it provides direction and purpose (Psa. 119:111); it renews the mind (Rom. 12:2); it teaches doctrinal truth, moral formation, and preparation for service (2 Tim. 3:16-17); it transforms attitudes and relationships (Eph. 4:20-32). So behind the “doing” of Christian actions or activities is a developing inner life of righteousness, joy, cooperation, respect and submission to the word of God. “Inner assent is inseparable from outer activity” (Gregory 1975:483).

Fifth, a rich variety of language expresses the many appropriate applications of Scripture. In Psalm 119 the psalmist describes a comprehensive relationship to the Word. He walks in (vv.1,3), keeps (vv.20,34), trusts (v.42), seeks (vv.10,155), delights in (vv.16,92,174), meditates on (vv.15,97), rejoices in (v.162), perceives (v.18), understands (vv.27,130), waits for (v.166), hopes in (vv.114,147), remembers (v.52), believes (v.66), longs for (v.40), loves (vv.97,127), sings (v.172), follows (v.106), and chooses (v.173) the teachings of the Torah (Zuck 1982:23). His moral response is aptly summarised: “I obey your statutes, for I love them greatly” (v.167).

Sixth, application of Scripture had both corporate and personal implications. Individual piety and growth was important, but conformity to the will of God was to be the characterisation of the people of God in both the Old and New Testaments. By her obedience Israel was to be different than the surrounding nations and so bring the knowledge and glory of God to the Gentiles. The church as the body of Christ represented the saving grace of the gospel to the surrounding culture.

Seventh, biblical obedience was sufficient for knowing God and doing His will. In our relationship with him we are complete (Col. 2:9;2 Pet. 1:3). In our need for growth and guidance we can rely on the adequacy and sufficiency of the Scriptures. Success, wisdom, and blessing come through thoughtful and diligent application (Josh. 1:8;Psa.

1:3;Prov. 2:1-6;John 13:17;2 Tim. 3:15-17;Rev. 1:3). Indeed, the teaching of Scripture provides a comprehensive approach to life.

He said to them, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess" (Deuteronomy 32:46-47).

The Bible provides the materials for an all inclusive worldview and a frame of reference for understanding and interpreting history and individual experience.

To sum up: The Scriptures have a consistent emphasis on the need for moral application in the life of the believer and the church. Though written by many writers in very different historical circumstances and in a wide variety of styles, the Christian church recognised the Scriptures as the very product of God himself (2 Tim. 3:16). Therefore, they could not be read in a neutral or impersonal fashion. They needed to be studied and proclaimed for they were the inspired record in which the living God revealed His glory, His saving grace, and His coming Kingdom.

The Need for a Theory of Application

The need for a theory of application is at least threefold. First, it is clear that an appropriate personal response is expected from the recipients of Scripture. But the general need for application requires a theory of transfer for those separated in time, history, culture, and language from the original writings.

Occasionally, someone might suggest that guidelines for application are not necessary. Scripture is directly applicable in the same way that it was for the original recipients. Or, life response is an automatic spiritual result of the work of the Holy Spirit. While both of these truths have validity in specific instances they do not provide a comprehensive approach to the theory of application. This is illustrated when someone promotes an application totally divorced from the meaning of a text. We are made

aware of the need for reflecting on how we arrive at our conclusions. Application is the process by which we think our way from the ancient text to the contemporary setting. In what way does biblical teaching impact upon present experience, issues, and needs? Application “may be defined as the process of communicating the present-day relevance of a biblical text, specifying how that relevance may be translated into action, and inviting and urging the hearers to make that transference” (Zuck 1982:19). Indeed, if the Bible itself expects us to appropriate its teachings then the process of interpretation cannot be complete until its relevance has been demonstrated. Meaning in some sense must be understood to include both what the text said and what it means today.

This issue is called by many biblical scholars the “hermeneutical problem.”

Goldingay defines it as the need for the “written word to become again the living Word” (Goldingay 1995:3). New Testament ethicist Richard B. Hays writes:

How do we appropriate the NT’s message as a word addressed to us? These texts were not written in the first instance for Americans at the end of the twentieth century. When we read Paul’s letters to his churches, we are reading the mail of people who have been dead for nineteen hundred years; when we read the gospels, we are reading stories told for the benefit of ancient communities whose customs and problems differed vastly from ours. Only historical ignorance or cultural chauvinism could lead us to suppose that no hermeneutical “translation” is necessary for us to understand these texts. The more we understand, the more we will find ourselves wondering how we can take our moral bearings from a world so different from ours” (Hays 1995:104).

Traditionally, hermeneutics (plural) comprised the principles of interpretation that guided the process of exegesis (Mare 1973:15). There was confidence that spiritual meaning and guidance would be found in the text of Scripture because it was the product of divine inspiration. In recent years interpretation has been approached through a “new hermeneutic” (singular). Rather than the individual principles to lead the meaning out of the text, a “hermeneutic” is a comprehensive theory of knowledge to

lead the interpreter into his or her own understanding. The locus of meaning is shifted from the text to a dialogue between the elements of the text and the perspectives of the interpreter (McQuilkin 1992:53; Lategan 1992:149). Each phase of the dialogue brings the interpreter into a closer approximation of the truth. This circle or progression of meaning never comes to finality for meaning is fluid. Most evangelicals affirm the more traditional definition because of the new hermeneutic's existential and historical-critical presuppositions (Carson 1980:14-15; Thiselton 1985:323-329). However, there is wide recognition that many of the issues raised are valid concerns in the interpretive process. While rejecting it as a theory of knowledge, the process of dialogue with the text has been adopted by many as a better understanding of how we learn than the older model of linear progression. This process of learning, termed the hermeneutical spiral, is practiced by evangelicals in the conceptual framework of objective, divinely revealed truth (Osborne 1991:6; Doriani 2001:70-76). Central to this process is the role of the interpreter. The new hermeneutic has brought attention to the preunderstandings that the interpreter (and the author) brings with him to the text. The new hermeneutic has concluded that the reader is highly determinative of meaning through his dialogue with the text. But this is not the only possible conclusion (Doriani 2001:63-67). Those prior expectations may have great influence on the process of learning but it does not necessarily nullify the possibility of objective truth.

If they have delivered us from the false notion that a historical record may be exhaustively true and have taught us that historical records, including the documents which constitute Scripture, are at best partial statements, partial interpretations; nevertheless they must not be permitted to seduce us into thinking that partial knowledge is necessarily false knowledge. Finite human beings may know truly, even if they cannot know exhaustively (Carson 1980:15).

Harold Mare sums up his excellent discussion of historical, grammatical exegesis by pointing out what separates the two approaches. "New Testament and

conservative hermeneutics only and always have practiced these principles within the context of a history that involves true facticity and enactment in a continuity of time and space, and also involves a true subject-object distinction” (Mare 1973:26).

Second, a theory of application is needed to build upon the growing swell of scholarly research into moral and ethical methodology. Exegesis has been primarily concerned with the meaning of the text in its historical setting. The author’s meaning is uncovered through the study of words, the syntactical relationship of phrases, and its place within the canon and the social world of the writer.

In recent years there has been a growing recognition that exegesis, or the discovery of textual meaning, is not complete until that meaning comes to bear upon the life of the reader or the reading community. The biblical author wrote not only to be understood intellectually, but to be believed and obeyed in moral and spiritual transformation. Until that purpose is implemented in the life of the Christian community the author’s meaning is not fully “understood.” This emphasis is growing across many theological perspectives and disciplines.

Responding to those who would write from a purely historical viewpoint, Hays says,

For those who live, think and struggle within the church, however, the normative questions cannot be indefinitely deferred. The community must somehow form judgments and act, and--as I have already noted--the grammar of Christian faith demands that ethical judgments be materially related to the Biblical testimony. (Hays 1995:101).

From a more devotional perspective New Testament scholar Gordon Fee states, “Hence the aim of exegesis: to produce in our lives and the lives of others true Spirituality, in which God’s people live in fellowship with the eternal and living God, and thus in keeping with God’s own purposes in the world” (Fee 1995:30; see also Mare

1973:15;Zuck 1982:23;Kaiser 1985:34;Richard 1986c:206;Warren 1991:464;Degner 1996:259).

Evangelicals as a whole committed to this principle in the Third Summit convened by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in 1986. Building on the foundation of Summit I, which affirmed the Scriptures as the inerrant Word of God, and Summit II, which defined principles for interpretation, Summit III produced a statement on biblical application. "The interpreter's task in broadest definition is to understand both what Scripture meant historically and what it means for us today, that is how it bears on our lives" (Perdue 1987:5).

Up to now the most fruitful thinking has been done in practical disciplines such as homiletics, ethics, counselling, and missions where contemporary relevance is inherent in the discipline. Thankfully, general treatments of biblical studies and hermeneutics are giving more attention to application. Grant Osborne devotes four chapters (100 pages) to what he calls applied hermeneutics, including biblical and systematic theology, contextualisation, and homiletics (Osborne 1991:261-361). Whole books are now being written (Doriani 2001). As principles for application are distilled from the many investigations underway, they need ultimately not to stand on their own but to be incorporated as an integral part of exegetical method (Kaiser 1981:149).

Third, a theory of application will enhance ministry to the spiritual needs of people in our churches. In this day of diversity the Church is facing a crisis of authority. Many Christians have a sincere belief in the Bible intellectually but do not know how to embody that knowledge in the actions, thoughts, motives, and values of their lives. They may live in a world divided into the sacred and secular with different sets of guiding principles in each. Their moral framework may be an eclectic composition of many, sometimes conflicting, authorities received from the welter of voices in modern society.

Or they may have been overcome by the selfist philosophies of our generation. Dr. Paul Vitz observes that all the major theories of motivation and personality assume that reward for the self is the only functional ethical principle (Colson 2002). Others have been raised in the postmodern environment of cultural relativity and tolerance. The confidence of many in the Scriptures has been undermined by the scholars and pastors “who seem forever to be telling people that the text does not mean what it seems plainly to say” (Fee 1995:31). As a result Christians no longer turn to the Bible with the conviction that God has spoken a divine word for the heart issues of their lives or the moral complexities of society. Biblical illiteracy is increasing rapidly. Every fundamental doctrine and moral principle of historic, orthodox Christianity is under discussion and redefinition. Our churches are full of theological and behavioural problems that mirror secular culture, not because people have recently come into the faith, but because Christian believers (and leaders) have not brought the churches’ moral and spiritual life under the authority of scriptural teaching. People who profess faith in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour need the confidence that they can find God’s answers to the spiritual, personal, and practical issues of life within the teachings of the Bible.

Outline

Following this Introduction, Chapter 2 will explore ethical teaching in the thought world of the first century. Writers of the New Testament had both the heritage of Jewish culture and Greek philosophy. Their style of writing would be comparable to the literature of the time. Their vocabulary would be drawn from these two sources to express God’s revelation.

Chapter 3 will survey the ethical lists of the epistles in their New Testament contexts. Exegetical work will be done on key passages with the view to seeing how

the New Testament writers used the lists of vice and virtue to teach Christian life and ethics. How do they fit into the context of the book? Are they coherently linked to New Testament theology? How do they relate to the virtues and vices of Greek philosophical ethics?

Chapter 4 will engage the contemporary discussion of hermeneutical principles for application. Personal application of the ethical lists will be set against the background of the wider theological context. How, in general, do we bridge the gap from “then” to “now”?

Chapter 5 will present a practical use of the virtue lists by exploring their contributions to issues in multicultural ministry. Several of the catalogues occur in contexts of Christian unity in the midst of ethnic and social diversity (Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 4-6; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:1-17). As one part of the larger mosaic of ethical teaching they depict an ideal of oneness in Christ between Jew and Gentile and other diversities.

CH. 2 HISTORICAL: ETHICAL CONCEPTS OF HELLENISM

The letters of the New Testament were written in the social context of Roman politics, Greek culture, and diverse religions. Since the conquests of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) the expansion of Greek language and philosophical ideas had far outstripped the expansion of its political borders. Aristotle had been the young Alexander's tutor. His ambitions included far more than military victories and political power. He desired to spread his adopted Hellenism (for he was Macedonian) as the basis for a trans-national empire. Rather than the classic view of the independent Greek city-state, he envisioned "world-cities" with Greeks and non-Greeks living together. Borders that formerly divided ethnic groups and national states would become irrelevant. People from all places and backgrounds could congregate in these cosmopolitan centres for business and trade, the sharing of literature and philosophy, and enrichment of culture and humanity. To this end he established cities and centres of learning. Alexandria in Egypt was the largest Hellenistic city of the period. Though his dreams of empire died with him in his thirty-third year the cultural influence he had planted continued to live. "Greek became the language of literature and commerce from the shores of the Mediterranean to the banks of the Tigris River" (Vunderink 1982:89). With the rise of Roman military and political might Hellenistic influence did not wane. Indeed, the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean world continued to be *koine* or common Greek, even with the growing use of Latin. Greece's ancient philosophers were revered, read, and reapplied to the new historical and social situation. Many church historians have noted that it was the uniform language of the Greeks along with the infrastructure of the Roman roads and the *pax romana* of the Roman army that

facilitated the rapid spread of Christianity in the first century (Latourette 1975:20). The social and intellectual climate of Hellenism provides the historical background for our study of vice and virtue in the New Testament.

The Ethical Life

The pursuit of the good life had long been the teaching of the moral philosophers. It had variously been described as the life of happiness, excellence or virtue itself. Because of superficial meanings of words like “happiness” in our own day, the concept of “flourishing” has been suggested as a better way to describe this quest. The good life in the Greek mind answered the question, “What is the best sort of life for human beings to live”? (Prior 1991:1). They were not so much concerned with an evaluation of individual acts, but with the characterisation of a life in its entirety. How could that person reach his or her highest potential in what it means to be human?

The Greek term used to capture these broad ideas was *eujdaimonia*. It can be variously translated, “prosperity, good fortune, wealth, happiness” (Liddell 1996:323). It could be conceived as material prosperity which was thought to bring happiness. But in philosophical circles it came to describe the inward condition of the soul. Plato described the good life as the harmonious integration of the rational and irrational parts of the soul or inner man. Aristotle described the highest good as the “activity of the soul in conformity to excellence or virtue” (Prior 1991:134,154). The conception of the good life had an element of moral goodness, an element of rational consistency, an element of pragmatic success, an element of material prosperity, an element of physical health, an element of circumstantial happiness, and an element of civic activity. Each of these elements was combined or emphasised according to the approach of the individual teacher.

All Greek philosophy was broadly dualistic. Matter was inherently evil. The soul or immaterial part of man was pure in itself, but had become contaminated through its contact with the body. The happiness of the good life was that state in which the soul of man was emancipated from the evil influence of matter, at peace with itself, and in control of the life (Latourette 1975:26-27).

Central to this quest was the operation of reason. Men and women had within their rational powers the ability to make progress toward the good, happy, moral, self-satisfying life. Every area of life, but particularly the passions, had to be brought under the authority of reason. This process included the mentoring and accumulated wisdom of the moral teachers. The individual had to apply himself or herself to philosophical knowledge, self-discipline, and habits of life that produced character and progress in virtue. Given the right instruction and application human beings had the potential to achieve the good life. It was not the domain of the elite, but the possibility of all.

By the time of the New Testament the political reality of the Greek city-state had vanished. The earlier philosophers had closely associated citizenship and civic duty as an integral part of the good life. Political life was governed by the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, the basic ideal of the good life remained the central thought of Hellenistic ethics. Major interpretations of the good life were provided by the Epicureans and the Stoics. Though there was much debate and discussion between these various groups they still held in common the ideal of the good life. On this basis, Harvard scholar, Gisela Striker, classifies Hellenistic ethics as “eudaimonic” (Striker 1996:170). In both of these approaches the good life was increasingly internalised as a personal journey. Thus happiness would not be found in the external circumstances of the *πολις* but more and more within the inner self.

Epicurus (341-270 B.C.) lived three centuries before Christ. He described pleasure as the highest good. This was not necessarily an indulgence of the sensual pleasures, but a pleasure of the mind. Epicurus' chief concern appears to be not so much the achievement of active pleasures but the elimination of physical and emotional pain which upset one's inner tranquillity. Though not opposed to physical pleasures he apparently recognised that intense sensual delights also created a certain kind of pain and dissatisfaction. He created a taxonomy of pleasures for his followers to achieve this state of mental tranquillity. Some pleasures were both natural and necessary such as food. Others were natural, but not necessary for survival, such as sexual activity. He rejected other pleasures considered to be neither natural nor necessary, such as fame. As Gordon Clark observes, "More to his taste were good meals, dozing in the sun, while avoiding politics and family life" (Clark 1973:277).

To achieve this avoidance of unpleasantness he withdrew from active participation in the social structures of society. He and his followers lived in a commune known as the Garden. Epicurus also distanced himself from religion, which he blamed for the resulting evils of guilt and fear of divine judgment. He taught that since the body was composed of atoms, death simply meant the disintegration of the atoms. There was no conscious afterlife of judgment or reward. Therefore, one need not live now with fear of the future (Vunderink 1982:121).

Free from the responsibilities of society and religion, Epicureans focused on present happiness. Practical wisdom and reason were used to calculate and control the choices and actions in life that would remove pain and increase the pleasure of serenity (Prior 1991:201-205).

The guiding principle of Stoic ethics was natural law. For them nature was more than a descriptive account of the way our universe operates. Nature was god in a

pantheistic and fatalistic sense. There was a divine reason which permeated all things, but fell short of a transcendent and personal God (Latourette 1975:26). Within this law of nature all events had a rational explanation and positive purpose. Since one could not change or resist the predetermined events of one's life, happiness was defined as living in contentment with the way things were. As a corollary to this fatalistic worldview nothing could be labelled as inherently evil. What was experienced as unpleasant or evil required a change of perception to accommodate the true nature of the world (Prior 1991:207-219).

As with the Epicureans this tended to be a passive approach to virtue. The Stoics cultivated an emotional indifference (*ἀπαρρησία*) to external events. They valued the virtues of endurance and courage. In contrast to the Epicureans the Stoics did not abandon civic involvement. Within their fatalism they believed that a moral purpose existed for mankind. Living rightly meant making choices in harmony with nature that would bring men and society closer to this moral purpose and make them happy (Vorster 1990:39-40).

The moral heritage of Stoicism was humility, impartiality, and personal freedom. In a worldview where each person's life was equally determined there was no room for boasting or comparison. The next step of this moral equality would be to treat each person's interests the same as one's own. Within this framework personal freedom meant bringing the events good or bad under the control of the rational mind. This freedom meant distance from the inner powers of emotions and appetites, and a patient acceptance in the external events over which they had no control.

The concept of the good life is a necessary introduction to the ethical lists because a quality or action was considered virtuous in relation to some overarching

standard or goal. The Greek word most often translated virtue is ἀρετή. It was used in five major ways. In earliest usage it meant “eminence, excellence in achievement, or mastery in a particular field.” So the homeric idea of virtue was “characteristics and skills that enabled the possessor to survive danger and attain glory” (Prior 1991:23). When this achievement came from divine assistance it meant “endowment with a higher power” and the display of that power. The second use was that of “manliness.” The third usage of “merit” described the honour which came to the “manly” man or achiever. But in philosophical writings the fourth definition of “moral achievement or excellence” was by far the most common usage. No longer was courage on the battlefield or superiority on the sports field in view. Virtue was eminence in the development of desirable personal attributes. The fifth usage was “righteousness or fidelity to a cause.” This definition is seen most often in the Septuagint and the extra-biblical writings of *Maccabees* where the virtuous person was one loyal to the faith (TDNT I 1964:457-461; see also BAGD 1996:105, and the discussion of Deissmann 1932:97, 362).

In the New Testament the word itself is used only four times (Phil. 4:8; 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 1:3,5). In Philippians 4:8 it is used almost in passing as a summation or characterisation of the other virtues. In 2 Peter 1:5 it is one of several moral qualities (translated “goodness” in the NIV) that complement saving faith in God. The other two references have the moral power and excellence of God in view. So while the New Testament recognises ἀρετή as one of many Christian moral qualities, it does not seem to emphasise the word as the comprehensive idea of virtue. Bauernfeind comments, “For a world in which man constantly saw himself morally responsible before a holy God the Greek concept of virtue could not finally fulfil its apparent promise.

Though not irreligious, it was far too anthropocentric and this-worldly in orientation”
(*TDNT* I 1964:460).

In Hellenistic thought virtue was the quality by which one achieved the happy life. Indeed, if virtue was the means, then the happiest persons should be the most virtuous, making virtue itself the goal. This constituted one of the central debates in Greek ethics. Was virtue the goal itself or a means to achieving the excellent life? Was virtue morality or was virtue the achievement of fulfilment and happiness? What indeed was the relationship between living rightly and living well? It was self evident that a moral life did not always lead to happiness and vice versa. “The task of ethics will be to establish what this end is—what happiness consists in—and how we may best achieve it” (Striker 1996:172).

Different schools of thought over time answered these questions in different ways. If one looked at virtue for its own sake then it became a secondary definition of the good life (Young 1980:153). Plutarch seems to take this approach where virtue is the goal. He offers the advice that reason plus habituation leads to virtue and sets this in contrast to pleasure, diversions, and wealth (Plutarch 1991:125-126).

Others maintained a clear distinction between the goal of the good life and the qualities needed to achieve it. From the time of Plato four cardinal virtues were used to summarise the rest—prudence, justice, courage, and temperance. Ethical discussions of many qualities and situations might be subsumed appropriately under each of these. For instance, Musionius lists the commonplace virtues of a “good woman” under self control or temperance. These include oversight of the household, chaste, not a slave to desire, and not lavish in dress (Frag. 3.22-25, quoted in White 1990:203-204).

Perhaps Gisela Striker has found the synthesis when she describes virtue not as the outward act itself, but as “the inner disposition underlying action” (Striker 1996:169).

The Greeks viewed the gods to be the ultimate sources of virtue and virtues. Hierocles presents us with one such statement in “On Duties” (1.3.53-54) “For there is one immutable and firm virtue which we may reasonably suppose belongs above all to the gods.” A similar thought comes from Sextus, “One can receive no greater gift from God than virtue” (Both quoted in Malherbe 1986:110,86).

In this thought-world of the virtuous life we find the ethical lists of moral teaching. These lists are groupings of both undesirable (vice) or admirable (virtue) qualities that are used to represent and illustrate the moral life. The lists did not introduce new or unexpected moral qualities. Rather, they gathered together what was commonly known and agreed upon by society at large. The lists themselves did not argue and debate the merits of individual qualities. This might be done in other formats of address or essay, for instance, Plutarch’s letter “On Contentment” (Plutarch 1991:202-238). Within the larger context of the discussion they were used to illustrate or exhort to a moral way of life.

Malherbe offers these three uses of the virtue and vice lists. First, virtue lists characterised the good life. They gave concrete examples of general precepts in the morally good person. Second, they demonstrated the value of the philosophical way of life. In this case vice and virtue lists would be used together to demonstrate by comparison the superiority of wisdom. Vice represented a general picture of one’s moral condition before entering upon the way of wisdom; virtue presented the positive results. Dio Chrysostom (A.D. 40-120) was a native of Bithynia and a Stoic philosopher. In an essay entitled “That the Wise Man is Fortunate and Happy” he used ethical lists in this way. “And do you describe as wise anyone except the man who is

sensible and just and holy and brave, and as a fool him who is unjust and unholy and cowardly?" (Cohoon 1932:23.3). Third, virtues lists were used to show qualities of kingship. The good king was expected to lead by example. People could look to him as a model of virtue to be emulated. In another address ("On Kingship") perhaps delivered before Emperor Trajan, Dio Chrysostom urged that virtue would assist him in ruling outwardly and overcoming bad character within himself. Included are justice, prudence (practical wisdom), sobriety of mind, humaneness, peace, harmony, respect for the gods, and consideration of men (Cohoon 1932:1.6).

Ethical lists were widely used as a component of moral instruction. Philo of Alexandria was a Jewish-Hellenistic philosopher. In "The Sacrifices of Cain and Abel" he used the biblical story of Cain and Abel as an allegory of vice and virtue. He filled their characters with the moral precepts of Greek philosophy to urge upon his readers the pleasures of the mind over the pleasures of the body. Leaving the historical characters of Cain and Abel behind from paragraph 26 to 33 he personified vice as Lady Pleasure and wisdom as Lady Virtue. In an oft-cited section (32) he rattled off some 150 vices one after the other to reveal the true nature of Pleasure as an ethical prostitute. His list in promoting Lady Virtue is not nearly as long, but he concludes, "One day would fail me if I were to enumerate all the names of particular virtues" (Philo 1993:95ff). This final statement reveals something of the representative nature of ethical lists. They are not meant to be comprehensive. Neither do the individual qualities in some way add together and make a person virtuous. Rather the person of virtue will be revealed through these qualities of behaviour and attitude and any others which demonstrate moral wisdom.

Virtue and vice lists were found also in the "Rule of the Community" at Qumran (1 QS3.13-4.26; cited in Aune 1987:195). The early Christian "Didache" described the

way of Death (versus the way of Life) with at least 41 descriptions of vice (Par. 5). A similar listing is found in the “Epistle of Barnabas,” the “Way of the Black One” (Par. 20; Kleist 1948:18,63).

It should be noted that ethical lists were only one element of moral exhortation. Common topics (*topoi*) such as marriage, brotherly love, and citizenship were often discussed and debated. Appeals for the good life were made through the example of prominent people, real or legendary.

The conventional terms, representative usage, and wide distribution across differing schools of thought lead us to an important conclusion. The use of vice and virtue lists themselves do not determine moral perspective. Many groups used similar terminology. There was popular consensus that the vices were detrimental and the virtues were beneficial. The difference came in the larger moral framework of a particular school of thought. The basis of morality, the purpose of life, and the achievement of virtue—in other words, the total moral context was determined by this larger conceptual framework. In that setting the lists could be used and tailored to represent and illustrate a particular point of view. Meeks concludes his survey of the ethical lists by saying that context is everything (Meeks 1983:66). If the ethics of Hellenistic life was guided by the pursuit of the good life, then virtue was construed to be those qualities and actions which achieved this end. In Palestinian Judaism, if moral good was loyalty to the cause of nationalistic concerns, then the virtues were defined and presented in that way. When we come to the New Testament lists, then, we must determine the moral and theological context in which they were used.

For all the intellectual sophistication of Greek thought and the rich heritage of their culture, the Hellenistic world was one of spiritual hunger. The folk religions and

ancient deities associated with city states or local regions had lost much of their credibility by defeat and absorption into the Roman Empire. People became disillusioned with the mythical antics of the Greek and Roman pantheon. Morally aware people could discern that many men lived better lives than the violent, deceptive, and immoral behaviour of the gods who supposedly wielded influence over their lives. Rome maintained the state cult of emperor worship more as a unifying political strategy than anything else. Many masses of people in the Roman Empire were slaves or soldiers pressed into service from various conquered lands. They had little social future and reached out for some hope of immortality and future life. Various mystery religions from Persia and North Africa flooded into this spiritual vacuum and commanded great popularity. They were called mystery religions because the worshipers were initiated into the rites of their particular group and sworn to secrecy. They were a “mystery” to outsiders or the uninitiated. Most told the story of a saviour-god who died and rose again. What we do know is that many of their rituals involved trances and ecstatic experiences in which the deity possessed them and perhaps spoke through them. These states were induced through alcohol, driving drums, dancing, mutilation, and sexual activity. The moment of possession was the climax of religious experience (Latourette 1975:22-25; House 1983:137-139).

Many of these religions were syncretistic. They freely borrowed ideas and held concepts in common with others. The mythical, traditional, and mystical were mixed together. People were often members in more than one group. Loyalty to the Caesar was the duty of a citizen but held little spiritual value. A person might be an adherent of a traditional religion out of respect for their heritage and also participate in one of the mystery religions for the spiritual energy they experienced.

The appeal of Judaism in this confusing situation was its strict monotheism and high standards of morality. Many weary of the excesses around them became God-fearers and proselytes in the synagogues dotted throughout the empire.

The spiritual and moral climate of the Hellenistic world made it clear that to define value and virtue was one thing, but to live it out in the reality of human experience was another.

Letter Writing

Another important consideration in the study of virtue is the literary format of letter writing in the ancient world. A letter is a written text addressed to individuals or groups from whom the sender is separated by distance or social status (Aune 1987:158). Without the means of mass communication moral philosophers would teach and debate in schools, in public addresses, or in literary and personal letters. The literary letters were those written for publication. Personal letters were private correspondence used to stay in touch, pass on information, or make a request. Many of these have been preserved for us in the Egyptian papyri (See overviews by Aune 1987:158ff; Osborne1991:252-258; Johnson 1994:audio)

The personal letter began with a prescript of the “sender to the receiver, greetings.” Words of relationship, endearment, or geography might be included with this beginning. A second feature was the wish for good health. Third came the prayer of thanksgiving. Fourth, the largest part of the letter was the body. Fifth, a closing greeting or wish.

The body of the letter treated philosophical themes common to life (*topoi*). These were linked by internal transitional formula's (*peri; dei*). The moral teachers often used autobiographical accounts to illustrate and support their views. These letters often included details of their itinerary.

Their teaching concluded with a final series of exhortations, known as paraenesis. The word itself means “advice” and became a conventional form of moral instruction. Widely held virtues were affirmed and applied to the issue under discussion. This advice was presented as a reminder of what was already known. It could be exemplified in well known models of virtue. The paraenesis was delivered by one morally and socially superior to the addressees (Aune 1987:191). The purpose of these exhortations was to motivate readers to correct conduct in their personal attitudes, relationships, and behaviour (Coetzer 1984:37).

While paraenesis can be treated as a genre in its own right, in the context of the New Testament letters it is better to view it as a sub-genre or one mode of expression. It is now widely recognised that the epistle is a multiform genre. An author will introduce many variations to the conventional format according his purpose and needs (Osborne 1991:259). What is important for our study of Christian virtue is that the ethical lists occur in these paraenetic sections. Treated as a unit, the list itself is not determinative of meaning. It is rather one of the literary building blocks that the author used to communicate his message. The individual virtues in the list will acquire their ethical definition from the overall moral framework of the New Testament letters.

The Epicureans and Stoics are mentioned specifically in Acts 17:18. Paul interacts with them as one who understands something of their ideals and teachings. Methodologically, he begins within their frame of reference. Yet, there is an important point to be made even on a cursory level, namely, that he makes a clear distinction in the fundamental outlook of the Christian message from the best of Hellenistic moral philosophy. He would indeed use many of the same terms for virtue within the Christian life. His letters would be filled with familiar literary components, such as a dialogical style (diatribe), personal example, paraenesis, and ethical lists. In spite of semantic

and literary similarities neither of these explains the theological categories of Paul's understanding and message. We must look elsewhere for the theological background of Christian virtue.

The Old Testament Background

Writers of the New Testament saw themselves in historical and theological continuity with the work of God under the old covenant. The idea of Judaism goes back to Mt. Sinai, but the historical reality only from the post-exilic period (see surveys in Bright 1972:430-467; Fraade 1992:1055-1061). Throne, temple, and law had been central to the history of Israel. After they returned from Babylon the nationalistic hopes of a Davidic throne were suppressed under the Persian, Greek, and Roman empires. The temple was rebuilt and became the religious and political centre of Palestinian Judaism. With the development of the canon, the law (and its interpretation) took a more prominent role in Jewish life. Characteristics of formative Judaism were feast days, dietary laws (with their function to separate from the surrounding pagan culture), temple rituals, and moral integrity.

But these were also the very issues which divided segments of the Jewish community and led to various parties and sects. Each group had a response and perspective on the domination by foreign powers, the temple with its entrenched priestly nobility, and the interpretation and application of the law. From these ongoing discussions developed the Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, and Essenes of the New Testament period. They discussed and debated these issues sometimes with heated polemic. Fraade cautions that this intertestamental literature was written from a partisan point of view and should be interpreted against its rhetorical background. He warns that it is difficult to draw a picture of the "man in the street" from these argumentative writings.

Because many Jews were scattered across the empire the decentralised systems of synagogue and scribe had enormous and growing influence in the Jewish communities of the Diaspora. The oral interpretations of the law were fluid and developing but would later be recognised as a unit in the 3rd century A.D. Scribal teaching interpreted the meaning and purpose of the exile. It also gave coherence to Jewish life and ways in the present political dispensation. The Pharisees and their predecessors were at the centre of this move to promote and protect the law. Arising during the post-exilic history of the nation, the Pharisees held zealously to a legalistic righteousness based both on the Torah and the many oral traditions of the rabbis which had been promulgated to define and protect the sacred teachings (Pfieffer 1959:112-115).

During this time the law took on a “life of its own.” There was a tendency to treat it as suprahistorical. Certain aspects of its teaching were connected not with Sinai, but with eternity. Law-keeping became the key ingredient in God’s covenant with his people. Abraham was given the covenant and its promise because he had kept the law faithfully (Ecclesiasticus 44:19-21). “Although God’s grace was never forgotten, and his mercy continually appealed to, religion in practice was a matter fulfilling the law’s requirements. This meant that Judaism was peculiarly liable to the danger of legalism: i.e., of becoming a religion in which a man’s status before God is determined entirely by his works” (Bright 1972:444).

Though divided by many differences, groups within Judaism held to a broad framework of common faith. All except the careless and apostate gave allegiance to the law, anticipated an eschatological redemption, and aspired to a national identity. The differences arose from emphasis, particular interpretations of the law, and the nature of their eschatological expectations (Bright 1972:466).

Recent scholarship tends to picture Christianity as one of these competing groups to represent Judaism. New Testament theological disputes are framed as internecine struggles for ascendancy. Jesus' conflicts with the Pharisees and Paul's arguments for justification by faith are viewed as power struggles within formative Judaism. ". . .the hostility toward Jews and Judaism that appears in some New Testament texts is to be understood as an expression of 'sibling rivalry'" (Hays 1996:409-410). Sim holds, for instance, that Matthew writes to and for a Christian messianic community that remains Jewish and requires law-keeping as a prerequisite to Christian baptism. The mission to the Gentiles as outlined in the commission of Matthew 28:19-20 assumes that Gentiles will become Jewish proselytes before undergoing baptism (Sim 1996:194-195).

The problem I have with the above reconstruction is two-fold. First, it treats the growth of the Christian movement as primarily a social struggle within Judaism rather than a debate about conflicting views of truth. If they could have come up with an agreeable solution all believers in Jesus could have lived happily as law observant or non-observant. The issue was social, not theological.

Second, the message of Jesus is presented as an equal alternative to the issues being debated among the sects and parties of Judaism, rather than a new answer that stood in distinction from all the alternates being offered by the Jewish communities. John Bright saw this clearly a generation ago in his conclusion to *A History of Israel*. Within Judaism itself, what would become known as rabbinic Judaism provided the only answer to the continuing history of Israel. The Sadducees offered only assimilation with no eschatological hope. Their fortunes rose and fell with the *status quo*. When that was destroyed their answers became irrelevant and they ceased to exist. The militant

groups with all their passion and outbursts of violent insurrection only led to the destruction of national and religious identity. The apocalyptic communities were disappointed with the passing of time because their expectations did not take place. The only way forward was the law abiding life promoted by the Pharisees and developed by the rabbis that would follow them.

The gospel of Jesus was not one of these Jewish possibilities. For while it was birthed within the milieu of Jewish social history its understanding of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as God's Son and Messiah was connected, not to these events, but to the Old Testament revelation of God's promise of redemption. There could not be two outcomes to the promises and prophecies of Yahweh's dealings with his people. The law could not continue historically in Judaism (as it does) if Christ was the end ($\tau\epsilon\nu\lambda\omicron\sim$; goal, completion, fulfilment; Rom. 10:4) of the law. Bright calls these "two opposing answers to the question: Whither Israel's history?" For the person who affirms that "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16) the Old Testament assumes a new meaning as a part of the redemptive drama leading on to its conclusion in Christ (Bright 1972:466-467).

The point to be made is that the Christian message was vitally connected to the fulfilment of the Hebrew Scriptures, not the aspirations of a people or religion. Scholars of various theological perspectives recognise this connection. "The outlook, content, and language of the New Testament (NT) are largely determined by the Old Testament Scriptures (OT)" (Borgen 1996:193). Marshall affirms the view of Lindars that "the Old Testament is the greatest single influence in the formation of the New Testament theology (Marshall 1988:1). And speaking of Paul's ethical use of the Scriptures, Hays observes, "The scriptures of Israel were imbedded deeply in his bones. (Hays 1996:30).

In the New Testament writings the themes of promise and fulfilment are common. Citations and allusions are frequent. The spiritual authority of their message is grounded in the revelation of God in the Old Testament. But the capstone of their confidence is in Jesus as God's promised Messiah. For all the variety of materials by which God expressed himself, they understand the Old Testament to be a message of salvation in Jesus Christ: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:14-5).

The gospel they preached was grounded in the sacred writings. "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

The faith of the New Testament was not a reformulation of Judaism. It was not long before there was a parting of the ways over two main issues—the Messiahship of Jesus and justification by faith alone (Acts 4:18; 5:28; 15:5). It was the Jews who persecuted the early believers. Paul himself had to renounce the principle of legalistic righteousness to embrace Jesus as Messiah (Phil. 3:3-8). The two were incompatible. Although E.P. Sanders has done much to dispute the perception that Judaism was a legalistic religion (a calculation of good deeds vs. bad) he nevertheless, upholds the view that the law was the basis of practical righteousness for the elect.

If I understand Paul correctly, what he opposes is the supposition that Torah obedience is either the necessary or sufficient condition of salvation. But I should not call the view that it is the necessary and sufficient condition a 'a particular interpretation' [responding to W.D. Davies 1977]. It is, rather, the *standard* Jewish view, which can be massively documented from the Jewish literature from the pre-pauline, pauline and post-pauline period. In the Jewish

view, salvation ultimately depends on the grace of God, especially as evidenced in the election and the redemption from Egypt. But the condition of remaining among the elect, those who would be saved, was loyalty to the Torah and obedience of it, or repentance and atonement in case of transgression (Sanders 1978:184).

Silva admits that conservatives have often painted a caricature of the Pharisee's legalism. Nevertheless, certain teachings within the Judaism of the day taught that sins might be atoned by honouring one's parents and giving to the poor (Ecclesiasticus 3:3,14,30). These, he says, are not contradicted or denied by the later rabbis. He also suggests that the Pharisees in some ways made the Torah easier to obey, as in finding loopholes in the law. "The Pharisees were often in danger of thinking that they had adequately fulfilled their duty before God (cf. Lk 18:9-12,21), and therefore no great sense of dependence on God's grace was likely to arise" (Silva 1986:119,121). The message of God's righteousness was revealed in the gospel and received by grace through faith in Christ.

This vital connection with the Old Testament does not overlook or deny the influence of other historical, religious, and social forces surrounding the Christian faith. But it does distinguish in what is primary and what is secondary in our interpretation of the text. In comparing the value of sources for background studies Guthrie concludes:

The need for the theologian to define his understanding of the relationship between the OT and NT revelation is more pressing than in the case of the relationships between NT theology and any other of the background studies, because of the authoritative character of the OT. It cannot be set on an equal footing with such studies as rabbinics, Qumran and Philonic studies, for example, since the NT nowhere affords to any of these a comparable authority. Indeed none of them is mentioned. The OT cannot be regarded as simply one source among many, for it is unique among all the background studies. (Guthrie 1981:61).

As one considers Christian virtue in the writings of the New Testament, surface terminology and forms may overlap with its philosophical or religious counterparts, but

the underlying theological context and worldview comes from the Old Testament. The New Testament view of God, man, the world, sin, and salvation in Jesus the Messiah finds its source in the eschatological fulfilment of Old Testament promises.

CH. 3 CANONICAL: NEW TESTAMENT VIRTUES IN CONTEXT

Introduction

Vice and virtue lists are frequently used in the moral teaching of the New Testament. They are most often found in the hortatory sections of the epistles. If one accepts the Beatitudes as a virtue list, then Matthew 5:3-11 would be the only virtue list outside of the epistles. Jesus' depiction of the human heart in Mark 7:22-23 and its parallel in Matthew 15:29 would be the only vice list. Revelation has three short vice groupings in 9:21, 21:8, and 22:15, but the Apocalypse itself is a mixed genre of a letter to the seven churches of Asia Minor containing the prophetic visions of the apostle John. The number of lists varies according to the criteria of the author. Numbers range from 19 to 23 for vice lists and 11 to 13 for virtue lists (Easton 1932:1-12;Furnish 1968: 68f;McEleney 1978:203-219;Betz 1979:281-283 and commentary;Coetzer 1984:36-42;Malherbe 1986:130; Aune1987:195f; Meeks 1993:67f;Charles 1997:117f;Mappes 2003:202-218).

The variations raise the question of what is a list. Must it be a string of three or more adjectives or nouns (1 Tim. 3:2-3)? Can it include descriptive phrases or clauses (1 Cor 13:4-8)? Must it have a particular literary form or function in the context? May it be combined with other forms of expression such as the imagery of spiritual armour in Ephesians 6:14-17? David Aune suggests that New Testament catalogues of vice and virtue are of several varieties. There are the connected lists in which the elements are linked together by "and," "or," or "nor." Others are unconnected (asyndeton). And a third group is what might be called an amplified list where one or more terms are explained in some way (Aune 1987:195). A list will have a recognised rhetorical

function in the context whether that is deemed to come from a conventional source or constructed to meet the situation addressed (Charles 1997:125). The compendia of vice and virtue are also ethical in nature, that is, they describe attitudes or actions that harm or benefit healthy human relationships. Biblically, these ethical qualities are rooted in divine morality.

Early research into these portions of Scripture was motivated by the search for sources behind the biblical text. Comparison to similar catalogues in Hellenistic moral philosophy did advance understanding of literary structure and function in ethical teaching. But the emphasis on formal features tended to isolate the lists as a genre on their own. The idea that biblical writers borrowed from idealised lists led to interpretation which had as its point of reference an outside source, rather than the context of the letter as a whole. Referring to idolatry in Colossians 3:5, Easton says:

From the facts analyzed above, however, it is evident that Paul is citing a formula which concluded with "covetousness *and* idolatry;" "idolatry" being the culminating term as in other lists already discussed. But it suddenly occurred to him that the Colossians were in no need of a warning against idolatry, and so he changed the wording, producing a phrase that no doubt lacks clarity but which teaches an excellent moral lesson (Easton 1932:6).

In 1984 Coetzer summarised a generation of research into the vice and virtue lists.

After reviewing four possible sources (Jewish, Hellenistic, Jewish/Hellenistic, Iranian) he concluded that they are likely a mix of all these influences, "Neither does the present state of research in this field provide sufficient guidelines in favour of a definite choice and for the time being one will have to rest content until there are new developments" (Coetzer 1984:39).

The "new developments" have been in the direction of viewing the lists within their biblical contexts. It has always been recognised to some extent that biblical authors used or constructed the lists to fit the need of the situation. In addition, there is

a growing recognition of their complex makeup, situational use, and relationship to other forms of moral exhortation. Insights from past research must be taken into account, but integrated into a more contextual approach to biblical meaning. Examples of this contextual approach would be the theses of J.M.G. Barclay on Galatians 5:1-6:11 (1988) within a sociological hermeneutic and J. Daryl Charles on 2 Peter 1:5-8 (1997) within a more evangelical hermeneutic. I agree with the basic conclusion of Charles that “Hellenistic form and Jewish theological assumptions merge in the Christian paraenetic tradition” (Charles 1997:121).

But for the Christian seeking wisdom, the application of these catalogues is of paramount importance. If the lists represent a summary of Christian character and moral behaviour, then we need to hear their message afresh in a time when moral direction is desperately needed.

The purpose of this chapter is to discern an exegetically based approach for the interpretation and application of Christian moral virtue. It will begin with a general survey of the vice and virtue lists. The scope will narrow to general observations and initial conclusions on the virtue lists. An in-depth study of Philippians 4:8 in its context will serve as a test case.

Comparative Survey

The following passages are commonly identified as catalogues of vice and virtue.

Vice Lists

Matt. 15:19
Mark 7:21-22
Rom. 1:29-31
1 Cor. 5:10-11
1 Cor. 6:9-10
2 Cor. 6:9-10

Virtue Lists

Matt. 5:3-11

2 Cor. 6:6-7

Gal. 5:19-21	Gal. 5:22-23
Eph. 4:31	Eph. 4:2-3
Eph. 5:3-5	Eph. 4:32
	Eph. 5:9
	Eph. 6:14-17
	Phil. 4:8
Col. 3:5,8	Col. 3:12-14
1 Tim. 1:9-10	
	1 Tim. 3:2-3
	1 Tim. 4:12
1 Tim. 6:4-6	1 Tim. 6:11
	2 Tim. 2:22
2 Tim. 3:2-5	2 Tim. 3:10
	Titus 1:7-8
Titus 3:3	Titus 3:1-2
	James 3:17
1 Pet. 2:1	
	1 Peter 3:8
1 Peter 4:3	
1 Peter 4:15	
	2 Pet. 1:5-7
Jude 8	
Jude 16	
Rev. 9:21	
Rev. 21:8	
Rev. 22:15	

General Observations on the Virtue Lists

First, the construction of the lists is varied in length, structure, and purpose.

None truly “stand alone” but Philippians 4:8 (it is grammatically connected to verse 9) is often cited as being the closest example of a Hellenistic virtue list. On the other hand the list with which Paul defends his ministry in 2 Corinthians 6:6-7 is highly complex with elements of hardship (vv. 4-5), virtues (vv. 6-7), and patience under stress (vv. 8-10).

The series of virtues in verses 6 and 7 is broken by reference to the Holy Spirit, the power of God, and the weapons (ὀπλῶν) of righteousness. The first two reveal the spiritual enablement of Paul to conduct himself in a virtuous way. The latter is a military image (Cp. Eph. 6:11-17; 1 Thess. 5:8; Rom. 6:13) describing his spiritual resources in salvation. Literary inclusion (“honour and dishonour”) show the comprehensiveness of

his faithfulness, and paradox (“sorrowful, yet always rejoicing”) demonstrates the tensions of present circumstances and ultimate victory. The point to be made is that the virtues cannot be isolated from the larger list. All of these devices are elements of one list that has one purpose in the context of Paul’s defence (vv. 4-10).

Second, the majority of the ethical terms used are common to the Greek language of the day. This demonstrates the sophistication of New Testament communication, for common ethical vocabulary, familiar to first century audiences, was filled with Christian meaning and content. Some have made much of this common terminology and concluded that Paul and others borrowed both the words and the concepts or, at least, divorced New Testament ethical teaching from a theological foundation. “In the many catalogues which we find in the New Testament and in the Apostolic Fathers little effort to introduce specifically Christian concepts can be detected. . . . To be sure, Christian life went beyond common morality, and it certainly included a critique and even a replacement of conventional morals. At this point a tension is to be noticed between the forces of change, implicit in the preaching of the Christian message, and the weight of convention which the catalogues of vices and virtues exert” (Betz 1979:282; cp. Meeks 1983:67).

Without denying the fact of overlaps in vocabulary and structure of the New Testament lists, nevertheless, the inventories of vice and virtue demonstrate a selection process that was thoroughly consistent with new life in Christ. The obvious one is the prominence of $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$. In Galatians 5:22-23 it heads the list and is rightly seen to be the fountainhead of all that flows out of it. Colossians 3:14 states that love is the summation of other virtues. Ephesians 4 and 5 are filled with the concept of Christian love; “bearing with one another in love” (4:2), “walk (or live) in love” (5:2). The

construction of 2 Peter 1:5-7 “features an ethical progression that builds toward a climax in a ἵνα φανῆται (Charles 1997:145). Love was an active concept to be demonstrated toward others (1 Cor. 13:4-8). Closely associated with these commands is the love of Christ for the believer. In Galatians it is Christ who “loved me and gave his life for me” (2:20). To serve one another in love is an extension of the Old Testament summary of loving one’s neighbour (5:13-14). In Ephesians our love is the imitation of God’s love (5:1) just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us” (5:2). In Colossians the Christological connections are even more pronounced. The ethical injunctions are given because “Christ is all and in all” (3:11). We forgive because Christ has forgiven us (3:13). It is the peace of Christ that must rule in the fellowship of believers (3:15).

The terminology of Christian virtue emphasised actions which promoted unity and harmony in the churches. Stoicism, with its emphasis upon autonomous man, tended to focus on qualities of the inner disposition, tranquillity, and self-sufficiency (Aune 1987:195). Humility was a quality not honoured in Hellenistic culture (ὁμόθυμος ὁμοῖον ἴσους, BAGD 1996:804; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12). It was used of servility and grovelling, the opposite of the self-sufficiency of the ideal wise man. But in the Christian life humility was a “recognition of personal insufficiency of one’s self but the powerful sufficiency of God” (Reinecker 1976:549) that was fundamental to equality and service (Phil. 2:3-4).

Many have noted the verbal and conceptual parallels between Paul and his culture. He used some terminology or phrases from Stoic thought or at least vocabulary common to both (“as having nothing, yet possessing everything;” see deSilva 1998:554-559 for his discussion of Stoic conceptual parallels). In his extensive comparison of Paul and Seneca Sevenster concluded,

Seneca's language would sometimes seem to have an affinity with that of the Apostle, while certain of his notions would also seem to coincide with Paul's, but on looking deeper we find that he even then pursues his own particular line of thought. . . . The same words do not always mean the same thing. On the contrary, in this study the fact has time and again emerged that superficial resemblances are precisely what, on closer examination, reveal the underlying difference most clearly (Sevenster 1961:240).

Thus, a cursory observation of the terminology, especially those terms which differ from the ordinary values of the day, reveals the inner canonical connections through the Old Testament and the Christological focus of the New.

Third, the above discussion transitions to another vital observation. New Testament virtue lists are presented in a Christian frame of reference. In addition to the above discussion, the moral life is defined by, and made possible through, the work of God in salvation. Christian virtue is the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22). Where there is any indication in the text, ethical terms are defined by the qualities of Christ himself. The Christian life means living worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1), worthy of the gospel (Phil. 1:27), or worthy of the Lord (Col. 1:10). All of these assume a saving relationship with God through the gospel of Christ. God's power equips for the ethical life which is a demonstration of our participation in the divine life (2 Peter 1:3-4).

Fourth, moral inventories comprise one or more elements of larger moral contexts. The best example of this is Ephesians 4 to 6 which is Paul's exhortation to walk worthy of our calling. Four virtue lists are used in the discussion (4:2, 4:32, 5:9; 6:14-17). The first is an introductory summary of the worthy walk and bridges into his discussion of Christian unity. The second climaxes Paul's detailed exhortations contrasting moral behaviour of the "old man" and the "new man" (4:17-32). The third parenthetically characterises "walking in the light". Both the second and third are part of larger sub-sections. The Christian's armour is a metaphorical presentation of the believer's spiritual resources in salvation. After such a lengthy treatment of moral

obligations Paul concludes by reminding us that the real conflict is spiritual (6:12).

Walking worthy (4:1) means standing strong in these spiritual resources. Other modes of expression in this section are the unity of the body (4:2-16), the behaviour of the new nature (4:17-32), the imitation of God (5:1-2), and Christian social relationships (5:17-6:9). The meaning of Paul's teaching on the Christian life is not contained within any one of these rhetorical devices, but within all together. Any interpretation must not isolate one of these features apart from its relation to the context.

Fifth, the lists are representative in nature. Certain phrases clue us into this fact. Galatians 5:21 ends the works of the flesh with "and the like" (ταῖς ὁμοίαις τούτοις) and it is those "practicing things such as these" (ταῖς τοιαύταις; correlative pronoun "such" "sort;" BAGD:821). In the same way the fruit of the Spirit concludes, "against such things there is no law" (5:23). The lists do not have to present every vice or virtue. But in their representative character they supply enough information for the reader to make an intelligent moral decision on attitudes and actions not specifically stated in the lists (Rom. 1:32;13:9;1 Tim. 1:10; Oropeza 1998:9). The individual traits are important and worthy of study but they further contribute to the broader ethical impact. Therefore, in a hortatory context the interpretation of the list may rest more on its function within the context rather than the range of meaning within each individual element. Furnish cautions about over exegeting the lists (Furnish 1968:76).

Sixth, the use of contrast in the vice and virtue lists makes communication more vivid. A series of vice or virtue may be used on its own, but the classical use makes a moral point through the side by side comparison presenting the choice of two ways. The contrast may be an emotional reminder of their former life in paganism thus making more real and personal their blessings in Christ (Col. 3:7; Titus 3:3). At times the

contrast serves as a polemic against false teachers (1 Tim. 1:9-10;6:3-5;Charles 1997:125). The fruit of the Spirit makes all the more impact by the stark contrast to the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21, 22-23). The forgiving behaviour of the “new man” stands in opposition to “every form of evil” of the “old man” (Eph. 4:31,32). The acts and attitudes which characterise the old life must be “put off” (αἵ ἀρεταὶ τῆς σαρκὸς) and the qualities of the new life in Christ must be “put on” (ἐνδύσασθε; Col. 3:9,12). The motives and conduct of the man of God are opposite to that of the false teachers (1 Tim. 6:1-10, 11). If one wants to identify the spiritually wise man, heavenly wisdom compared to earthly wisdom gives discernment (James 3:13-16, 17-18). Christian social life is more sharply understood by comparison with the former state of life without Christ (Titus 3:1-2, 3).

Seventh, lists take their form from the Hellenistic environment of communication, but the theological content comes from the Jewish heritage of the Old Testament and the apostolic preaching. First Peter 3:8-11 is a clear example of this. Peter uses three New Testament *hapax* (ὁμοειδής, συμπάσι, εὐσπλαγχνία, Guthrie 1981:930). This might indicate an outside source for his terminology. But the list itself is set in a thoroughly Old Testament background. Chapter 3:8-9 concludes an extensive section on Christian ethical behaviour beginning at 1:13. The blessing of new birth (1:3) leads to a life of moral transformation. God is holy. The believer should live a holy life (1:15-16 quoting Lev. 11:44,45;19:2;20:7). The Old Testament authorises the living quality of God’s Word (1:24,25 quoting Isa. 4:6-8), predicts the Messiah as cornerstone of the church and the suffering Saviour (2:6-8; see Isa 28:16; Psa. 118:22; Isa. 8:14 and 2:22 with Isa. 53:9), and provides the language for the new people of God (2:9; cp. Deut. 10:15; Ex. 19:6; Isa. 43:21). This moral

apologetic for the Christian faith is summarised with a virtue list urging mutual love and harmony. Two present, active participles in verse 9 describe the negative and positive means for fulfilling this injunction (mh; ajpodidovnte~, eujlogou`nte~). By his quotation of Psalm 34:12-16 (33:13-17a in LXX) Peter shows where he derives his ethical foundation.

The spiritual armour of Ephesians 6:10-19 is another case in point. The imagery for this extended metaphor comes from the military outfit of the Roman soldier. This figure is understandable in light of the prevalence of the Roman military in general and in the experience of Paul in particular. But even here the theological content and the image itself does not originate in Hellenistic culture. Isaiah 11:5, 52:7, and 59:17 link the ideas and phraseology of God's salvation with pieces of armour (See also Wisdom 5:17-20). Paul was relying upon the Old Testament Scriptures for the content of his thought but adapting it to the present analogy of the Roman soldier (Sevenster 1961:162; Wood 1978:85-88).

Initial Conclusions

Virtue catalogues appear to function in four ways. These four uses may not always be distinct from one another. For instance, a summary of apostolic teaching may also address a particular situation. But there appears to be an emphasis in context.

First, some moral catalogues summarise apostolic moral teaching. The vice list in Galatians 5:19-21 is presented as something that Paul had previously taught. "Which things I am telling you in advance just as I told you" (5:21) indicates a body or consensus of moral application that was communicated to the churches (Betz 1969:281). In Ephesians 4:21-22 his exhortation appeals to the original message of his missionary work with them. "Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the

truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.” In Philippians 4:8 the virtues recommended to the church had been demonstrated in his life and teaching (4:9). Charles identifies 2 Peter 1:5-7 as an example of Christian moral instruction. These virtues are a “natural expression of one’s organic union with Christ, the fruit of divine grace” (Charles 1997:127). The genre of the list is the “clearest echo of a pagan ethical list” in the New Testament, but the ethical terms chosen and used provide a “foundation of faith that is a product of the righteousness of Christ, revealed graciously through the knowledge of God” (Charles 1997:156). Other passages demonstrate that early Christian teaching, practice, and moral application was shared consistently with the first generation of churches (Rom. 6:17; 1 Cor. 4:17; 2 Thess. 3:6). Because these lists are representative and not exhaustive they present the minimum requirements of Christian behaviour and would suggest other avenues of conduct appropriate to the faith (Furnish 1968:76).

Second, virtue lists characterise the ideal or consistent ethical life. In the Pastorals this ideal is presented in the form of contrast between the false teacher and the true church leader. The character of the one is the antithesis of the other. Timothy’s example of life (1 Tim. 4:11) should be consistent with the Christian teaching in which he had been nurtured, “brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed” (4:6). This contrasts the teaching and life of those who have “abandoned the faith” (4:1). In 2 Timothy 3:10-11 there is complete harmony between Paul’s teaching and his moral example, “You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings. . . .” His example was the exact opposite of the moral bankruptcy of false teachers (3:1-9).

In Crete, the qualities of eldership (1:5-7) were important because some were professing faith but denying it in their way of life (Titus 1:16).

These moral exemplars were vital in social environments where the foundations of morality had eroded beyond recognition (McElaney 1974:214-215; Charles 1997:125). They served as patterns for spiritual maturity. The same virtues should be the goal of all Christians. Titus chapter 2, which I would include in the virtues lists, applies sober mindedness (*nhfavlion*), sensibility (*swvfrona*), and the serious attitude (*semnouv~*) of church leaders (1 Tim. 3:2, 8) to all the men of the congregation (Titus 2:2). The same virtues are applied to the life situations of older men and women, and younger men and women. Christian maturity is not the domain of a few, but should be the pursuit of all.

These models then serve as criteria or guidelines for selecting local church leadership (1 Tim. 3:15; Titus 1:5). Sound leadership guards the flock against the wrong sort of teachers. The lists do not require perfection or super sainthood, but do demand a maturity that has reached a consistency in personal, social, family, and spiritual spheres of life.

Third, virtue and vice relate Christian concepts to secular ideas. The choice of moral vocabulary demonstrates something of the relationship between Christian morality and secular ethical ideals. The lists, as we shall see in Philippians 4:8, are made up of terms which have extensive use and meaning in Scripture alongside others that are used only infrequently. Because the latter are *hapax legoumena* or very rare there is limited basis for comparison outside of their secular usage. Context must determine whether the biblical author is using it with a secular meaning or adapting its use within a Christian perspective.

This sort of problem has led some to see the lists as adopted wholesale from the surrounding culture. If the moral terminology is assumed to mean the same thing both in the church and in culture, then moral conduct is not rooted in theology, but in anthropology. Christian faith contributes to religious belief, but offers nothing unique to moral behaviour (White 1990:213-214; see McEleney 1974:211-213 for examples and discussion). Easton concluded that the qualifications for overseer (1 Tim. 3:2-3) “represent rhetorical formulas which could be applied with more or less appropriateness to any responsible walk in life” (Easton 1931:10-11).

A more nuanced approach seeks to discern the relationship of this overlap. A conciliatory approach explains the similarities as building bridges with various groups inside or outside of the church. The writers of the New Testament used traditional moral standards acceptable to Jews, Christians, and pagans (Aune 1987:195). This helped to soften the differences between the groups (Betz 1979:282). Barclay came to a similar conclusion concerning the lists in Hellenistic Judaism. The Jews had used this method of instruction with an “apologetic desire to show that what the law required was exactly in line with the virtues prized in the Hellenistic world” (Barclay 1988:124-125). Others have suggested that the traditional forms helped to maintain peace among the highly diverse social groups within the church itself (Mappes 2003:206-207 although he does not hold this view).

The basic problem with the conciliatory view is that it minimises the theological contexts of the lists. The catalogues occur in Christian teaching relating to salvation and the Christian life. There may have been an indirect benefit where cultural similarities existed but this was not their primary purpose. What was used from the vocabulary of the culture was integrated fully into the gospel message. Speaking of Paul’s writings, Furnish says, “It is in the perspective of the whole redemptive event of Christ that this

apostle frames his ethical exhortations” (Furnish 1968:67). David Desilva investigated the comparison of Pauline and Stoic teaching. He compared simple verbal parallels, phrases, conceptual parallels, and shared use of topics, imagery, and rhetorical devices (such as vice and virtue lists). “Not only the form, but also the content of these lists corresponds to what one encounters in Stoic (and other non-Christian) authors, suggesting that Paul has incorporated them to reinforce Christianity’s commitment to conventional morality” (Desilva 1995:562). However, he goes on to clarify the theological differences that set the Christian message apart from cultural assumptions.

It was the encounter with Christ, the experience of the Spirit, all within the framework of a fervent eschatological expectation that shaped Paul’s message, and, as seen throughout the discussion above, accounts for many of the differences between Paul and the Stoics at each level of parallelism explored” (Desilva 1995:565).

It must be added to Desilva’s article that language had a general usage in culture outside of a particular school of thought. The similarities at points may have simply been a common vocabulary without the necessity of borrowing, overlap, or knowledge of the other. Both Paul and the Stoics utilised a wider culture of communication in thought, terms, and forms (Barclay 1988:222). Sevenster is adamant on this issue, “A catalogue of verbal similarities will not contribute to the exegesis of the Pauline epistles” (Sevenster 1961:173).

Christianity shares common ground not with culture, but with humanity created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 9:6; James 3:9 and Ch. 4). Where overlap occurs it is because through the exercise of rational thought and human experience, mankind has been able to perceive a dim outline of what is noble or pragmatically worthwhile. But only in Christ does one come to know the theological reasons why this is so and the enablement of the Holy Spirit to live them out.

Fourth, the New Testament ethical lists address specific moral and relational issues. All of the New Testament letters had a historical setting. In this sense the message was occasional or circumstantial (Aune 1987:204). All of the vice and virtue lists in some way addressed a moral problem. But some of the lists show evidence that they were created specifically for the particular problem. The vice list of Galatians 5:19-21 appears to use a “framing” approach with common material at the beginning and end with eight terms in the middle addressing dissension and disunity (Barclay 1988:153). Paul warned the Corinthians against sins that were actually taking place in the church. The lists did not function as mere illustration. They began with the real problems and then incorporated others for illustration and warning. They were “mostly situational” (Oropeza 1998:9; see 1 Cor. 5:10-11;6:9-10;2 Cor. 6:9-10;16-20-21). The pastorals show a similar trend. For instance, 1 Timothy 1:9-10 have in the background the Mosaic law, for the problem centred upon those who thought themselves to be teachers of the Law (1:7). Where there was an underlying pattern the final form was crafted to the situation (McEleney 1974:216-217; 1 Tim. 6:4-5;2 Tim. 3:2-5; Titus 3:3).

Among the virtue lists 2 Corinthians 6:6-7 is constructed to defend Paul's ministry. First Peter 3:8 is part of an exhortation to unity and harmony under suffering. Timothy is given a pattern of behaviour to counter the lives of unruly and false teachers (1 Tim. 4:12; 6:11).

Section Summary

The catalogues of vice and virtue succinctly package a summary of Christ-like moral conduct. They may have been the “audio-visuals” of basic Christian instruction. By contrast and comparison they provided a quick-reference moral compass. In New Testament contexts they functioned to instruct, motivate, warn, and guide men and women towards ethical behaviour and harmonious relationships. This was the larger

purpose of moral exhortation or paraenesis (Malherbe 1986:129; Charles 1997:117). The lists as they stand are an integral part of the writer's argument or appeal. They reveal the heart, beauty, and rationale of Christian character. They were meant to be life transforming.

The comparative survey surfaces several preliminary principles for personal interpretation and application of New Testament ethical lists. First, identify the larger context. The list will never carry the moral guidance by itself. Second, find how the list functions in its particular context. Is it illustrative or instructive? Does it warn or encourage? Third, study the individual virtues used by the writer. How do they enhance the present context? Expand outward from context to author; to other New Testament writers; to its use in the Old Testament and secular society (Larkin 1988:339-343). Where a word is rare in its biblical usage determine whether the author is using it in its secular sense or giving it a specifically Christian meaning. How does that quality demonstrate some aspect of godliness? Fourth, in nouns and adjectives there is often implied action. To possess the quality of love means that love is expressed concretely in words and actions (1 Cor 13:4-8). What in the list needs to be implemented to achieve the moral purpose of the passage (i.e. unity, integrity, perseverance)? Fifth, by way of comparison determine what must be "put off" in order to "put on" this moral progress.

These general observations and initial conclusions must now be put to the test. The next section will be an exegetical study of Philippians 4:8.

Philippians 4:8

Our study of Philippians 4:8 in its context will move towards two critical questions for application. First is the response Paul expected of his readers in the city of Philippi. But more importantly is the response Paul expected of others who would read his

exhortations outside of the specific situation. Are there indicators in the context of the letter itself or in the wider historical and social context that point to its ethical application for other people and for other times (i.e. today)?

8 Ὅ ἐϊ ἐδῦί, ἀἄοϊ β, ὀά ὀό ί ἐçèç , ὀά ὀἄ ίῦ, ὀά ἀβῆἄἄἄ,
 ὀά ἄίῦ, ὀά δñī ὀὀἔç , ὀά ἄ ὀçìἄ, ἄ ὀἔð ñἄ ἔἄ ἄ ὀἔð
 δἄἔί ò, ὀἄῶ ὀἄ ἔϊ ἄβἄῶἔἄ
 9 ἔἄ ἰῦἔἄἄἄἄ ἄñἄῦῦἄἄἄἄἄ ἔϊ ὀἄἄἄἄἄἄ ἄ ἄἄἄ ἰ ἰἰ β,
 ὀἄῶ ὀἄ δñῦὀἄἄἄἄ ἔἄ ἔἄ ὀ ὀç ὀ ἄ ñἄçḡ ὀἄἄἄ ἰἄ ἰῦ ἰ
 (Philippians 4:8-9)

Setting of the Virtues

Introduction

To; λοιποῦν introduces 4:8-9 to close this section of exhortation in 4:2-9.

The adjective can refer to what is left undone. Or it can distinguish between people or things and be translated “other” (BAGD 1996:479) The substantive is commonly used in this adverbial sense to introduce the conclusion of a letter. It sums up and brings to a close: “as far as the rest is concerned, ”beyond that,” “in addition,” “finally.” The adverbial use may also be used for an internal transition in thought as at 3:1 (see also 2 Cor. 13:11; 1Cor 4:2; 2 Thess. 3:1 for its use before the end of a letter and the discussions of Moule 1959:161; Vincent 1897:137; Alexander 1989:97).

At 4:8 το; λοιποῦν does not conclude the letter because Paul’s extended thanksgiving for their offering is yet to come. Even so, it is best to take this as a concluding particle, not of the letter as a whole, but of this paraenetic section which concludes the hortatory body of the letter from 1:27-4:1. This conclusion comes from a consideration of the genre and structure of Philippians.

Genre and Structure

Paul's letter to the Philippian church is warm and personal. His joyous thanksgiving reflects their close association in the gospel (1:4-5). They had laboured together from their first exposure to the gospel (1:5; 4:3). When he moved on to other locations they had contributed financial support (4:15). Neither had they forgotten him when he encountered troubles and imprisonment (1:7; 4:14). In his present imprisonment some ten years later (Acts 28:30-31), the Philippian church sent Epaphroditus with yet another gift (2:25). When he writes to this congregation, he uses personal and intimate language. "I have you in my heart. . . I long for all of you with the affection (σπλαγχνοίᾳ) of Christ Jesus" (1:7,8). "Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, . . . dear friends!" (4:1).

The personal flow of thought from thanksgiving and prayer (1:1-11), to personal news (1:12-17), to exhortation (1:27-18), to travel plans (2:19-30), to strong warning (3:1-4:1), to general exhortation (4:2-9), and back to thanks for their gift (4:10-20), has made the book a difficult one to outline. Particularly troubling is the abrupt change of tone in 3:1b-2. Is there an overall theme? What provides continuity? How do the various sections fit together? Paul does not seem to treat a particular theological problem as in Galatians. The classic passage of New Testament Christology is found in 2:5-11, but it is used as illustration and motivation in the exhortation to unity and like-mindedness. Similarly, the preaching of the gospel is mentioned often and the coming of Christ is a hope throughout the letter, but neither seems to be the occasion or driving force that ties its contents together. Several solutions have been suggested.

First, there are those who see no need for a logical structure. After all, it is a personal letter. Adolph Deissmann pioneered the comparative study of ancient letter forms through an examination of hundreds of Hellenistic papyri. He concluded that the

New Testament letters were both occasional and personal in contrast to public and formal. A personal letter was sent to a specific addressee or group. The contents were not premeditated. An epistle was a more formal literary writing intended for a public audience (Deissmann 1979:58; Doty 1969:183-184; Alexander 1989:87)

The older commentators recognised this informal, thematic character of Philippians with joy and thanksgiving being the most common emphases. $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$ and $\kappa\alpha\iota\upsilon\pi\omega$ are used in (1:4,18,25;2:2,18,28,29;3:1;4:1,4,10). Vincent identified it as a “familiar” letter whose informal and unsystematic character along with its abrupt transitions were answered by the informality of this form (Vincent 1897:xxxi, xxxiv).

A second solution is proposed by those who follow a form critical method. In opposition to Deissmann they concluded that the letters of Paul did have specific form and function. Their research identified the typical structures of personal letter writing and the idioms frequently used in popular communication (Doty 1969:192-199; White 1981:90-100). Since Philippians did not fit into one of these clear patterns, the formal markers were used to suggest a composite letter put together by a later editor.

$\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \lambda\omicron\iota\pi\omicron\upsilon\eta$ is an adverbial phrase often used to sum up and bring to a conclusion. Its position midway in the letter at 3:1 and the abrupt change in tone and content is explained as the interpolation of another letter. In formal letter writing the acknowledgement of a gift would typically be at the beginning. On the basis of these formal literary features two or more letters are proposed each with its own historical background (Rahtjen 1960:167-173; Beare 1969:24-29). Most consider the entire letter to be Paul's, but assembled by an editor at a later stage of transmission (Beare 1969:24).

The problems with the composite letter approach are at least two. There is a consistent history for the unity of the text (Dalton 1979:101-102). The background of each proposed letter and its incorporation into its current form is an artificial reconstruction for which there is no textual evidence. Subsequent research has shown that the letter form is a very flexible genre. The basic structure of opening, body, and closing is subject to numerous variations (Osborne 1991:255-256). To approach the text with a too rigid literary scheme minimises the content and message of the letter itself. While using the basic research of the form critical scholars Russell cautions against constructing an abstract "Pauline letter structure" which is then used "to rule structural variation as evidence of inauthenticity" (Russell 1982:296). While conforming to the general form of communication, the letter's content was developed to address the pastoral concerns of the apostle in his absence.

A third approach combines the broad outlines of letter writing with a descriptive analysis of the letter's message. Jewett argues for the unity of the letter from a study of the thanksgiving prayer (1:3-11). Using this as the thematic rather than structural key he suggests that the major themes of thanksgiving for their financial gift (1:3), joy (1:4), suffering, and right mental attitude (1:7) are the dominant thought of chapters 2-4 (Jewett 1970:53).

T.E. Pollard argued the unity of Philippians on the basis of common themes and terminology in chapters 1-2 and 3. Paul's central concern was the potential disunity of the church (1:27). He exhorts them to live worthy of the gospel and reinforces his message with the example of Christ's humility (2:5-11) and Paul's own experience (3:1-14). Further, there is, in the background, the terminology of Isaiah 53 and 45. Philippians 2:11 is a citation of Isaiah 45:23. In 3:9 Paul alludes to the righteousness by

faith found in Isaiah 53:11 and 45:24-25 (Pollard 1966:64). Finally, there is a close verbal agreement between ch.3 and the rest of the letter.

kevrdo~ , kerdaivnw 1:11)	1:21	3:7,8 (elsewhere only in Titus
hJgevomai	2:3,6	3:7,8
eJurivskw	2:7	3:8-9
schvma//, metaschmativzw	2:7	3:21
morfhv/, /suvmmorfo~	2:6	3:21
politeuvomai, polivteuma	1:27	3:20 (only use by Paul)
tapeinovw/ tapeivnwsiv~	2:8	3:20

This thematic development was not produced by a predetermined literary structure, but a stream of consciousness motivated by a deep concern for unity in the Philippian church (Pollard 1966:59,64,66).

W.J. Dalton followed a similar line of thought, but added an important feature to his analysis. He found an *inclusio* in the opening and closing sections of the letter that demonstrated its overall literary unity. Four common elements tie these two sections together.

koinwniva	1:5	4:15
sugkoinwnov~	1:7	4:13
ajpov th`~ prwvth~ hJmevra~ ejn ajrch/`	1:5	4:15
Reciprocal feelings (fronei`n)	1:7	4:10

He concluded his findings, "Thus we have four common elements at the beginning and the end of the letter. It does seem fitting that the central idea should be that of partnership, since in fact this theme dominates the whole text" (Dalton 1979:101). This is an important insight for it puts the themes of unity and steadfastness (1:27) as subordinate to partnership (1:5; contra Jewett and others who take the exhortation of 1:27 as the thesis statement of the letter) in the literary structure of the letter.

Robert Swift built his analysis of the letter on the partnership theme. Fellowship in the gospel is a central theme broad enough to explain the details of the entire letter. “The development of this theme follows a literary structure that is as systematic, coherent, and logical as that of any New Testament epistle” (Swift 1984:236). Paul’s concern for Christian unity and steadfastness are sub-themes addressed in the main body of the letter. An appropriate response of restoring unity in the fellowship and standing strong in suffering will further their gospel fellowship for it mirrors not only the present experience of Paul himself but the humility of Christ. The resulting outline is:

Salutation	1:1-2
Prologue	1:3-11
Biographical Prologue	1:12-26
Body	1:27-4:9
Walk Worthy of the Gospel	1:27-30
Walk in Unity and Steadfastness	2:1-4:1
Walk in Unity	2:1-30
Walk in Steadfastness	3:1-4:1
Walk in Unity and Steadfastness	4:2-9
Restore Unity	4:2-3
Maintain Tranquillity	4:4-9
Epilogue	4:10-20
Salutation and benediction	4:21-23

The thematic approach goes a long way in positioning the virtue list of 4:8 in its larger context. However, following the publication of H.D. Betz’s commentary on Galatians there was a new trend to analyse the letters of Paul on the basis of rhetorical criticism. This fourth approach finds the unity of Philippians in rhetorical categories. Ancient rhetoricians developed principles for persuasive oral presentation and argumentation. As a discipline it was distinct from the theory and art of letter writing. The rhetorical presentation included these basic elements (Betz 1970:359-375; Osborne 1991:121-126; Reed 1993:304):

Exordium (introduction)

<i>Narratio</i>	(statement of the case under discussion)
<i>Confirmatio (probatio)</i>	(proof of the case)
<i>Conclusio (peroratio)</i>	(conclusion)

Rhetoric intended to persuade or dissuade from a particular course of action was known as *deliberative*. This approach was often used in the political arena (Watson 1988:59; Reed 1993:297). Duane Watson sees the answer to the structural problems of Philippians in the framework of deliberative rhetoric. The rhetorical situation is the rise of a rival gospel that combines faith with observance of Jewish laws. Paul espouses a life worthy of the gospel that “entails love, fellowship, mutual concern, and single-minded purpose to live for the gospel, all in reliance upon the righteousness of Christ” (Watson 1988:59-60). The argument of the book therefore answers the question, “What is a manner of life worthy of the gospel?” The introduction or *exordium* is 1:3-26. The thesis statement (*narratio*) is found in 1:27 and amplified in verses 28-30. The *probatio* in 2:1-3:21 argues for this vision of the worthy life on the basis of Christ’s example (2:1-11), Paul’s exhortations (2:12-30), and the example of his own spiritual experience with Christ (3:1-21). The conclusion (*peroratio*) of chapter 4 recapitulates the need for unity and steadfastness (4:1-9) and appeals to their mutual relationship for a positive response to his appeal (4:10-20). The virtue list of verse 8 is said to repeat in some way previous topics in the letter (Watson 1988:61-77), although this is not clearly explained. “It is interesting that Paul does not use the list of virtues to more effectively recapitulate *topoi*, for only the *topos* of purity (α { ἁγιωσύνη }) from 2:15 is reiterated” (Watson 1988:77). He concludes that Philippians is a complete literary unity with the connections between the various sections explained by ordinary rhetorical conventions (Watson 1988:88).

The value of this approach seems to be the awareness of Hellenistic rhetorical devices. But it falls short of providing a complete explanation of the contents of the letter. First, Philippians is not polemic in nature. Paul's relationship with his readers is warm, personal, and supportive. At the time of writing the threat of false teaching is still external to the Philippian assembly. When Watson states that recapitulation is necessary in 4:1-9 because "Paul is encountering conflict from the Philippian congregation with regard to what constitutes a life worthy of the gospel" he is reading more than the larger context allows. Second, by taking 1:27 to be the thesis statement he limits the rhetorical situation to the hortatory section of letter. To be sure there are sections of exhortation (1:27ff) and argumentation (3:2ff) but neither of these is broad enough on its own to characterise the entire epistle. The opening paragraphs of 1:3-26 and 4:10-20 are personal in nature and pertain more to affirming their fellowship in the gospel than to changing their behaviour. Third, rhetorical theory appears to be read into, rather than out of, the letter at certain points. What Paul says is viewed more as a tactic of argumentation than a genuine expression of his affection for them. For instance, his consideration of possible death (1:19-26) is presented to frighten the audience, a tactic to arouse *pathos* and win over the audience (Watson 1988:64). This section is better understood as a reassurance that no matter how his imprisonment turns out it is "all right" because the gospel is advancing and he is in Christ (Alexander 1988:95). Fourth, Reed has investigated the formal relationship between the classical rhetorical handbooks and the epistolary theorists. Were ancient letter writers instructed or encouraged to organise their epistles according to rhetorical categories? After surveying the literature he concludes that there are functional overlaps, but no formal relationships between the two disciplines. The greatest area of influence appears to be

in style more than structure. Similarities and the use of rhetorical devices came from the broader cultural environment of communication. "In other words, there is no necessary connection between the basic theory of epistolary structure and the technical teachings about rhetorical arrangement. The similarities may be explained in light of the modern linguistic realization that language is often pragmatically used in different genres to do similar things" (Reed 1993:308. See 314-322 for his critique of Watson's position). He, therefore, urges methodological caution in applying rhetorical structure wholesale to the letters of Paul.

A fifth approach offers helpful insights from the study of family or friendship letters. The friendship letter had no specific theme or issue to present, but was for the sake of maintaining and developing the relationship. The letter substituted for the personal presence of the writer and presented his or her side of the conversation. White refers to this function of friendly correspondence as "staying in touch" (White 1981:90-93;Reed 1993:303-304). A typical pattern for a family letter is presented by Alexander with the corresponding sections of Philippians (Alexander 1989:94).

Address and greeting:	1:1-2
Prayer for the recipients:	1:3-11
Reassurance about the sender:	1:12-26
Request for reassurance about the recipients:	1:27-2:18
Information about the movements of intermediaries:	2:19-30
Exchange of greetings with third parties:	4:21-22
Closing wish for health:	4:23

If Philippians conforms to the basic structure of a friendship letter, then Paul's purpose for writing is nurture and relationship. This accounts for the personal and affectionate language throughout the letter. Many terms he uses are the language of friendship in the ancient world (Fee 1995:18;White 1990:211-212). Furthermore, many of these terms are *hapax* in Paul or used infrequently in other Pauline writings (Silva

1988:11-12). The disclosure formula of 1:12 (“I want you to know”) is a typical feature and fits in the normal flow of thought. There need not be a formal body as in other types of epistles, but in the flexibility of the letter style he can interweave concerns and exhortations as he does in chapters 2 and 3. While not typical, the note of thanks at the end of the letter (4:10-20) does have parallels in the family letter genre (Alexander 1989:97-98). Finally, the much discussed issue of opponents takes a back seat to the reinforcement of “family” ties. “Moreover, if this is the letter’s primary function, it relieves us of the need to posit some major heresy or conflict within the church as the main reason for writing; the admonition and warnings can assume a more subordinate role in the letter plan” (Alexander 1989:99).

The family/friendship letter genre appears to provide the most satisfactory pattern for the formal structure of Philippians. It gives us a sense of shape and how the parts will be expected to fit into the whole. However, genre and its structure is the least definitive aspect of context. One will find within the general expectation of genre a great variety of expression depending on the specific needs and purposes of the writer and his recipients. The final detail of the outline must come not from a generic prototype but from a thematic reading of the text itself. It must descriptively rather than prescriptively be allowed to guide the structural process.

In the case of the Philippians correspondence the “strengthening of Christian family ties” is termed fellowship or partnership in the gospel (1:5;4:15). This is the core value of Christian friendship (Fee 1995:5). The central portion may not be the body of a more literary epistle, but it is much more than a mere request for reassurance (“then whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know. . . v. 27). This springboard becomes the opportunity for Paul to express himself to the issues of unity in the congregation and steadfastness in the face of outside pressures. These

surely step outside the content of the normal letter of friendship. Yet, he is able to move from issue to issue using the framework of the family letter.

Dalton's observations of *inclusio* are suggestive at this point. Not only do we find bracketing at the beginning and the end, but within the letter itself we find that 1:27-4:1 is marked out by the use of *politeuomai*, *polivteuma* and the theme of standing fast (*sthvkw*). As a result, it is best to combine both a thematic and formal approach. Fee refers to the letter as a "hortatory letter of friendship." I offer a modified outline which includes both the structural elements of the family letter and the inner thematic relationships of the content itself.

Address and greeting:	1:1-2
Partnership in the gospel (Prayer for the recipients):	1:3-11
Advance of the gospel (Reassurance about the sender):	1:12-26
Unity (Request for reassurance about the recipients):	1:27-2:18
Information about the movements of intermediaries:	2:19-30
Steadfastness (Further request for reassurance):	3:1-4:1
Concluding exhortations (Unity and Steadfastness):	4:2-9
Thanks for their gift (Partnership):	4:10-20
Exchange of greetings with third parties:	4:21-22
Closing benediction:	4:23

Larger Hortatory Context (1:27-4:9)

In this analysis 4:2-9 closes the central concerns of the letter with a typical Pauline section of moral exhortation or paraenesis (Russell 1982:297, 303-305; Silva 1988:219 and compare Rom.12:1;Gal. 5:1;1 Thess. 4:1). With this paragraph Paul moves from the single exhortation to live worthy of the gospel (1:27) to the exhortations and applications which will summarise an active response to his message. The paraenesis links with what has preceded, adds to its thought, and summarises to bring closure to the central "body" of the letter.

In Philippians these concluding exhortations (4:2-9) are not typical paraenetic concerns which close out a section of instruction or argumentation. Indeed, the whole

thrust of his concern is ethical rather than doctrinal or polemical. The “request for reassurance” will happen when he hears back that they are following through on his instructions.

Moral instruction begins in 1:27 and ends with a transition at 4:1. The letter opens with a prayer of thanksgiving for their partnership (*κοινωνία*) in the Gospel (1:3-11). This word means fellowship, close association, or generosity, and, at times can refer to a financial contribution. Here those are certainly in the background, but the emphasis is active participation in the Gospel enterprise. Rienecker says that “it denotes cooperation in the widest sense, their participation w. the apostle whether in sympathy or in suffering or in active labor” (Rienecker 1976:544; also Silva 1988:45). Next comes a report on the progress of the gospel through his imprisonment and trial (1:12-26). This information reassures them that God is completing His good work (1:6) in spite of the personal trials and suffering of the apostle. He expresses an expectation of his soon release and reunion with them (1:19, 25). Until that release actually takes place he must consider the possibility of his own execution. For Paul, death would bring him into a “with Christ” relationship far better than the earthly sufferings of his ministry and imprisonment (1:23). His confidence of release is not based upon the legal proceedings but the assurance that God’s purpose for fruitful ministry is not yet complete.

The hortatory section beginning in 1:27 moves from the advance of the gospel in his circumstances to the advance of the gospel in theirs. No matter what happens to him, they must, as a matter of priority (*μόνον*), conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel. The main verb *πολιτευομαι*, means “to have one’s citizenship,” “to rule or govern the state,” or “to conduct or live one’s life” (BAGD

1996:686). Paul's more common word (also metaphorical) for living the Christian life is *peripatevw* found in passages like Romans 6:4; 8:4; 1 Cor 3:3 and later in this letter at 3:17,18.

Politeuvmoi is a colourful word for Paul to choose because Philippi, though located in Greece, was designated as a Roman colony. The city of Philippi was settled first as Krenides when gold was discovered in the area. Philip of Macedon, Alexander the Great's father, captured and rebuilt the community with Macedonians when he recognised its economic and strategic value. During the time of the conquests of father and son they funded armies and campaigns from the lucrative gold revenues. The Romans did not realise such prosperity and the town declined to a small settlement. When Anthony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius in 42 B.C. Philippi was resettled with Roman military veterans and declared to be a Roman colony. Another immigration of war veterans arrived when Octavian defeated Anthony in 31 B.C. The defeated militias were dispossessed of their property in Italy and relocated to the outlying colonies. A few years later Octavian was declared Augustus (27 A.D.). Because of its significance in his rise to power, Philippi was renamed *Colonia Augusta Iulia (Vixtrix) Philippensium*. It was extended the "Law of Italy" which apparently involved direct responsibility to Rome, rather than the provincial authorities, no taxation, and citizenship with its legal and social rights and privileges (Borchort 1986:834-836). The goal of "colonisation" was to replicate on a small scale the values and institutions of Roman culture. It was to be an outpost where Italians outside their native homeland and those granted the privileged status could be "at home" and experience the benefits of empire (Vincent 1897:xvii).

When Paul and his team entered Philippi they encountered a predominately Gentile community with a proud Roman heritage. The Jewish population was so small that they apparently did not have the required *minyan* for a synagogue (Acts 16:13). The first convert to Christianity was a Gentile businesswoman along with her family or business associates (Acts 16:14-15). After casting out the demon, Paul and Silas were singled out as Jews, arraigned before the Roman magistrates, (a term used of military captains or governors), and accused of undermining Roman custom (16:20-21). There is cynicism in this account both toward religion and the state. These hardened slave owners cared nothing for the spiritual powers or needs of the girl. Loss of their profits prompted them to bring a case against Paul and Silas. Their missionary activities were characterised so as to offend Roman pride. Beare provides an excellent survey of the religious background of Philippi.

The syncretism of the age is found here in one of its most ample expressions. Archaeological investigation, incomplete and partial though it has been, has yielded names and symbols of native Thracian deities, of the gods of Greece and Rome, and of the great divinities of the Orient—importations from Anatolia, Syria, and Egypt (Beare 1959:7).

Would it be this twin religious toleration and Roman civic pride that would result in the present suffering of the Philippians believers (Phil 1:29-30)? Through the arrest and imprisonment of Paul and Silas and the miraculous intervention of God, the Roman military officer and his household came to faith in Christ (16:23-34). This brief historical digression provides a backdrop for Paul's choice of words to this predominately Gentile church. The concept of *politeuomai* is rooted in the history of the Greek city state. It meant to exercise civic responsibilities as a citizen of the state. The *povli~* was conceived as the "theatre of corporate activity of every kind, in which the individual citizen found scope for the use of all his gifts and the

realization of all his potentialities” (Beare 1959:66). It also had a more general usage of fulfilling one’s responsibilities. This may be its sense in the only other New Testament use in Acts 23:1, “My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.” But even here Paul may have in mind the Jewish idea of living faithfully in covenant relation to God (2 Macc. 6:1;11:25. See O’Brien 1991:146-147 for a summary of the discussions).

The question remains as to which nuance of the word Paul intended for the Philippians. It could be a generic equivalent to “walking worthy of the Lord” or it could make a metaphorical connection between heavenly and earthly citizenship. In favour of the latter is the repetition of the related noun at the end of this section in 3:20. In contrast to the earthly mindset of the false teachers (3:19) Paul reminds them that “our citizenship is or exists (present tense of $\text{u}\text{J}\text{p}\text{a}\text{v}\text{r}\text{c}\omega$) in heaven. The noun may mean the state itself or the responsibilities of citizens within the state. An interesting usage also is the idea of a colony of foreigners (O’Brien 1991:460). To people who take pride in their Roman citizenship Paul builds his moral appeal on their higher spiritual citizenship. They are to live in a way that is consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How that is done is explained in the subordinate clauses using military and athletic imagery (1:27-30). They are to stand firm ($\text{st}\text{h}\text{v}\text{k}\text{e}\text{t}\text{e}$) in one spirit and purpose. The picture is a soldier holding his ground in battle. They will also live worthy as they contend together for the faith of the gospel. $\text{S}\text{u}\text{n}\text{a}\text{l}\text{q}\text{e}\text{v}\omega$ means to contend or fight alongside someone else in a common cause (Rienecker 1976:548). Negatively, they will not be startled or frightened by the forces of opposition. Faithfulness to the message of Christ, when it would be easier to compromise or deny the gospel, is a confirmation ($\text{e}[\text{n}\text{d}\text{e}\text{i}\text{x}\text{i}\sim$) that God is at work in their lives (1:6, 25,26; 2:12-13).

Both of these verbs are repeated in the closing verses of this hortatory section.

St \hbar vkw is a summation in 4:1 and sunalqevw in 4:3.

The concept of heavenly citizenship forms a mental framework for the apostle to present his appeal in 1:27-4:1. The comparison should not be pressed in all its details for he uses other figures of speech (soldier, athlete) and modes of expression (exhortation; exemplification, 2:5-11; polemic 3:2,) in making his appeal. The point of contact in this metaphor appears to be the value they place on their citizenship. Pride in Roman heritage suggests the higher value and priority of spiritual and eternal citizenship in heaven.

In this common relationship maintenance of unity is very important.

“Togetherness” is the moral emphasis of these instructions. In this contest or struggle they are to stand “in one spirit,” with “one purpose” (γυχῆν). Unity will be discussed in chapter 2 not in an abstract way, but in the context of social opposition which mirrors Paul’s past experience in Philippi (Acts 16:6-40) and his present imprisonment in Rome (1:30). So not only are they in unity with each other, but they share with Paul, though separated by distance, the common cause of the gospel.

Rome has been the traditional provenance of the Philippian letter along with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. The reasons are several. First, Paul writes from prison (1:17,13). Acts 28:30-31 (60-62 A.D.) describes his imprisonment as house arrest in which there was relative freedom to receive visitors and carry on ministry with those who came to him. This picture is consistent with his description of ministry influence in Philippians 1:12-18. Second, he makes reference to the Praetorian Guard which was stationed in Rome to protect the Emperor and his interests (1:13). Prai τ wv ρ on could be used of the imperial residence or even the provincial

residence of the governors. However, the following phrase, “and to everyone else” suggests a personal reference to the guards themselves. Third, Paul expects an outcome to his trial that would result in release or execution (1:19-21). Fourth, he sends greetings from the household of Caesar (4:22). These would be servants, slaves, officials, or staff associated with the emperor (Nero A.D. 54-68) and his responsibilities. The major objection to the Roman view is the number of visits back and forth mentioned in the epistle. Four are required. Several others implied or intended. The four required are 1) the news of Paul’s imprisonment, 2) the sending of Epaphroditus with their gift (4:18), 3) news of Epaphroditus’ illness reaching the Philippian church (2:26), and 4) deep anxiety of the church brought back to Epaphroditus. A fifth visit would be the impending return of Epaphroditus with the letter from Paul. The closer proximity to Ephesus has led some scholars to propose an Ephesian imprisonment during the third mission trip (Acts 19; White 1990:206 n. 21). The major hurdle of this view is that no imprisonment is specifically mentioned. Another proposal is Paul’s two year detention in Caesarea where he was held in Herod’s praetorian (Acts 23:35; 24:27). The internal references above are explained in reference to Roman provincial authorities and Paul’s expectation of release (Hawthorne 1983:59-61). However, if distance and travel is a concern for the Roman view, it becomes almost prohibitive for the Caesarean view. On the whole, commentators have accepted the traditional Roman view as the natural understanding of the circumstances in the letter (Lightfoot, Vincent, Moule, Kennedy, Beare, Hendriksen, Kent, Silva, O’Brien, Fee). Travel in the Roman Empire was frequent and Philippi stood at the eastern end of the Egnatian Way. The 800 mile trip would take a minimum of forty days (O’Brien 1991:25) and one would need to add time for delays, rest, and the interim periods (Beare 1969:19). Even so, the four required trips would fit comfortably into the

two years. Martin himself remains undecided on the issue but has an excellent discussion of the issues involved (Martin 1987:20-36; also Guthrie 1981:535). The Roman imprisonment places the writing of the letter 60-62 A.D., and probably near the end of that time in light of Paul's anticipation of release and the need for travel time.

Though it has generated great debate, the actual *location* of imprisonment probably does not have a huge bearing upon the exposition of the text. The *fact* of imprisonment certainly does for it is integral to their fellowship in the gospel. Paul is in prison and suffering in various ways. They are suffering in a similar way (1:30). On the basis of their common relationship in Christ, he exhorts them to a one minded unity and moral perspective. In doing so his own example is one of the primary methods of moral instruction (1:30;2:17;3:4-17;4:9).

Chapter 3 addresses their unity in the gospel message and its consequent moral behaviour (3:17). An errant message will lead to errant behaviour (3:18-19).

Apparently, the Philippian congregation was exposed to a gospel which in teaching and/or practice included circumcision. The traditional and most common identity of this group is with the Judaizers, Jewish Christians who accepted Jesus as Messiah but demanded the continuation of covenant regulations. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Jerusalem Council had debated this question and concluded that justification was by faith in Christ alone without works of the law (Acts 15:1-35). This decision was consistent with the Old Testament and carried apostolic authority for the churches. Jewish traditions derived from the Mosaic Law might continue as cultural practice, but Gentiles were not required to become Jews culturally or ceremonially in order to be saved. Following the principle of "to the Jew first" it is natural that opposition and confusion would arise from the synagogue. It was a difficult mental and spiritual

adjustment for that first generation of Jewish Christians to leave behind their legalistic righteousness. Once the issues had been raised and answered under the guidance of God's Spirit (whom Jesus promised would lead them into all truth, John 14:26; 16:13) justification by faith alone became a matter of orthodoxy.

A second possible identity is that of Jewish opposition itself. Some have suggested the sudden break in tone came with the arrival of a Jewish contingent that would bring charges in Paul's trial. Or perhaps they were active Jewish evangelists seeking to re-proselytise from the Jewish Christian church. The first is a mere conjecture that would effect Paul but not the Philippian believers. The second would represent a change of strategy on the part of Judaism. They often opposed and sought to silence, but there is no evidence that they claimed back their former adherents, especially in a church that was predominately Gentile to begin with.

Others have questioned the need for these to be Jews at all. Perhaps early Gnostic elements were being combined with Jewish practice. The insulting term "dogs" (kuvna~) is used of Gentiles. Paul's description of the enemies of the cross in 3:18-19 further complicates the identity of these teachers. The moral depravity described here conflicts with the normal image of Judaizers who would adhere to the strict moral codes of the Law. However, one must consider Jesus' diagnosis of the true moral condition of the Jewish religious establishment (Matthew 23:1-39; Mark 7:20-23; compare John 8:7, 42-47).

The fact is that the text does not identify these teachers clearly. Their message included circumcision. Unlike Paul's rejoicing in the message of 1:15-18, the gospel message itself was under threat. The apostle's severe polemic indicates that he

considered their message to breach justification by faith (3:2). Note the emphatic repetition of *ἠέπειτα* with each of the three designations.

A more important question is their relationship to the Philippian church and how that fits into the theme of the letter. Most have assumed that these teachers were active in Philippi and beginning to create divisions and loyalties in the congregation. In the assembly some would remain loyal to Paul and his message. Others would lean toward this new version of the gospel with its present and dynamic leadership. Not only would there be different opinions concerning the facts of the Christian message, but personal relationships were strained as friends, associates, and families divided around the issues. If these teachers were already active in the Philippian church it means that there was division and dissent within the fellowship, and varied opinion regarding Paul and his message. In this light the purpose of the letter is to re-establish the authority of the gospel and to regain the favour and loyalty of his former friends.

A similar problem relates to his exhortation to unity (1:27;2:1-11). Add to that his specific directive to Euodia and Syntyche (4:3). How far had disunity progressed among the church members? Is the message of Philippians to be taken as corrective or preventative? Philippians is addressed to the church as a group (1:1). Whatever the internal and external threats may have been the language of the letter as a whole does not indicate that the congregation was divided on different sides of the theological issue (1:4,7,8; 2:12, 26; 3:1; “we” vs. “those” false teachers of 3:2,315-19).

We treated genre and structure at the beginning our study because in the case of Philippians it seems to shed light on a number of issues. If we are correct in identifying the basic genre as a family/friendship letter, it would suggest that the strengthening of their relationship/friendship is the primary purpose. Stated from the other side, Paul is

not writing primarily to correct or reconcile what has already been perverted or broken. Within the genre “enemies” are a common topic. While not denying the reality of the threat from the outside, the emphasis of this feature is upon the value of the “friendship” in contrast with “enemies.” Perhaps this is one reason why these references are couched in somewhat ambiguous language.

At the same time we must observe that Paul greatly expands the typical family letter and uses it for pastoral admonition. The exhortations and warnings alert the congregation to very real threats that require a life worthy of the gospel. If he is confident in the faithfulness of God to complete his good work (1:6) he will still point out the need for unity against the divisive responses to suffering and opposition (1:27-2:11). If they are at present unified theologically, he is aware of the many ways false teachings or false motives can find their way into the church (3:1-21). If two believers have come to disagreement they must reconcile in Christlike humility (4:3) before disagreement turns into division and divisiveness throughout the church. Were there false teachers at Philippi? Without any doubt the exposure to suffering, theological compromise, and moral temptation was an ongoing reality. Were there false teachers *in* the church at Philippi? The best answer is *no*, at the time of the writing of this letter. That does not make the ethical appeals any less potent for Christians are in constant need of encouragement and admonition. Perhaps this is summarised in his prayer of 1:9-11. He does not pray for love which they do not possess. Rather, thankful for the love they already have, he prays that their love might continue to expand and grow until the day of Christ. The need to live as a citizen of heaven never diminishes until we are indeed home.

In concluding this contextual setting of the virtue list we should also note that Paul communicates his message through many literary devices. They include the metaphorical language of citizenship, the military, and the athletic arena. Philosophical terminology is given a new context in relation to Christ and the gospel. *Prokophv* becomes one's progress not in the ways of Hellenistic philosophy, but in the ways of spiritual growth (1:12,25). *Aujtarkeiva* is transformed from the self-sufficiency of the Stoics to the Christ-sufficiency of Christian faith (4:11-13)

Exemplification is one of the primary means of conveying his message. The centrepiece of the letter is Christ's example of humble service (2:5-11). Many commentators suggest this is a poetic tribute or song of praise to Christ. Even if Paul wrote this at another time or drew upon the work of someone else, he uses it as the highest example of "looking to the interest of others."

What would sometimes be called travel plans in 2:19-30 serve more than one purpose. They do communicate information. But Timothy and Epaphroditus are also examples of those who have served Christ unselfishly in the work of the gospel (2:21, 30). These travel plans reinforce the encouragement to unity.

Throughout the letter, Paul uses his own relationship both past and present with the church as a basis of appeal. They know him well. Theirs has been an ongoing relationship in the partnership of the gospel. His experience mirrors their present crisis (1:30). The loyalty and love they share provides a powerful motivation to live as citizens worthy of the gospel. In the doctrinal passage his personal testimony of conversion to Christ (3:4-11) is the primary teaching tool of righteousness through faith. The moral exhortation will climax by linking the integrity of his example with the virtue list (4:9).

To sum up: The paraenesis of 4:2-9 is the conclusion of a longer exhortation to live as citizens of the gospel of Christ (1:27-4:1). This worthy way of life must be demonstrated by spiritual unity and harmony with one another (ch. 2) and standing strong in the gospel message itself (ch. 3). The use of a catalogue of virtues in the conclusion should not look out of place for Paul has used many means of communication appropriate to the cultural, personal, and spiritual background of the Philippian church.

Immediate Context (4:2-9)

The ethical list of Philippians 4:8 is located in a short section of exhortation (4:2-9). The transition between the main hortatory section and the concluding exhortations is 4:1. In the nature of a good transition it both climaxes the argument of the preceding section going back to 1:27 and points the reader toward the summary appeals (Lightfoot 1953:57; Kent 1978:149; O'Brien 1991:478). Five connections link these instructions to the themes of the larger context. First, *fronevw* is used in various phrases in 2:2a,b, 2:5, 3:16, 3:15, and 4:2 to indicate the inward "thinking the same thing" that results in outward unity and harmony (BAGD 1996:866) In typical Pauline fashion the emphasis is reinforced by the piling on of similar phrases and concepts, *ejn eJni; pneuvmati, mia`/ yuch`/, th;n aujth;n ajgavphn e[conte"*, and *suvmyucoi* (1:27, 2:2). Second, their relationship *eJvn kuriw/* is the basis of ethical instruction in 4:1, 2, 4. Third, *sunalqevw* is repeated (1:27, 4:3). Fourth, the command to rejoice constitutes one of the major themes (3:1, 4:4). Fifth, Paul's use of his own relationship and example (4:9) has been a part of his thought in 3:4-17.

The final exhortations are more than conventional language of the Hellenistic world (Greek or Jewish). They are more than the devotional language of the modern church. They have been read and prayed and preached hundreds of times with great blessing to the people of God. But for exegetical purposes it is important to observe that this entire section has an integral function within the message of the Philippian letter. Verse 2-3 are a direct application of the unity theme to Euodia and Syntyche. Unity and harmony are a part of standing together in the gospel (1:27;2:4). Differing responses to social pressure and false teachings had created a disagreement between these women. This must be more than a personal spat or offended pride (Hendriksen 1962:190). It led to the same attitudes and bad relationships that required constructive and creative solutions worthy of the gospel (2:3,4,14). Compare Paul's own disagreement with Barnabas as a parallel example (Acts 15:36-41). The truth of the gospel was not at stake, but the integrity of the gospel was. Their influence could lead to wider division in the church as people rallied around their favourite personality. By involving another unknown church leader Paul indicated the seriousness of the situation (for possible identities of this person see Kent 1977:150;Martin 1987:168-169;O'Brien 1991:479-481). Paul pointed to their relationship "in the Lord" that gave them a greater unity than the things which divided them. He also appealed to their common cause in the gospel with other church members and Paul himself. This former relationship of "contending together" was their present model for reconciliation. So while he treated it as a serious situation the appeal is made in the warm and inclusive language of friendship.

In verses 4- 7 Paul moves from personal application to a series of general exhortations. The injunctions lack syntactical connections raising questions about the flow of thought. One view is expressed by Barth, "The mutual interconnexion between

these verses is for us unrecognizable. . . .It is a handful of requests, hints, observations and encouragements that Paul throws down. . .” (Barth 1962:118). Even so he goes on later to suggest thematic links between the statements (p. 120). Another view uses one of the elements, such as joy or peace as the controlling theme for the rest. In light of Hellenistic paraenesis and Paul’s own style of writing in passages such as Romans 12:9-21 and 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 the individual statements need not have a rigid logical connection of sequence, cause, or origin with one another. Joy (4:4) does not necessarily precede and produce the quality of forbearance (4:5), at least that is not what is being taught in this arrangement of exhortations. Neither must one rejoice in the Lord before he can experience the peace of God in anxious circumstances (4:6-7). Each statement can stand on its own in an axiomatic or proverbial way.

While not wishing to deny that there are links elsewhere between joy, gentleness, prayer, and peace, it needs to be asserted that the apostle is not making these connections in v. 4-7. . . .Here at Phil. 4:4-7, through the use of asyndeton, the apostle’s commands take on an individual importance; each is isolated so made emphatic (O’Brien 1991:484-485).

The coherence of the statements comes from the wider themes in the epistle.

In this view verses 4-7 should be interpreted in light of Paul’s concerns for their unity and response to suffering (Swift 1984:248; Martin 1987:169-173). But having said that, the interpretation must not be limited to any single background in the epistle. These exhortations are broad in nature. We rejoice in “all” circumstances (4:4) not just those which are enjoyable. We demonstrate forbearance to “all” people, inclusive of those inside and outside the assembly (4:5). We pray and therefore experience God’s peace in “every” anxious situation (4:6). Wherever we encounter the need for unity and steadfastness in the partnership of the gospel, these are some of the moral responses that demonstrate Christlike character.

Joy is pervasive throughout the various sections of the letter (1:4,18,25;2:2,16,19,27-29;3:1;4:1,4,10). This verse picks up the “Rejoice in the Lord!” of 3:1 and adds to it the comprehensive term $\rho\alpha\nu\tau\omicron\tau\epsilon$. The expression of joy is a statement of faith that their relationship to the Lord is greater than the severity of their trials. Barth calls it the defiant “Nevertheless!” versus anxiety (Barth 1962:120). Of the 48 times $\epsilon\dot{\jmath}\nu\ \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\upsilon\omega$ / occurs in the New Testament 47 are in the Pauline epistles. It often describes the spiritual relationship and fellowship that believers have through their common life in the Lord. Paul refers to Christians in Rome as “brothers in the Lord” (Phil 1:14). They are to welcome Epaphroditus because of this common life (2:29). Euodia and Syntyche must agree with each other “in the Lord.” “In the Lord” replaces relating to one another “in the flesh” or from a human perspective (Cp. 2 Cor. 5:16). But at other times the divine relationship is prominent in the phrase apart from human relationship or circumstances. Paul’s confidence of release is “in the Lord” (2:24). The believer can stand firm in the transcendent reality of their relationship “in the Lord” (4:1). So important is this joyous faith in times of trial that Paul repeats the staccato command, “Rejoice!”

It is always right to demonstrate a forbearing attitude towards those who oppress and intimidate. The lexical entries for $\epsilon\dot{\jmath}\rho\iota\epsilon\iota\kappa\epsilon\iota\sim$ are “yielding, gentle, kind” (BAGD 1996:292). Others have suggested “considerate, reasonable, generous, or large-hearted” treatment of another. The $\epsilon\dot{\jmath}\rho\iota\epsilon\iota\kappa\epsilon\iota\sim$ person treats someone not as justice deserves, but what in mercy is better for them and for the situation. Hawthorne comments, “While demanding equity [it] does not insist on the letter of the law” (Hawthorne 1983:82). Paul attributes to Jesus the spirit of gentleness (1 Cor 10:1. Cp. the synonyms in Matt. 11:29) where it is associated with humility. In 1 Timothy 3:2 and

Titus 3:2 gentleness as a spiritual quality is the opposite of a violent temper. In James 3:17 this reasonable attitude is characteristic of godly wisdom. In the context of this letter forbearance addresses the need for unity in personal conflict. It is the opposite of contention and seeking one's own good (Lightfoot 1953:160).

But this exhortation to Christian consideration takes the concept one step further. The above definitions assume a power to carry out some other sort of justice or punishment. Forbearance is expressed through clemency. Equality of relationship in the body of Christ should replace self-seeking ambition. But when Paul says that *ejpieikei* ~ should be extended to all men, he includes those times when the church finds itself in a powerless position of harassment and intimidation. Its active response is the meekness of Christ.

"The Lord is near." Perhaps this simple statement is one of those "hints" to which Barth referred. It is an assertion rather than a command and, therefore, the intended response is implied, not stated. The language is rooted in the Old Testament of Psalm 145:18 where the phrase refers to the nearness of God in fellowship. God's nearness would comfort and help suffering believers. While this is certainly true (Heb. 13:5), the broader context suggests that the phrase summarises the oft repeated eschatological theme of the letter (1:6, 10; 2:16, 3:12,20; 4:1; So Lightfoot 1953:161; Barth 1962:122; Kent 1978:51). The day of Christ is a motive and encouragement to walk worthy of the gospel because it will bring the completion, reward, and final justice that are lacking in this present life.

Verses 6-7 present the promise of God's peace in anxious circumstances. Two imperatives form two sides of the same response to whatever might cause anxiety or disunity. "Do not be anxious" (*me rimnavw*) finds its historical antecedent in the

warning of Jesus concerning the cares of this world (Matt. 5:25). This word may have a positive sense of “caring about or caring for” something. It is used this way of Timothy’s care for the Philippians in 2:20. But here it has the negative sense of being anxious because of undue concern (BAGD 1996:505). The prohibition is coupled with the injunction to present specific needs (hence, the varied words) to God in prayer. The two must work together. Thanksgiving is the emphasis of the command to pray (Barth 1962:122). As with the act of rejoicing (4:4) the giving of thanks before the need has been met is an act of faith that God is greater than whatever is unsettling them. This trust will be rewarded with the peace of God standing guard (*ἑτοιμασμένη*) over the “moral, volitional, and intellectual center of man” (Kent 1978:153). This guarding, keeping, or protecting of the inner man must mean more than feelings of tranquillity. In this ethical context a mind filled with anxious thoughts leads to poor judgment and bad choices. By renouncing anxiety and entrusting one’s troubles to God, he promises to keep the believer from being overcome by the enormity of the situation. This is a divine peace at work in the life of the believer. Its effects are visible but there is no human logic or connection between the severity of the situation and the response of the person. God’s peace is unfathomable (Hendriksen 1962:197;cp. John 14:27).

The common element of these exhortations is the presence and power of God. A right response in suffering begins with right thinking about one’s relationship with God. *Rejoice in the Lord. The Lord is near. Present your requests to God.* A second common element is the comprehensive effectiveness that is implied or promised. *All times* (4:4), *all men* (4:5), *in everything* (4:6). If there is a logical progression underlying Paul’s instructions, it moves from God (4:4) to others (4:5) to self (4:6-7).

Composition of the Virtues

Verses 8 and 9 comprise a concluding exhortation in two parts. The first part uses a virtue list as representative criteria for discerning correct ethical behaviour. Part two reminds the Philippian readers that these very qualities have been visibly demonstrated in their relationship with the apostle. Together these verses climax Paul's instruction for discerning the words, actions, and attitudes that promote unity and steadfastness in the humility of Christ.

The grammatical link with the preceding verses of the paraenesis is $\tau\omicron\iota$; $\lambda\omicron\iota\pi\omicron\nu\nu$, used here in its concluding sense (see p. 52). It is not the conclusion of the letter itself, but the last in a series of concluding moral exhortations beginning in v. 2. What also demonstrates its close connection with the preceding verses is the repetition of the peace of God in the blessing or benediction (Martin 1987:173). Beyond the gift of peace (4:7), the God who gives that peace will be with those who put these ethical guidelines into practice. I have suggested that verses 2-3 are a direct application of the unity issue with verses 4-7 having its general context in the anxiety of suffering. Verses 8-9 are even broader in scope and in a general way complement Paul's instruction to live in a manner worthy of the gospel (1:27). His mode of communication has been different in each of these concluding exhortations. The first appeal was personal and direct (4:2-3). The second was communicated in the language of worship having its roots in the Old Testament. Rejoice in the Lord. The Lord near. The God who bestows peace (4:4-7).

This third and final exhortation is expressed in the ethical style of the culture. A list of ethical qualities (4:8) is followed by the apostle's personal example. Both of these are familiar rhetorical methods in the Hellenistic world. The two-fold instruction says, "Think on these things! Practice these things!" The virtue list describes what "things"

they are to consider and discern. Paul's personal example then gives concrete reality to their practical application. The relationship of the syntactical units is best seen in a grammatical layout.

o{sa ejsti;n ajlhqh` ,
o{sa semnav,
o{sa divkaia,
o{sa aJgnav,
o{sa prosfilh` ,
o{sa eu[fhma,
ei[ti" ajreth;
kai; ei[ti" e[paino" ,

tau`ta logivzesqe:

a} kai; ejmavqete
kai; parelavbete
kai; hjkouvsate
kai; ei[dete ejn ejmoiv,

tau`ta pravssete:

Several things should be noted about the features of the virtue list. The first six elements of the list are neuter, plural, accusative adjectives. The neuter plural could often express the nominal idea. *Ta; divkaia* was used in the papyri of duties to the king or to the marriage. "The actions or behaviour that are fitting or appropriate" = duties (MM 1930:162 for examples). Hellenistic ethical writings spoke both of virtue as an abstract concept and individual virtues that collectively contributed to the ideal. While slightly ambiguous these first six descriptions should be understood primarily in their adjectival sense. Paul is not commending truth or dignity (reverence, seriousness) or justice (righteousness) as a philosophical abstraction. He desires the Philippian church to recognise the behaviours that possess these virtuous qualities. They will promote the unity and stability of which he has been writing.

Second, each is introduced with the anaphoric correlative pronoun $\omicron\{\sigma\alpha$.

This pronoun may refer to 1) space and time, or 2) quantity and number, or 3) measure and degree. Our usage falls best under number two referring to “how much (many), as much (many) as” (BAGD 1996:586). Any and everything that you find with this quality should be carefully considered for its ethical value.

The pronoun is repeated with each element of the list. After the first description $\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\iota\iota\eta$ is left out of the next five phrases and must be supplied in thought. The single use of $\omicron\{\sigma\alpha$ could also be used to govern the whole series. But it is not. It is repeated with each element. Anaphora is the use of the same word at the beginning of several successive clauses for rhetorical emphasis. With these crisp phrases Paul focuses attention on each quality in the series for thoughtful consideration.

The emphasis of each clause is also heightened by the absence of any conjunctions. “Asyndeton, by breaking up the series and introducing the items staccato fashion produces a vivid and impassioned effect” (BDF 1961:460.3). The conclusion that asyndeton here has this effect is because of its conjunction with the repetition of $\omicron\{\sigma\alpha$. In the same paragraph BDF notes that it “often, but by no means always, lends rhetorical emphasis.” Context must make the final decision.

Third, the grammatical structure of the series changes dramatically after the sixth descriptive term. The final two clauses in the series change from description to first class conditions. With $\alpha\upsilon\tau\eta\theta\iota$ and $\epsilon[\rho\alpha\iota\omicron$, the defining words now become nouns. The conjunction $\kappa\alpha\iota$; links the clauses. If the adjectives have a slight leaning toward substantives these nouns are used in an adjectival sense as reflected in the English versions: “excellent” and “praiseworthy” (NIV); “excellent” and “admirable” (New English Bible); “good” and “deserve praise” (Good News Bible). Some take the first as

a noun and the second as an adjective: “excellence” and “praiseworthy” (New American Standard Bible); “virtue and praiseworthy” (New King James Version).

Most commentators see this change as a comprehensive summary of the preceding six. Paul knows that he cannot list every desirable quality. The grammatical change signals a shift from the specific to general. It broadens the thought from individual qualities to the all-inclusive comprehensiveness of Christian virtue (Vincent 1897:139; O’Brien 1991:506). Kent adds the thought that the conditional sentence draws the reader toward the mental process of moral evaluation. “If anything is excellent and if anything is worthy of praise.”—the believer must make a determination. It forces him to exercise his own discernment (Kent 1978:152).

Gordon Fee, however, takes another view. He understands the last two clauses to qualify the previous six. Paul is recommending that the Philippians begin with what is good in secular philosophy. The six ethical terms would be familiar to them in that context. But the Christian must take the process a step further. Out of what society views as good they must select what is excellent and praiseworthy from a Christian point of view (Fee 1995:416n.13). His understanding rests on his broader interpretation that Paul is urging the Philippians to utilize the best of human culture. I will argue that Paul is using the list in a metaphorical way. Each virtue must be seen as already possessing Christian meaning. The phrase “from a Christian point of view” should be added to each idea, not just to the last two. Indeed, some already possess this identity through the Old Testament and Septuagint. The two conditional clauses sum up Christian moral excellence. They are inclusive of the previous descriptions in the list and would embrace any other quality deemed to fit the Christian ethical ideal (Kennedy 1974:468).

Fourth, verse 9 is linked to verse 8 by the relative pronoun α } . It's antecedent is $\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha$ which in turn has been defined by the virtue list (Hendriksen 1962:198; Hawthorne 1983:189; O'Brien 1991:500). The virtue list, therefore, does not function on its own. The exhortation is compound. "Think on these things! Practice these [same] things!" The ethical qualities of verse 8 are comparable to, and an embodiment of, what they have seen and heard in the life of the apostle. The admonition comprises both aspects of verses 8 and 9.

The relationship of these two aspects has been understood in different ways. Some see Paul's specifically Christian teaching and example (4:9) as a modification or qualification of more general moral qualities (4:8). Barth refers to verse 9 as specifically Christian behaviour contrasted to legitimate natural wisdom (Barth 1962:124; similarly Vincent 1897:140; Kennedy 1974:468; Fee 1995:417). This distinction between the verses requires that the relative α } be taken absolutely without antecedent in verse 8. The specifically Christian "things" they have seen in Paul are distinct from the cultural "things" they are to consider. Verse 9 then becomes a set of criteria to further refine the breadth of human moral values in terms of Christian teaching.

Hawthorne follows Sevenster in viewing verse 8 as somewhat provisional. "In appealing to the Philippians Paul takes into account their environment in order to obtain every possible support and understanding for what he wishes to say in verse 9" (Sevenster 1961:156; Hawthorne 1983:190). Verse 8 is viewed as preparatory and introductory to the real message. The mention of human virtue establishes a common ground of communication between Paul and the Philippians but the virtues do not have independent value. They must be redefined through Christian teaching. This view uses

the grammatical connection of verses 8 and 9 through a } . However, it minimises the meaning of λογίζεσθε which is presented as one half of the exhortation alongside πράσσετε . The qualities of verse 8 are presented with poignant clarity as worthy of careful reflection and application. Neither the syntax nor the verbs suggest that one half of the equation is subordinate to the other.

These two verses present one moral imperative illustrated in two different ways. Each illustration has a slightly different emphasis. The first calls for careful thought and consideration. The second urges practical application. But the moral substance of “these things” is the same object for both imperatives. The virtue list is used metaphorically to illustrate this substance. In the same way Paul’s personal example and relationship to the Philippians is used in verse 9 to define this substance. As William Hendriksen says, “Surely the Philippians had seen *Christian* virtues displayed in Paul!” (Hendriksen 1962:198).

Definition of the Virtues

The eight words which make up this virtue list are ἀληθῆς, σεμνῆς, δικαίας, ἰσχυρῆς, εὐφραδίας, ἀρετῆς, and ἐπιποθῆς . The first six are representative of moral virtue. The last two are a summation of moral virtue. In this context all serve to define the ethical conduct that promotes unity and harmony in the church.

ἀληθῆς " pertains to what is real and not imaginary (Louw 1996:70.3). Of persons it refers to those who are truthful, righteous, and honest (Mark 12:14; John 7:18). Of things, what are genuine and reliable (2 Peter 2:22, 1 Peter 5:12). In the papyri “it seems to bear the normal meaning of ‘true to fact’” (MM 1930:21).

Concerning the bad reputation of the Cretans, Titus 1:13 says, “This testimony is

αἰσχρολογία." In another New Testament virtue list Paul uses it substantively to affirm the genuineness and sincerity of his ministry in the face of accusations that he was a charlatan ([regarded] πλανοὶ καὶ αἰσχρολογεῖς"; 2 Corinthians 6:8).

The Christian view of truth begins with the nature of God himself. In stark contrast to the deceitful nature of humanity, Paul declares, "ὁ θεὸς ἀληθεύει" (Rom. 3:4; John 3:33; 7:28). It is this ultimate truth in God that provides the ideal and standard of Christian morality. Human truth and sincerity can be temporary, illusionary, self-interested, or external. Where used of Christian behaviour αἰσχρολογία is "denoting all that is true in thought, disposition, and deed" (O'Brien 1991:504).

Ἑμπνότης is an important concept for character and leadership. In our literature it means "worthy of respect, dignified, serious, respectful" (BAGD 1996:746; MM 1930:572). Nida-Louw place it in the semantic domain of words that convey modesty and propriety, "pertaining to appropriate, befitting behavior" (Louw 1996:88.47). Its opposite is "flippant" and "thoughtless." In secular religious contexts Ἑμπνότης applied to supernatural beings and places, hence, "venerable, holy." Outside of Paul's use in Philippians 4:8, it occurs only in the Pastoral Epistles, where it is a required quality of deacons (1 Tim. 3:11), deaconesses or deacons' wives (3:8), and older men in the congregation (Tit. 2:2). The noun form is used in these same contexts of elders' children who obey with respectfulness (1 Tim. 3:4) or Christian teaching that is handled with dignity (Tit. 2:7).

In our context *semev* " refers to things, that is, words and actions that are morally and spiritually appropriate to the health of the congregation. It is the opposite of selfish pride and ambition in that *semev* " is willing to accept the constraints and needs of one's situation and act appropriately without drawing attention to oneself.

divkaio " has a well established usage in the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, and in Greco-Roman society. Most often it refers to people whose conduct conforms to the law of God and man (*TDNT* II 1964:182-188). Justice (*divkaio* " used as a substantive) was one of the four cardinal virtues. The just or righteous person was held up as a model citizen who fulfilled the philosophical ideal.

In biblical terms God is just and all measure of justice is in comparison to him (Psa 145:17 [LXX 144]). His judgments and actions are right. Soteriologically, no one is righteous (Rom. 3:9;citing Psa. 14:1, 53:1;Eccles 7:20). All fall short of the glory of God. The person in right standing with God has been credited with righteousness through faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:21-26;5:19).

A more conventional use of the adjective refers to conduct that is fitting or appropriate or sensible. Paul uses *divkaio*~ in this way. In Philippians 1:7 his love for the church is right, that is, it is appropriate to their fellowship in the gospel. Christian masters must provide working conditions that are fair and equal (*to; divkaion kai; th;n ijsovthta*;Col. 4:1). In other New Testament usages it is used of a quick, out-of-court settlement (Luke 12:57) and remuneration that is fair or right for the task (Matt. 20:4). Peter says that is it right or appropriate to remind them of spiritual truth (2 Pet. 1:13). Three important passages for our understanding of ethical righteousness are Acts 4:19, Ephesians 6:1, and 2 Thessalonians 1:6. The first establishes the principle that what is right or appropriate must not only be evaluated by

human standards, but by the divine will. "But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is *divkaion* in God's sight to obey you rather than God." The second is a domestic instruction, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is *divkaion*." What makes this right or fitting is its conformity to the biblical command quoted from Deuteronomy 5:16. The third instance is eschatological. Because God is just the Christian may live a life of moral righteousness. What matters is not what people approve or disapprove now, but what God approves on that day. "God is just. He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you." Schrenk points out that New Testament ethical righteousness is oriented toward God in contrast to a merely conventional usage (*TDNT* II 1964:188). The virtue list undoubtedly uses the term in its relational sense. But functioning as it does in a biblical context the divine standard of righteousness is always in view.

Purity (*αἰσχρονομία*) came from the sphere of pagan religion. It signified an attribute of deity and all that belonged to him. In the religious sense it meant to be holy, sacred, or free from ceremonial defilement. A carry over of this nuance is still seen in the Septuagint of 2 Maccabees 3:18 and 4 Maccabees 18:7-8 (*TDNT* I 1964:122-124). The derived meaning of morally pure, innocent of wrongdoing (2 Cor. 7:11), or sexually chaste (2 Cor. 11:2; Titus 2:5) is the use we have in the New Testament (BAGD 1996:11). The ethical emphasis is especially seen in James' description of heavenly wisdom. *Αἰσχρονομία* stands first in the list of godly virtues. The pure life is free from moral defilement (1 John 3:3; 1 Tim. 5:22). Peter counsels Christian wives to win their husbands by their *αἰσχρονομία* *ἀναστροφῆς* (1 Pet. 3:2). The ethical choices of Philippians 4:8 require inward motives and outward appearances that are sincere, free from hidden agendas, and sexually pure. The duress of persecution or crushing

personal circumstances must not lead to attitudes and actions that defile or pollute the Christian or the congregation.

If the previous virtues had something of a religious background, the next two appear to be from secular usage. *Prosfilh`* means “pleasing,” “agreeable,” or “lovely” (BAGD 1996:720; Rienecker 1976:561). It has been found in epitaphs to honour people (MM 1930:552). It is used in the LXX of the Apocrypha only in Ecclus 20:13 where it describes speech which is gracious and 4:7 where the person himself is attractive to the congregation. It is not known in contemporary virtue lists of philosophy (O’Brien 1991:505). The virtue list of Philippians 4:8 is its only occurrence in the New Testament.

This is one of those words where we must determine whether it is used primarily in its secular sense or if it takes on additional meaning within a Christian perspective. By its associations in the list and by the way the list is used in context, the latter appears to be the case. Not that it loses its secular meaning. But what is pleasing in society becomes the starting point for reflecting on what is pleasing in a Christian context. The two senses will overlap, but not be identical. What is pleasing in society is determined by human desires, values, and goals. What is pleasing in the Christian setting is determined by biblical desire, values, and goals. *Prosfilh`* describes actions and words which are intrinsically winsome, making the person pleasing both to God and to man. This moral attractiveness will promote the fellowship and unity of the church.

Another New Testament *hapax* is *eu[fhma* . Both Liddell and Scott along with Lightfoot take it in the active sense of speaking well or attractively. It was used of words which promised success or happiness for the future (Liddell 1996:335; Lightfoot

1953:162). The noun occurs in the virtue list of 2 Corinthians 6:8 (also a NT *hapax*) with the meaning of “reputation.” As one considers the moral emphasis of Philippians they have been challenged to live worthy of the gospel in a way that promoted unity and steadfastness in their response to opposition (1:27). We might say that Paul’s choice of $\epsilon\upsilon[\ \phi\eta\mu\omicron\sim$ calls forth the consideration of words, actions, and attitudes which promote a positive and spiritual outcome in the congregation. In context this must be the opposite of a complaining and argumentative response (Phil 2:14). In Ephesians 4:28 only words that edify should be spoken (cp. Prov. 15:1). Moulton and Milligan suggest that nothing should be expressed in public worship to disturb devotion or given rise to scandal (MM 1930:267).

The concept of philosophical virtue was discussed in chapter 2. In Philippians 4:8 is the apostle’s only use of $\alpha\ \iota\ \rho\epsilon\theta\ \iota\ \cdot$. For one who was thoroughly familiar with the worldview of his culture, Paul could only have avoided the use of this word by design.

When we turn to Paul after reading Seneca’s clamorous glorification of human virtue, we are struck by a strange silence surrounding this word, a silence which is only once broken by the mention of the word $\alpha\ \iota\ \rho\epsilon\theta\ \iota\ \cdot$ in Phil. 4:8. However, this silence is not really so strange as it first seems if we bear in mind the fundamental anthropocentricity of the word ‘virtue’, which focusses attention upon the excellence, merits and achievements of mankind rather than upon God’s deeds, with which the Bible is primarily concerned” (Sevenster 1961:152; see comment of Moule 1977:115).

Here $\alpha\ \iota\ \rho\epsilon\theta\ \iota\ \cdot$ is not used in its philosophical sense, but in its more general meaning of “moral excellence” or “goodness” (MM 1930:75). This view is reinforced by the closely associated use of another ethical word, $\epsilon[\ \rho\alpha\ \iota\ \nu\omicron\ \cdot$. It can mean “praise, approval, recognition” normally in reference to a person. A person is commended by the authorities for doing what is good (Rom. 13:3; 1 Pet. 2:14). A brother is praised or

recognised by all the churches (2 Cor 8:18). In the final judgment God will praise or accept those who belong to him (1 Cor. 4:5). In salvation texts, praise goes to God for his saving grace (1 Pet. 1:7; Eph. 1:6,12,14). The sanctification of the believer brings glory and praise to God (Phil. 1:11). Or, ε[παίνο" may mean a "thing worthy of praise" (BAGD 1996:281). These two together summarise the criteria for Christian moral reflection. The words and actions, attitudes and relationships chosen to respond to a given situation must be inherently "excellent" and be seen by others to be worthy of praise or approval. One is the substance. The other the response.

Use of the Virtues

The moral exhortation is governed by the combination of two verbs, λογίζεσθε in verse 8 and πράσσετε in verse 9. Both are present imperatives denoting the continual or ongoing need for ethically sound behaviour. They are also second person plurals. The moral life of the church is viewed as a collective reality, even though decisions or responses will come from individual choices. Paul addresses the church as a whole, congregation and leadership (1:1), but individual conflicts impact everyone (4:2-3). The Philippians are exhorted to engage both aspects of healthy congregational life. First, there is a process of moral discernment; second, a need for concrete application.

Λογίζομαι is used extensively by Paul in two of three basic meanings (BAGD 1996:475). First, it means literally to "reckon, count, or calculate." Love does not take evil into account (1 Cor. 13:5). God did not count their trespasses against them (2 Cor. 5:19). Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness (Rom. 4:3,5,9,22 citing Gen. 15:6). Philippians 4:8 may have a hint of this nuance in

view for reflection in some ways required a storing up, filing, sorting, and sifting of information. It means “to keep a mental record of events for the sake of some future action” (Louw 1996:29.4). Second, it means to “think (about), consider, ponder, let one’s mind dwell on” in order to draw a conclusion or evaluation. This is the main thrust of Paul’s ethical use of the verb: to reason, ponder, think, and consider “these things” in such a way as to come to a moral decision. “Logivzesqe refers not so much to a critical evaluation of heathen culture and its standards of morality as to a careful taking into account and reflection on these positive characteristics so that their conduct will be shaped by them” (O’Brien 1991:507).

What we have in this word is the spiritual and mental process of moral reflection that leads to the “one mind” or “thinking the same thing” of Christian unity. The entire letter is filled with verbs and phrases denoting a Christian mindset. *Fronevw* is used some ten times, and contributes to the theme of unity and harmony. The principle is put forward in 2:1-4 and given personal application in 4:2-3. In support *hJgevomai* (“to consider, regard”) occurs six times; otherwise, only once in 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, and twice in 1 Timothy (Silva 1988:12). Humbly “regarding” each other better than themselves (2:3) is fundamental to Christian unity. Christ did not “regard” his divine privilege or glory to be prized but “humbled” himself (2:6,8). *Skopevw*, “to look out for (someone), keep your eyes on” (BAGD 1996:756) is used in the central ethical passage of 2:4, “Each of you should look not only to your own interests.” Chapter 3:17 then commends the example (“take note”) of those who follow a sound pattern of Christian behaviour. All of these terms are used in complementary relationship to build the concept of the Christian moral thought. *Logivzomai*

captures the moral reflection that is required to be of one mind, to regard each other better than oneself, and to look out for the interests of others.

Logivzesqe is complemented in verse 9 by pravssete. To think is not an end in itself, but only a means to a lifestyle of moral harmony and integrity. The “things” identified by reflection on the catalogue of virtues must be put into practice. To provide a concrete example of what he means Paul points them to what they have observed in his personal and ministry relationship with them. These descriptive verbs indicate the close personal relationship between Paul and the church. He can claim without fear of contradiction that the virtue of verse 8 has been embodied in his life.

“Which things also you learned (ejmavqete) and received (parelavbete) and heard (hkouvstate) and saw (ei [dete) in me.” Each of these verbs describes some aspect of Paul’s relationship to the Philippian church. The first describes learning in the context of a teacher-disciple relationship (BAGD:490). To Paul the apostle was revealed the gospel and this he shared wherever he went (Gal.1:1,11,12).

Parelavbete is often used of receiving or accepting a message or oral tradition (see 1 Cor 11:23; 15:3). It expressed the willing response of the Philippians to his ministry. A similar response came from the Thessalonian church receiving the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13). In his letter to this church we see that paralavmbanw meant an ethical tradition passed on with the gospel. “We instructed you how to live in order to please God” (1 Thess. 4:1). “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us (2 Thess. 3:6).

Most commentators feel that the third verb does more than describe again the teaching ministry of Paul. That is well cared for in the first two. What they have heard in

this instance is not from his teaching directly, but what they have heard about him in his absence. The things they learned from him were the same that they heard from other places of ministry. There was a consistency in the message.

The last verb describes not so much his teaching but the personal example of his interactions with them; his attitude under persecution; his compassion and personal concern; his hard work and personal integrity. What they saw refers to the characters issues of the gospel that are caught as much as taught. In his teaching, ministry, and personal life he exemplified in concrete action the virtues commended in verse 8.

Paul concludes this section of exhortation with a brief benediction (4:9b). The previous exhortation (4:6-7) had been for prayerful and thankful dependence upon God in anxious circumstances. Likewise, the contemplations of “thinking” and “doing” (4:8-9) are not merely rational exercises. Moral reflection must be conducted with the same prayerful dependence upon God. “And the God of peace will be with you.”

Function of the Virtues

This list of virtues is an appropriate choice of moral communication with a predominantly non-Jewish church. As a literary unit, the virtue list should be viewed metaphorically. It answers to 1:27 which introduces the hortatory section of the letter (see discussion of genre and structure). The Christian life is presented as living out one’s heavenly citizenship (1:27). This concept of citizenship is undoubtedly a metaphor. The similarities suggest parallels and mental pictures which make it a suitable illustration. But the spiritual realities of our citizenship in the gospel go far beyond its earthly counterpart (3:20-21). The “parallels and pictures” must be redefined in a Christian view of reality. In the same way the virtue list is a part of this portrayal of spiritual citizenship. In secular philosophy the $\rho\omicron\nu\lambda\iota\sim$ was the environment for

achieving the highest good (i.e. the virtues). So within the Christian commonwealth the believer realises the spiritual blessings of Christian character.

The list closes a discussion of specific concerns and applications (4:2-7) with a general process for approaching the specifics not covered (4:8-9). Paul cannot address every particular. But he can lay a foundation for clear ethical thinking that will be sufficient for every situation of disunity or anxiety that might occur. The form and content of the ethical list might well have been used in the teaching of many moral philosophers. Virtuous conduct was prized by the Hellenistic world. The theological content and spiritual function of the list comes from its setting in the total context of the letter. As a letter of friendship the warm relations of Paul and the Philippians are constantly on the surface of his communication. But the deeper theological connection is what they share in the gospel of Christ. These individual qualities must be defined within a Christian and biblical frame of reference. The vocabulary is a mix of the familiar and the rare. Biblical usage (i.e. prior Christian teaching) of the familiar terms would guide the understanding of those concepts known only from the secular realm. Christ himself is the ultimate example and source of the life that will bring harmony and peace. The congregation and leaders together must meditate and ponder what is virtuous by its very nature and recall the teaching and example of their spiritual leaders and follow that course of action.

Application of Phil 4:8

In chapter 1 we surveyed the Bible's own call to obedience. Studying, interpreting, even teaching the precepts of Scripture to others is not sufficient. It needs to be personally embodied in the thoughts, words, and actions of the individual believer and the Christian community. The distance between the "then" and "now" of biblical events and the present time creates a series of challenges for personal application. A

theory of application considers not only the end result of response, but the process by which we arrive at our conclusions. By observing the way in which Paul expected the first readers to live out his instructions, we hope to see principles and parameters for applying these same texts today. Taking into account the various contexts of the New Testament, the call to biblical morality is rooted ultimately in the historical act of Jesus' self sacrifice on the cross and His subsequent resurrection.

The exposition of Philippians 4:8-9 is generally given one of three emphases. The first emphasis applies these verses as a lens through which to view and evaluate human society around us. This is the application of the "best of human culture" exegesis. Christian and non-Christian alike face many common needs and issues. The virtue list provides moral ideals honoured in human culture that would be approved and affirmed within a biblical worldview. Criteria for this evaluation would be the specifically Christian teaching and examples referred to in verse 9. Following this same approach we may discern, affirm, and adopt cultural values and observations that are consistent with biblical tradition. Ways of life that are noble, honourable, good, or wholesome are a part of our common humanity and need not be rejected because they may not have come to us through a specifically religious context. Karl Barth suggested that through the keeping of biblical commands we affirm these overlaps with worldly culture (Barth 1961:124-125; cp. Beare 1959:148; Hawthorne 1983:187 and Rom. 2:14-15). Gaderlund presents this verse as a bridge back to human culture which helps us to live in the world, develop a Christian worldview, integrate thought and action, and increase effectiveness in evangelism. "While believers are to move out of the world into God's kingdom and truth, they are not to dismiss or discard what was good in their past lives, but rather let that serve, now properly, as the basis or foundation for their new lives" (Gaderlund 1985:22, 24-25).

A second emphasis applies these verses to a believer's thought life and its bearing upon his or her resultant behaviour. Right thinking leads to right behaviour. The virtue list presents Christian thoughts that should fill the mind and replace the more mundane or dishonourable thinking of our past life (Hawthorne 1983:191-192; O'Brien 1991:499,502-503). "If a man thinks of something often enough, he will come to a stage when he cannot stop thinking about it. . . .It is, therefore, of the first importance that a man should set his thoughts upon the fine things" (Barclay 1975:79). A popular youth magazine shares the testimony of a teenage girl and her struggle with fear. By responding to the fearful with thoughts that were true, noble, and right she experienced a growth in personal peace. "Jesus helped me step from my prison of fear to the light of His peace with that verse" (Taylor 2003:back cover). Christian mediation and arbitration uses the principle of Philippians 4:8 to help people replace the pain and memories of conflict situations. Every time you have negative thoughts "ask for God's help and deliberately pray for that person or think of something about the offender that is 'true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy'" (Sande 1997:200). Hendriksen sums up, "Let virtue conquer vice!" (Hendrikson 1962:201).

A third emphasis treats the virtue list as one element within the larger section of moral encouragement. The application is developed around one of the predominant themes of 4:1-9. Kent enumerates four exhortations to positive Christian virtue in verses 4-9 (Kent 1978:151). The theme of personal and inner peace is a common way of developing the flow of thought. "Peace of mind is related to the focus of our thinking and our living" (Bugg 1991:255;cp. Martin 1987:173). Linking with the exhortation to "stand firm" in verse one, MacArthur unfolds 4:1-9 through seven basic principles for developing and maintaining spiritual stability. Verses 8 and 9 offer a climax and

summation of all other exhortations and the key to implementing them. “Spiritual stability is a result of how a person thinks” (MacArthur 2001:284).

These emphases in application are not mutually exclusive. They may work together or be presented independently of one another depending on the situation being addressed. Some will be presented in relation to context; others as generic principles for Christian living. Our concern for this chapter is to discern how any application moves from Paul’s instructions to the Philippians to its present day significance. This must be done in ever widening concentric circles of thought. What response did Paul expect from the believers at Philippi? Are these in the form of specifics or generalities? Does the biblical text indicate the use of the virtue list for other situations? What about its use to other first century congregations? How does this passage compare to other New Testament virtue lists? Then there is the hermeneutical question of its significance for present day Christian believers. What moral instruction and guidance do we gain from it and how does that come to us?

Expected Response of the Philippians

In the concluding paraenetic section of 4:2-9, Paul’s stated intention for personal application was the reconciliation of Euodia and Syntyche. He appeals to both of these women (*parakalw`* is repeated) to put aside their differences and be in agreement. The particular exhortation uses the exact phraseology of his earlier general instruction to Christian unity in 2:2 (*to; aujto; fronei`n*) opening up the entire theology of the central hortatory section of the letter (1:27-4:1) for application to their situation.

The issues are not defined and a method for reconciliation is not given. But the ethical ideal of 4:8-9 with its two component parts (virtue list and apostolic example) would supply the process (“consider!” “do!”) and content (“true, noble, right, pure. .

.whatever you have learned and or received. . .”) for determining the Christ-honouring words, attitudes, and actions necessary to bring these two women together.

Let's suppose for illustration that the conflict had arisen over a different social status between the women (nothing in the text indicates that this was the case). In the early days of the Philippian mission they had responded with joy to the gospel of salvation in Christ and entered a relationship of equal acceptance before God and one another in the church. Along with others they contended side by side with the apostle Paul in telling others the good news (4:3). But Paul and his team moved on. Time passed by. Decisions of life and ministry had to be made. Differences arose. Attitudes polarised around the strong opinions of these two women. Conflicting ideas over these issues were attributed to the way of thinking, perceptions, and attitudes from their different social standings in the community. The divisive feelings of culture were imported into the church, threatening its unity and harmony. The ideal of Christian behaviour in 4:8-9 would help the Philippian church evaluate their situation. For instance, the first quality is “true” (αἰληγοῦν), that which conforms to spiritual truth and reality. What had Paul taught them during his period of ministry (4:9)? God offers salvation equally to all people (Gal. 3:28). He displays his wisdom and power by reaching those that society rejects (1 Cor. 1:26-29). There is an equal worship, fellowship, and service for Christ in the church. Violation in practice of this equality should be rejected as a misrepresentation of the gospel (1 Cor. 11:17-22; Gal. 2:11-16). So if (and remember, we are supposing for purposes of illustration) the differences arose from Euodia and Syntyche assuming they were superior/inferior because this is how society viewed them, this view was not spiritually true and needed to be corrected in their relationship. In the humility of Christ they must put off the selfish ambition or vain

conceit that had crept back into their thinking and to put on the new attitude of equal concern for one another (2:3-4). This must be done as a choice of obedience after the example of Christ (2:8,12). Each quality of the virtue list might be used in a similar process of moral reflection according to the requirement of the situation.

These inner connections are consistent with the structure of the letter itself. Chapter 1:27 introduced the mutually related themes of standing together in unity for the gospel. Chapter 2:1-11 then presented general principles for unity in the self giving humility of Christ. The literary device of *inclusio* signals the conclusion of the central section of the letter (3:20-4:1). Paul's direct appeal to Euodia and Syntyche is a specific implementation of the unity principle.

In a significant article on the unity and composition of Philippians, David Garland proposes that reconciliation was the purpose of Philippians. "It is my opinion that all of the preceding argument was intended to lead up to the pastoral confrontation of these two women" (Garland 1985:172). This would mean that 4:2-3 should be included not in the concluding exhortations, but as climax to the main body. In favour of this view is the repetition of $\sigma\upsilon\nu\alpha\lambda\lambda\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\upsilon\omega$ which would extend the *inclusio* feature to verse 3 (Garland 1985:160). The reconciliation of these two women would then fulfil the pastoral purpose or "application" of the letter. Though possible from a literary judgment, both grammar and theme would suggest that the major break is best following 4:1. $\omega\{\sigma\tau\epsilon$ plus the imperative ($\sigma\tau\eta\nu\kappa\epsilon\tau\epsilon$) is used to introduce a concluding summary (BAGD 1996:899). This summary is addressed to the entire congregation ($\alpha\gamma\delta\epsilon\lambda\phi\omicron\iota\nu$). The dominant motif that demarcates the body of the letter is "citizenship" (1:27; 3:20). Having concluded his general teaching addressed to all, in 4:2 he turned to a particular problem, namely, the rift between these two women.

These exhortations also have a second and wider application. Paul is teaching a pattern for Christian moral reflection whenever the need might arise. This generality is expressed by the $\text{o}\{\text{sa}$ (“whatever”) that introduces the first six virtues; by the $\text{e}\text{i}[\text{t}\text{i}\sim$ (“if there is any”) that summarises the last two qualities; and by the present imperatives (logivzete , pravssete).

These general expressions commend a lifestyle of spiritual discernment, awareness, and reflection. Not just in response to specific problems, but as a way of life the Philippians are to carefully consider and put into practice what is best from God’s point of view. This is an ongoing interaction of thinking and living; discerning and doing. Elements in the process are Christian teaching, personal example, cultural awareness, and life experience.

The pattern for moral discernment is addressed to the congregation. It’s individual application is seen in vv. 2-3, but even there others are called upon to be a part of the resolution. The church as a whole should demonstrate the moral quality of these virtues and assist one another in discernment and accountability.

Relationship to Other Congregations

If the preceding discussion describes the expected response of the Philippian church, what relevance did it have for other New Testament churches? What does the Philippian correspondence contribute to our understanding of the moral vision of the New Testament? It has often been pointed out that the New Testament letters were not theological textbooks that presented a systematic overview of universal theological and ethical principles. Each one was addressed to a church, group, or individual in a differing place, time, and situation. A letter must be interpreted in its situational context but it is not necessary to limit the application only to that context. Other factors

antecedent in time or in the nature of the text itself may serve as indicators for its wider relevance.

The following observations demonstrate the usefulness of Paul's counsel to the Philippians for other churches. First, the list is presented in generic terms. This is seen in the use of οἷσα and εἰ τι. "Whatever is true. . . if anything is excellent." In the first he is not thinking of a particular word, action, or attitude, but *any* word, action or attitude that arises in their quest for strength and harmony. What is true or respectful or right (just, appropriate) should be valued for other situations.

The last two elements in the list (excellence and praiseworthy) invite consideration of other moral qualities not included in the list. Any virtue that is excellent or praiseworthy could and should be brought to bear as needed. Humility has already had a prominent place in the letter, but is not mentioned in the list (2:3, 8). Likewise, the important quality of forbearance has just been enjoined without its repetition in the catalogue (4:5). The Philippians are not limited to the specific thoughts and instructions of the apostle Paul, but they must exercise spiritual (Spirit-led) discernment in addressing their own needs.

Second, while it certainly addressed the need for steadfastness and unity in Philippi the list is presented in a moral framework common to other letters. The central body of the letter is an exhortation to live worthy (ἀξίως) of the gospel. This adverb means "worthily, in a manner worthy of, suitably" with the genitive of the person or thing following (BAGD 1996:78). In 1 Thessalonians 2:12 Paul piles on the words of exhortation to affirm the Thessalonians in a life "worthy of God" (cp. 3 John 6). In the epistolary thanksgiving to the Colossians he prays that they might live "worthy of the Lord" (1:10). Introducing his moral teaching in the latter half of the Ephesian letter he

challenges them to “live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (4:1). In each of these cases *peripatevw* is used ethically to describe the Christian way of life (Cp. Rom. 6:4;8:4;14:16;Eph. 2:10;5:2,8,15;Col. 2:6;1 Thess. 4:1). In Philippians 1:27 the thought is parallel although the metaphor changes from “walking” to “living as a citizen.” These expressions are the common vocabulary of Paul’s ethical teaching to all Christian congregations in which he addressed a variety of historical, personal, ecclesial, and cultural issues.

Third, the use of *ajxiwv* provides a vital connection between Paul’s theology and his ethics. It is a life worthy and suitable to the gospel which is the message about Christ (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Moral accountability is not to a list of duties, nor to an abstract concept of goodness, nor to a particular cultural lifestyle, but to a person who has loved and acted in redeeming sacrifice on their behalf (Gal. 2:20). This three-way bond of Christ, Paul, and the believers is the glue which holds the letter together (Fee 1995:13-14). Paul’s moral guidance is not merely person-to-person, but person-to-person within a relationship to Christ. This “in Christ” (*e[n Cristw` `` ` /*) terminology is used eighteen times in this short letter. “In Christ” itself is used eight times in 1:1,26; 3:3,9,14; and 4:7,19,21; “in the Lord” nine times in 1:14; 2:19,24,29; 3:1; 4:1,2,4,10; and “in him” in 3:9. The meaning of these expressions is by no means uniform. When the relationship itself is in view the local sense of the dative is the better understanding (1:1). But in many instances the meaning shades over to the instrumental so that the work of God in the life of the believer is in/through/by means of Christ. Wedderburn lists 3:14; 4:7,13,19 as possible examples of this usage (Wedderburn 1985:89). Compare 2:19, “I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy.” In 3:3 “in Christ” is the object of the believers boasting (*kaucwvmeno i*) and stands in contrast to confidence in human

achievement or legalistic righteousness. But the anticipated goal of this “in Christ” relationship is to be “with Christ” or in conformity with Christ. Here *συνη* and its compounds are used (1:23; 3:10, 21) to present to moral goal of the present life and the eschatological hope of the future. Appeals to moral action flow out of this perspective on our present and future conformity with Christ (Harvey 1992:338).

The structure of Philippians is also built around the centrality of Christ and the gospel. After introducing the call to a worthy way of life in 1:27, the appeal to self-giving humility in the church (2:3-4) is based upon the example of Christ himself (2:5-11) and particularly his obedience to death (Hays 1996:39).

Many have pointed out that the death and resurrection of Jesus is the point of departure for moral reasoning in the New Testament. There are other warrants such as the Scriptures, the character of God, and the coming of Christ, but the touchstone of these seems to be the believer’s union with Christ through the cross. “The defining feature of New Testament ethics is its orientation to an event, namely, the event of Jesus (including his resurrection and exaltation to God’s right hand), and to the community that resulted” (Keck 1996:10;also Verhey 1982:179;Kilner 1989:369;Grogan 1995:143-147). “The task of a theological ethic of the New Testament is to make clear the implications of confessing faith in Jesus as the crucified and resurrected Christ for the life and actions of the community of faith” (Lohse 1991:1).

The centrality of the cross is seen in Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians. Hays argues that the “law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2) should be understood ironically as Jesus’ pattern of self-giving rather than an alternate Torah or body of rules. “Even if Galatians were the only source for our knowledge of Paul’s christology, we would know that Paul understood Jesus Christ as God’s Son who simultaneously expressed obedience to

God and loved humankind through surrendering himself to a death which somehow was vicariously efficacious to set others free” (Hays 1987:277). The theological self-giving of the cross (Gal. 1:3-4;2:20) is the example for the believers’ ethical self-giving including the fruit of the Spirit (5:16-25; Hays 1987:289).

In the three lists of Ephesians 4-6 the cross and its effects are again the centre of Paul’s argument. The believer is to forgive “just as in Christ God forgave you” (4:32). We are to live a life of love “just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (5:1-2). A Christian husband is to love his wife “as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (5:25).

In examining the Christian way of life in Colossians 3, Yates observes that the lists are set in the context of the theology of dying and rising with Christ (cp. Col. 2:14-15). The believer’s spiritual union or identification with Christ’s death and resurrection becomes both the basis and example for a Christian way of life (Yates 1991:244). “Far from being an appendix to the main argument of the epistle, in the paraenetic material of Col. 3:1-4:6 we are brought right to the heart of the meaning of atonement and the significance of the person of Christ dealt with earlier in chapters 1 and 2” (Yates 1991:251).

The ethically loaded letter to Corinth has as its foundational premise “Jesus Christ and him crucified” (2:2). His self-giving sacrifice was the background to answering even the practical questions of eating meat offered to idols (Horrell 1997:105-109;Williams 2003:117-119).

The centrality of the cross in Paul’s ethical reasoning has at least two important implications for application. The first relates to the horizons of New Testament ethical expectations. Paul’s concern is the life of the believer and the believing community. Through the spiritual benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection a person is justified

before God, forgiven of eternal guilt, made a new creation in Christ, sealed with the Holy Spirit, and baptised into the body of Christ (Rom. 3:21-24; Gal. 2:16;3:26;Eph. 1:3-14;2:8-9;Phil. 3:3-9;1 Cor. 12:13;2 Cor. 5:17;Titus 3:3-7). All of this and more the New Testament declares to be the free gift of God which is offered to any person who will receive it through direct and personal faith. It is only through this saving relationship with Christ that the believer is enabled to live the moral life (Gal. 5:16, 25).

In other words, Paul exhorts believers to be who they are. The reality of who they are in Christ necessarily dictates how they are to live. Just as it is grammatically preposterous to suggest that people *are* other than they *are*, so it is morally preposterous if such is the case. The imperative of *who they are* to be is intimately linked to the indicative of *who they are*" (Kilner 1989:373).

This does not mean that moral principles have no value for society at large. Integrity, sexual morality, harmonious relationships, care for the sick, aged, and impoverished make human life more pleasant and pragmatically successful. The humanitarian benefits may be recognised and cherished, but practised apart from Christ, humanity lacks the sanctifying power of the Spirit (Rom 2:14-15), real spiritual change (Gal. 2:16), and any ultimate hope (Phil. 3:20-21). The centrality of the cross means that the Christian message is not about a better way of life. It first requires a call to the Gospel through faith in Jesus Christ (Kilner 1989:372 n.13; Guthrie 1981:896;cp. Hartin 1994:520-521).

A second implication bears on the occasional nature of New Testament letters. Problems in the churches did not force Paul or other writers to change the Gospel. The Christian message was rooted in historical events that could be personally verified by people living in the first century (1 Cor. 15:1-11;Acts 1:8;1 John 1:1). It was further developed through direct revelation to the apostles (John 16:12-14; Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 11:23). On the human side Paul would have experienced spiritual growth like anyone

else. His own understanding and relationship to the Gospel would have developed as a part of this process. As the Gospel advanced from Jerusalem to Rome, each new location and issue raised new challenges. But the New Testament does not reason from the new situation. In other words, the content of the gospel was not changed because of new circumstances. Rather, using the occasion Paul goes back to the historical and revealed meaning of the cross and reasons forward to the situation with a fresh application or perspective. Whatever variation or new application was applied to the situation it was an implication of the Gospel that did not vary from its historical and revelatory baseline. “While the church borrowed the forms of their receptor cultures (1 Cor 9:19-23), it refused to compromise the content of its message” (Osborne 1991:321). In referring to the unified ethical perspective of the early church, Grogan comments, “He [Paul] may have had to develop that paraenesis in some ways because of new ethical challenges and dilemmas faced by the churches, but he did not depart from it in principle” (Grogan 1995:147). This approach gives due consideration and weight both to the ancient text and the contemporary situation without sacrificing the historical importance of the first or the pressing reality of the latter.

Back to our observations regarding the relevance of Philippians 4:8 to other congregations. The first was its presentation in general terms. The second was a common moral framework with other ethical material in Paul’s letters. Related to the second, the third observation was the centrality of Christ and the gospel in Paul’s moral vision. Now, fourth, he often recommended his own life and that of others as an example of the moral life. In Philippians this is prominent. Not only does he put forward the example of Christ (2:5-11), but he also used the ministry of Timothy (2:21), Ephaphroditus (2:29-30), himself (3:4-11), and other mature believers (3:17) to exemplify the message of humility and unity. In seeking sound moral direction they

should consider what they have personally learned and verified from Paul (ejmavqete kai; parelavbete), along with the confirmation of what they had seen in his ministry and character (hjkouvsete kai; ei[dete). In the exegesis we have pointed out that what was preached in the apostolic gospel contained moral teaching (1 Thess. 4:1;2 Thess. 3:6). This imitation was in no way a slavish loyalty. It required the careful thought of logivzete (v. 8). Nor was it the mimicry of external habits, dress, or mannerisms. The imitation Paul invited was the moral life they shared in common through Christ.

The fullest expression of this figure is found in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." Though not used exclusively in this way, the heart of the motif seems to be an appeal for perseverance and faithfulness in the midst of suffering (cp. 1 Thess. 1:6;2:14). The example of Christ to the believer is his spiritual suffering for us (1 Pet. 2:21-24). Paul's desire was to know Christ in the understanding and fellowship of his suffering (Phil. 3:10). Spirituality grows through conformity to the sufferings of Christ. The motif does not espouse a martyr complex, but seeks to comprehend the heart of Christ that motivated him to act in self-giving sacrifice for our spiritual good (Rom. 8:17, 29-30;15:1-7;2 Cor. 12:9-10;1 Pet. 2:21;4:13-14). We share in his suffering and ultimately his glory by acting with the same interests toward others. This imitation theme in Paul's exhortations takes us right back to the centrality of Christ and the gospel. His obedient death becomes the paradigm of obedience for the believer to follow (Hays 1996:31).

A fifth observation that makes Philippians 4:8 relevant to other congregations is the catalogue of virtues itself as a method of moral instruction. We have seen previously that ethical lists were widely used by Paul, other New Testament writers,

Hellenistic Judaism, and Greco-Roman moral philosophers. The representative nature of the catalogues meant they could be used and adapted according to the pedagogical purposes of the instructor or author.

A sixth, and final, observation is that these exhortations were addressed to the church as a whole (Phil. 1:1). They required individual application as in 4:2-3, but even there the church was challenged to become involved as needed. They were to look out for the interests of each other (2:3-4) but the goal was to stand firm *together* for the gospel (1:27). The Christian life teaching of Ephesians 4-6 required that each one fulfil their giftedness, but the result was maturity in the body of Christ (Eph. 4:7-16). First Timothy and Titus were addressed to individual church leaders, but they were essentially “open letters” so that the congregation as a whole might know how to conduct the affairs of the church (1 Tim. 3:15). The New Testament maintains this delicate balance of the spiritual responsibility of the believer in the corporate life of the church (i.e. Gal. 6:1-5). It fully respects the rights and responsibilities of the person, but does so within the collective relationships of the Christian community. The church is the communal context of moral discernment and embodiment (Guthrie 1981:896; Verhey 1982:177). Conservative Christianity has often treated justification as a highly individual reality (creating something of the “Lone Ranger” mentality) and the church as highly institutional. For this reason Hays emphasises the communal aspect of New Testament teaching as the practical context for Christian behaviour. The right question, he suggests, is not “What should *I* do?” but “What should *we* do?” (Hays 1996:196-197).

To sum up: Paul urged Christian unity and steadfastness in the humility of Christ. In addressing the specifics of the Philippian congregation he used a moral and theological framework similar to his instructions to other New Testament churches. The

Christological basis and general principles for ethical discernment could be used by all believers in similar situations. Does this hold true for contemporary application?

Before this question can be answered we must consider the broader theological context of personal application.

CH. 4 HERMENEUTICAL: THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF PERSONAL APPLICATION

Overview

The gaps of history, culture, language, and theology between “then” and “now” have been bridged in many different ways. An overview is essential for understanding the contribution coming from our study of the virtue lists.

The term “application” itself may mean different things to different people. Most commonly, the idea of application is what a teacher or preacher does in interpreting the text and communicating not only its informational content, but its present relevance to the hearers. Application answers the question of “So what?” or “What does it mean to me (today)?”

Others would disagree with the underlying disjunction of meaning and significance of the above approach. They would view both meaning and relevance taking place in the moment of understanding. The goal of hermeneutics is to bring together in a present and relevant experience both the thought world of the text and the perspectives of the interpreter. When the two are merged with one another the outcome is a synthesis of insight.

Many view application within their discipline or calling. Missiologists think in terms of communicating the gospel in a cross-cultural setting. They will wrestle with some of the same above issues. Will they give priority to the text or the context? Does communication of the gospel mean a recital of information or the reproduction of its spiritual dynamic? What in Scripture is dressed in cultural clothing and what would that principle look like in the target culture? For ethicists application is the finding of biblical solutions to contemporary questions of morality and behaviour. Some of these

questions are rooted in the ethics of Scripture itself (i.e. marriage, divorce, and remarriage). Others arise out of the realities of contemporary culture which are not addressed in the Bible (i.e. smoking, birth control, abortion). In these cases the methodology will be more inferential and the solutions suggestive (hence the wide range of perspectives on issues such as just war/pacifism). Christian counsellors apply the Scriptures to the crises and personal relational problems of their clients. They must deal with the very urgent and immediate needs of personal Christian ethics. Systematic theology itself is a form of application. It re-presents the content of Scripture in meaningful categories and discussions for a contemporary audience.

All of these are a part of the multi-faceted ways in which Scripture is used in church and society. But for this thesis I want to think through the issues of personal application. How does the individual believer read the biblical text and arrive at a meaningful application for his or her personal spiritual growth? What are the factors to be considered? What methods or perspectives are helpful in the process? The emphasis will not be on principles or methods for interpretation or exegesis. My desire is to work toward a theological framework for personal application and relevance of biblical truth. The following section is an overview of approaches to bridging the gaps of “then” and “now.” Then I will explore what appear to be the most promising directions in the current discussion—the role of biblical theology, the contributions of literary studies into the text of Scripture, and the personal dynamics of application.

Historically, allegorical approaches were used to apply the text to personal and communal (church) life (Sproul 1977:54-56; Fiorenza 1991:357). The literal sense was the historical or descriptive meaning of the text. The moral or tropological sense instructed people how to behave. The allegorical sense related the passage to the wider content of Christian faith. And the anagogical expressed future hope. The

practice of this method often went beyond the boundaries of the text. It imposed artificial parallels and allowed for speculation. But recognising its spiritual intent and function Marshall offered this mediating evaluation, "I have a hunch that much of what was dubbed 'allegory' in mediaeval interpretation and similar approaches was in effect re-application of the text to new situations and communities" (Marshall 1994:135).

Devotional approaches assume the immediacy of biblical relevance to the believer. Many popular books will take this approach in one form or another. Methodologies and "how to's" guide the devotional Bible student toward spiritual growth and personal development. Promises, commands, teachings and examples are personalised and implemented directly into the spiritual life of the individual. This approach is effective where there is theological continuity between the biblical teaching of "then" and "now." There is a normal process of discernment that takes place in the reading of Scripture. However, without a more critical approach it has the danger of lifting verses out their biblical context and appropriating them in a way that the wider context would not support. It becomes confused or simply ignores portions of Scripture that do not appear to be spiritually fruitful. Christian faithfulness can be seen as adherence to the moralisms and examples of biblical instruction. And the Christ-centredness both of biblical revelation and Christian living can be lost. Marshall refers to this problem as naïve biblicism (Marshall 1979:45). While acknowledging the need for further growth and development of theological and critical skills it must be said that this has been the fruitful starting point for many, many believers in their understanding of Scripture. For a positive example of devotional principles, attitudes, and methods see Henrichsen and Jackson, Section V: Applying the Bible (1990:259-335).

More academic approaches begin with a consideration of the discontinuities between "then" and "now." In contrast to devotional approaches some will see very little

that is directly applicable for today. “In respecting the gap between the New Testament and our world one realizes that in no way do the biblical writings present us with laws or ideals that we are immediately to apply to our present” (Hartin 1994:521). He means that it cannot be directly applied in its present form or cultural package. Others who use the Bible more directly still acknowledge the methodological ambiguities. “In situations that have no biblical precedent, however, it is not self-evident how the Bible’s moral teachings are to be applied” (Smedes 1982:190). In surveying the literature one feels not that these are gaps to be crossed from point A to point B, but minefields to be navigated in getting there!

Biblical ethicists use the Scripture as a starting point for moral reflection on modern problems. Christopher Marshall proposes five sources for fruitful ethical thinking. The Bible itself is the first and given priority, but not sole authority. “Whatever the problem in appropriating Scripture today, and they are considerable, there remains a widespread conviction, across confessional lines, that Scripture can, does, and should shape Christian moral life. And there remain strong historical, theological and practical arguments for according the Bible such a decisive or normative role” (Marshall 1994:227).

Second is theological tradition. This tradition is biblical revelation received, reflected on, and interpreted by the people of God down through history. Third is moral philosophy which might include human reason, moral virtue, natural law or revelation, and the common ground of social structures and behaviours. Fourth, Christian ethics requires the gathering of empirical data to clarify the decision-making situation and identify the range of available options. This contextual information is often supplied by technology or the social sciences. Fifth, the decision making process takes place in the context of the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. “Arriving at moral judgments

entails a dialectic between scriptural and non-scriptural factors, between the considerations based on circumstance and rational inquiry and those which appeal to the biblical witness” (Marshall 1994:225, the five are presented pp. 222-225). It is therefore, this ethical dialogue with Scripture that reaches across the time of history and the diversity of cultures.

Not in distinction to, but as a part of the above, many rely on the concept of “principle.” The surface structure of the text presents a message in a historical and cultural package. The theological principle must be unpacked from its cultural context and reapplied in the new contemporary situation. A majority of interpreters across theological persuasions use this concept to one degree or another. The principle deduced from Scripture has normative value in connecting with the present. Principles separated from their biblical contexts allow their reapplication in externals analogous to, but not directly addressed in Scripture (Larkin 1988:353-360; Osborne 1991:336-338; McQuilkin 1992:300-306; Tiessen 1993:193-204; Marshall 1994:133-136; Degner 1996:275-276; Klein 1998:332-334).

Richard Hays, however, rejects this separation of the text and its setting. He insists that each text must be accepted as normative in its own right. This precept is an extension of his conviction that all language communication is by nature culture-bound. Coherence must be achieved by relating the texts as they stand, not by changing them, harmonising them or selecting certain ones over others. This he accomplishes through the three focal images of new creation, cross, and new community as themes which capture the ethical perspectives of New Testament teaching. Assuming a high degree of cultural and historical discontinuity he proposes for application a leap of imagination that connects the realities of then and now.

The use of the New Testament in normative ethics requires *an integrative act of the imagination*, a discernment about how our lives, despite their historical dissimilarity to the lives narrated in the New Testament, might fitly answer to that narration and participate in the truth that it tells. I reiterate here a major thesis articulated in the Introduction: *whenever we appeal to the authority of the New Testament, we are necessarily engaged in metaphor-making, placing our community's life imaginatively within the world articulated by the texts*. An exercise of aesthetic judgment is unavoidable if the two worlds are to be brought into conjunction (Hays 1996:298-299).

In this process he gives a significant role to prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit in the community.

A more existential approach distinguishes between the Bible and the Word of God. The Bible is a witness to the Word of God which can be experienced by the believer in reading and studying the Scriptures. Scripture is not itself revelation, but the moment of revelation comes when the meaning of Scripture “becomes” the Word of God again in the experience of the believer. For the individual the distance of time and thought-world is closed in the moment of personal spiritual insight. Historically, the gaps of application are crossed by a Spirit-led series of interpretations and re-interpretations of the root metaphors of Scripture. These metaphors, such as redemption in Christ, establish parameters which place controls on interpretation (Velthuisen 1988:124-125). Authority for contemporary Christian life is not rooted in doctrines with “final certitude” but in a “relationship of faith with Jesus Christ” (van Huyssteen 1989:178-179).

Postmodern approaches take the reader, the contemporary context, or the interpreting community as the starting point for biblical interpretation. Language is historically conditioned so that the original meaning of the text or the intention of its writer is not recoverable in any objective sense. By objective is meant that which has existence, reality, or validity outside of one's own mind or experience (Carson 1996b:120). The contemporary interpreter receives the text into his or her own

historically and socially conditioned preunderstanding and so becomes a part of the interpretation. "According to their point of view, an interpreter does not actually uncover the meaning objectively inherent in a text but interacts with the text to create a new meaning, which is neither unconnected with the text nor simply objectively there. The interpreter is actively and intimately involved in the interpretation" (Jodock 1990:372).

The more recent emphases upon community views ethics not as an application of rules, principles or ideals revealed in Scripture. Rather, the community itself interprets, affirms, and embodies, or lives out the agreed upon course of action. It is this embodiment which carries biblical authority (Cahill 1990:383). In the range of postmodern approaches the distinction between interpretation and application is often collapsed so that there are not two processes (interpretation and application), but one (what it means to me/us). Where the locus of meaning is in the interpreter or the community there is no need for application in the classical sense of that word.

A consideration of these approaches raises the issue of authority. What is it that carries or transmits the transcendent message of the text? What parts and aspects of the biblical presentation should and can be transferred into contemporary life? The method used to cross these gaps will reveal where true meaning and authority is seen to reside. For instance, if the abiding authority of the Bible is in the theological principle behind the text does biblical authority reside in the text or in the principle which has been distilled? If we rely upon tradition or insight or a leap of imagination then these processes in themselves carry normative force in our lives. The crisis of Biblical authority has been discussed by scholars of all theological persuasions. In some way all are responding to the view that the traditional authority of the Bible has been lost in the contemporary world. Francis Fiorenza begins her discussion by affirming that the

Scriptures continue to have a *de facto* authority amongst various Christian communities. She categorises the uses of Scripture as functional or canonical. The functional approach begins with the effect of the Bible in contemporary church life and personal experience. The authority of Scripture is based on its continued usefulness to shape and transform believers. She points out that these uses are primarily pragmatic and beg the question of why Scripture has authority. Canonical uses start at the other end of the spectrum with the historical formation of the Scriptures. The formative process of origin, redaction, and reinterpretation prior to and within the canon uncovers a paradigm for Biblical authority. These approaches follow this observed pattern of interpretation and reinterpretation and place the authority of Scripture in the *process* [her emphasis] of reinterpretation as opposed to the canonical text (Fiorenza 1990:362). She herself poses a synthesis of the functional and the canonical. The Bible should be viewed as a constitution which establishes the original identity of the believing community. As such, the Scriptures will always be a primary source. In instances of historical particularity, such as the person of Jesus, the Bible will be normative. In other areas such as church and state the lessons of history or sociology might take on increasing importance. In the first, authority remains in the Scriptures. In the second it is shifted to tradition or history. While the interpretation of Scripture will be consistent with the church's original identity, as time goes on its teachings are open to reinterpretation in light of new historical situations. She concludes, ". . .the authority of the Scriptures does not rest on a single meaning that is received and then interpreted, but rather that the meaning of the Scriptures is construed in relation to the integrity of the events and traditions expressed in the Scriptures along with the ongoing process of reception of these interpretations" (Fiorenza 1990:367).

Fiorenza addressed many valid issues in biblical interpretation. For instance, she is concerned with the distance between the professional scholar and the person in the pew. Her proposal of reception hermeneutics seeks to embrace both the findings of the academy and the perceptions of the average church goer. But with regard to authority I believe she begins in the wrong place. To analyse the methods of interpretation or the uses of Scripture in the church is to leave the issue of authority a matter of sociology and analysis. To anticipate our later discussion of biblical theology it is better to see spiritual authority residing in God himself. The authority of Scripture is then the means, or at least one of the means, by which God exercises his dominion over us. The nature of God and the derivative nature of Scripture become foundational to our view of authority. Evangelical theologian Millard Erickson puts it this way,

This volume proposes that God himself is the ultimate authority in religious matters. He has the right, both by virtue of who he is and what he does, to establish the standard for believe and practice. With respect to major issues he does not exercise authority in a direct fashion, however. Rather, he has delegated that authority by creating a book, the Bible. Because it conveys his message, the Bible carries the same weight God himself would command if he were speaking to us personally (Erickson 1985:245-246).

Gordon Fee also cautions that one's view of religious authority does not begin with the Bible itself, but with one's view of God which most often functions on a presuppositional level. Our view of who God is and how he acts and speaks operates in the background of how we see Scripture (and other matters). The one is an ultimate issue. The other is a penultimate and derivative matter. Further, he reminds us that the ultimate issues of life are generally embraced by faith. They cannot be proven by external verification. But they can be shown to be reasonable with the data available. "So I cannot prove the Bible to be God's Word. But one can show by a variety of evidence that it makes good sense to believe it to be so" (Fee 1991:28).

From a philosophy of knowledge James Grier argues for the autopistic (self-attesting) apologetic value of Scripture on the same grounds. "Every system has a self-referential starting point that cannot be validated by an authority" (Grier 1980:75). If an authority can be referred to another authority for verification then it loses its ultimate status.

But even if one takes a high view of Scripture, it does not resolve all the interpretive difficulties. It only redirects the questions that need to be asked and answered. How does the historical relate to the universal? How do we determine the cultural, personal, occasional components of Biblical commands? How do we integrate differing perspectives, apparent contradictions, and ambiguities within the canon? These questions are raised to show the importance of the above overview for the issue of authority and application. While interpretive/applicational strategies do not determine the issue of spiritual authority, they are important in so far as they carry forward our view of authority in a consistent way and connect us with what is normative in the Scripture. The rest of this chapter will present a discussion of the theological, literary, and personal framework for Biblical application. The goal is to develop a hermeneutical bridge from text to the present that is most consistent with an evangelical view of God and Scripture. That takes us first to the role of Biblical theology.

Theological Basis for Contemporary Application

Biblical theology is an important starting point in a theory of application. The term needs to be defined. As a descriptive phrase it may refer to theology that is related to and derived from the Scriptures. As a discipline of biblical studies, the phrase distinguishes between historical, systematic, or philosophical theology. But even within the history and practice of biblical theology as a specific discipline there have been and continue to be wide divergences based upon presuppositions and prior

theological decisions. We will consider three ways that biblical theology has been practiced in the modern period to the present. These three can be distinguished by the way they view history in their approach.

Historical-Descriptive

In the Reformation period the Reformers turned away from the philosophical theology of their day to the teaching of the Scriptures. Scripture was the only authority for them and it was allowed to interpret itself, a principle called the analogy of Scripture (*analogia scripturae*). This basic idea laid the foundation for the formal discipline which would come later. The immediate results were, however, a bit different. Early Protestant theology assumed the theological unity of Scripture. This assumed theological consistency was referred to as the analogy of faith (*analogia fidei*) which ignored the progressive nature of the Bible. Scriptural texts from either Testament were used as proof texts without adequate attention to their Biblical contexts. In time these systems of theology became the authority rather than the Scriptures. The Pietistic movement reacted against this rigid form of Protestant theology. The rivalry and rift between Biblical theology and dogmatics began to evidence itself.

Theology was not far behind secular scholarship in the triumph of rationalism in the 18th century. Rationalism brought a shift from a theological centre to an anthropological centre. Religion was considered to be a matter of reason. Biblical theology took upon itself to investigate the ideas of mankind about theology, cosmology, and anthropology. Early on, biblical theology adopted the methods of historical criticism. The Bible was viewed as a mere human product. "No biblical theology in the modern sense of the term was possible until scholarship generally had abandoned the old hermeneutical principle of *analogia scripturae* and *analogia fidei*, which assumed

both the uniformity of religious ideas in the Scriptures and their identity with the doctrines of the orthodox churches” (Dentan 1963:19).

The inaugural address of Johann P. Gabler at the University of Altdorf on March 30, 1787 marked a turning point in biblical studies. Hasel points out the three major ideas of the address: First, divine inspiration was rejected and the individual thought of each writer became the dominant interest. Second, the task of biblical theology became the collecting of varied ideas of the biblical writers. Third, stress was laid upon the importance of maintaining the historical time periods of the Old and New Testaments (Hasel 1972:21-22).

Following Gabler, biblical scholars embraced a historical-descriptive approach which freed itself from the existing orthodoxy, creeds, and traditions of the church. James Smart would later describe biblical theology as “the descriptive task of reproducing the original thought of the biblical authors, which might then exert a critical and constructive influence upon the contemporary systematic theologies” (Smart 1979:18). The emphasis on discontinuity soon led to the fragmentation of biblical studies. There was no longer a unified theology of the Bible, but views of the Old or New Testaments, various groups within the nation of Israel, or the individual Christian authors which resulted in “various kinds of theology ordered in historical succession” (Ebeling 1955:221;also Fiorenza 1991:356;Reventlow 1992:486).

Biblical Theology Movement

In the twentieth century what became known as the “Biblical Theology Movement” rescued biblical studies from its historical sterility. Various neoorthodox scholars retained the historical-descriptive methods of the earlier period along with its naturalistic worldviews. But they were not satisfied to leave the results of biblical scholarship at the point of “what it meant.” They desired to move on to “what it means”

with a word for their day. Karl Barth's commentary on Romans introduced a dialectical approach that stood in the gap between the historical background of the text and the pastoral needs of his congregants (Reventlow 1992:488). The text of Scripture was not revelation in itself. Rather it was the human witness to people's encounter with the Word of God. Revelation was understood to be in this personal encounter through or behind the text for those seeking to know God. Thus historical criticism could still be accepted with the theology of the text being affirmed to the interpreter in the existential moment. Theology was no longer rooted in history (see also "Overview," p. 116).

The "Biblical Theology Movement" brought a new energy to biblical studies during the 1940's and 1950's. *Theology Today* began in 1944, *Interpretation* was launched in 1947, and the *Scottish Journal of Theology* in 1948, while Westminster Press began the publication of commentaries and books representing the new approach. The movement as a whole emphasised the Bible as the Word of God, the need for faith, and God's revelation in Christ. There was renewed interest in the unity between the Old and New Testaments. But many became disenchanted with its reliance upon the results of historical research and sought new ways of shaping theology and the Word of God.

More recent approaches moved from behind the text to beside or in front of the text. That is, the locus of meaning and authority moved from the supposed events in the pre-history of the canon to an interaction between the Scripture and the early Christian community.

A canonical approach challenges the assumption that the earliest historical events play such a determinative role in the capacity of scripture to have authority or to render reality. Without denying the value of information gained by means of any critical investigation, a canonical approach seeks to understand a different issue: how a biblical text is normative within religious interpretation, that is to say, how the context of ancient traditions within scripture functions as an arena in

which certain religious questions are asked and answered (Sheppard 1992:862).

The process of that interaction with the normative traditions in their own day established the precedent for the church's continuing process of interpretation for today. "The canonization of scripture represents the freezing of only one imperfect moment within that same process of interpretation" (Sheppard 1992:863).

The biblical theology movement is now considered a thing of the past, but what is contiguous in more recent models for interpretation is the disjunction between history and theological meaning. As an example Gerard Loughlin argues for a literal meaning of the text in the life of the church. By literal, however, he does not refer to the "letteral" sense of the text which may be history-like without being truly historical. He proposes a distinction between the *story* of the text, the *history* to which the story wholly or partly refers, and *religious truth*, which the story may or may not accurately portray. "Only the third really matters, and increasingly it cannot be thought to depend on the other two." He concludes, "Finally, I have tried to suggest that the literal sense of Scripture is locatable in the co-consituion of Scripture and Church, of text and reading-community" (Loughlin 1995:376, 380). This is in contrast to the merely historical on the one hand or the merely self-referential on the other.

Hermeneutical Tool of Exegesis

There is a third way to understand the term "biblical theology." In this thesis it will refer to a hermeneutical resource which traces out the story line of God's self-disclosure through the historical progression of the Bible (Osborne 1991:263; Goldsworthy

2000:22). Each individual passage should ultimately be interpreted in light of the theology of the completed canon (Kaiser 1978:6).

In contrast to the preceding two, this approach views the Bible within a historical framework and theological unity. This does not discount the literary texture, personal styles, and varied genre of the Bible, but does affirm that these are presented in the context of historical factuality in contrast to a second order or literary reflection. God is seen as acting in human history and communicating His message in words to men and women. Categories of biblical theology are constructed upon these acts and words. Theology is grounded in historical events such as creation (Gen. 1-2), the fall of mankind (Gen. 3-5), the incarnation of Christ (John 1:1-18), the crucifixion, and the second coming (Acts 1:11). As one example Paul's apologetic for the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 is based upon the historical, verifiable witness of those still alive at the time. It is the framework of these great acts of God in redemptive history that form the context for theological understanding. This view of biblical theology requires looking at a few of its component parts, for even among evangelicals there is by no means consensus on all these issues.

Revelation

The first is the revelatory nature of Scripture. What is termed natural revelation leads to general inferences about the character of God as seen in nature and providence (Psa. 19:1; Matt. 5:45; Acts 17:24-31; Rom. 1:18-20). The theological concept of special revelation is constructed from various strands of biblical witness. The Old Testament term denoting revelation is *hlg* which means "to uncover." But the concept is complemented by verbs of showing, seeing, and appearing along with nouns for word and vision (Bromiley 1988:161; TWOT I 1980:160-161). In the New Testament the verb *ajpakaluvptw* and the noun *ajpakaluvpsi~* carry the main idea of revelation.

But again, the theological idea is supplemented by words of showing, declaring, manifesting, and making known. After a survey of its use in other cultures and religions, Bromiley concludes that revelation “entails a disclosure of what is at first hidden or secret” (Bromiley 1988:161). In Scripture special revelation refers to a self-disclosure of God that would otherwise be inaccessible to ordinary cognition. It is by no means a complete disclosure, for God by definition is an ultimate and transcendent being outside the realm of our sensory experience. But it might be called an adequate knowledge within God’s redemptive purpose for his people (Deut. 29:29; 2 Tim. 3:14-15; Erickson 1985:175). God’s self-disclosure in Scripture is for the purpose of redemption and restoration of man to a relationship with him.

The God manifested himself in various ways. Major modes of revelation were acts in history (the exodus), direct appearances and words (call of Abraham, Moses at the burning bush), messages through the prophets and spiritual leaders (“Thus says the Lord”). All other forms of revelation, however, anticipated the supreme revelation of God in Christ (Heb. 1:1-3; cp. John 14:9).

But is this revelation of God personal or propositional? Did God intend to communicate information concerning himself or present himself personally to his people? On the one hand the encounters of God with biblical characters were powerful and life changing. In addition, the final and complete disclosure of God was in the person of Christ (John 1:14-18; Heb. 1:1-3). Therefore, many understand the essence of revelation to be this experiential and life transforming reality through the activity of the Spirit. Scripture, in this moment of spiritual realisation, is a vehicle that the Spirit of God uses in the experience of the present day believer. Revelation is not in the informational value of the text but in its power to bring out the personal presence of Christ in one’s life.

At least two thoughts must be observed. In these biblical encounters some knowledge of God was communicated either by observation, acts, verbal speech, or previous Scriptures. The power of the experience was from the human side a response to the truth about God that was brought to the person's attention. No real spiritual experience can occur without some knowledge of God. God reveals himself by showing (acts in history) or telling (speech) us something about himself. We experience it by faith (Erickson 1985:196). There is no need to set up an exclusive disjunction between what is personal and what is propositional. "One cannot respond appropriately to God without first having some knowledge about God" (Netland 2001:202, see his argument for the both/and approach pp. 197-204; Osborne 1991:408-410).

Further, the propositional record of these revelations in the Bible conveys to us the same truth necessary for our own spiritual growth. In this sense the Bible is revelation even if indirectly compared to those who first received it. One example comes from the life of Jesus himself. He is the ultimate revealer and revelation of the Father. In his own day many were looking for a messianic leader to fulfil their national and personal aspirations. But they did not accept Jesus' testimony and claims. They failed to recognise him in their present personal experience because they had failed to recognise the revelation (i.e. the written testimony) of the Christ in their Scriptures. " You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39-40). Here is both propositional and personal truth. Jesus points them back to the written Scriptures, not as an end in itself (biblicism or even bibliolatry), but as a prior, progressive, and written testimony that embraced by faith would lead into a personal relationship with their Messiah.

One point of clarification is necessary. The idea of propositional truth can be used in two ways. First, it can refer to the form of written or verbal communication. A propositional statement makes an assertion or a declaration. Every passage in Scripture is obviously not propositional in form, although many are. The Scripture is a tapestry of styles and approaches all of which have a way of communicating information and truth. Neither is every proposition presented as a statement of truth. It may be an accurate statement of someone's word or action that is patently wrong from God's point of view. "There is no God" (Psa. 14:1). Second, in a more general way, it can refer to the "cognitive information that demands personal commitment" (Osborne 1991:410). Harold Netland distinguishes between the sentence and the proposition itself. The sentence is the vehicle of communication. The proposition is the message. One is the "how" the other the "what" (Netland 2001:199). The vehicle may change in form, but there is always a "what" to be grasped in the intent of the writing. All Scripture is propositional in that it intends to communicate a message no matter the genre of a particular writing. To say that the Bible is propositional means that it "never affirms in matter of fact what is false" (Carson 1996:163-167).

If both the propositional and the personal have a valid role to play, does one have priority over the other? Those who hold to the historicity of Scripture will usually use the term "revelation" for the Scriptures and "illumination" for the Spirit's work of bringing understanding to the mind of the reader. If we think of "revelation" as acts of revelation or special revelation from God, then perhaps a better way of summarising the preceding discussion would be to say that the Bible is "revelatory" in nature. That is, the Bible contains the acts and words of God's direct revelation which form the salvation-historical framework of the Scriptures. This is not to say that all incidents and words are "revealed" because many are historical, literary, personal, and completely observable

from the human plane of life. The earthly life of David could be studied and investigated by a historian living at the time. His psalms could be collected and collated. But only the prophetic word of God could establish the covenant which revealed God's purpose to send his Messiah through David's royal descendents (2 Sam. 7:11-16).

Inspiration

A closely related concept is that of inspiration, a term that embraces not only those parts of Scripture that are directly revelatory, but all that has been recorded. Briefly stated, inspiration means that "God in His sovereignty so superintended the freely composed human writings we call the Scriptures that the result was nothing less than God's words and, therefore, entirely truthful" (Carson 1986:45; see also Moo 1986:203). While the human writers were "inspired" as a part of the process of composition (2 Pet. 1:20-21) there is no suggestion that they were so empowered in every activity of their lives or in everything that they wrote. The term "inspired" most appropriately applies to the texts which they wrote under divinely guided conditions which were received and recognised by the churches.

The central passage for this doctrine is 2 Timothy 3:16-17 where the Scriptures are commended to Timothy as $\rho\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\sim$. The traditional translation of "inspired" conveys the idea of God breathing a blessing into the human documents. After a detailed study of this verbal adjective Paul Feinberg concludes that the word does not refer to the in-spiring of writings already in existence, but rather to the very process of production. "The Scriptures are the spirated breath of God. For this reason, Paul can say that the Scriptures are God's speech (Gal. 3:8,22; Rom. 9:17). God is the author what is recorded (Acts 13:32-35), and the entirety of Scripture is the oracle of God (Rom. 3:2)" (Feinberg 1980:278).

As opposed to a crude literal theory of dictation, this view is termed as “concurrent” or “concurive” in which God worked through the varied personalities and circumstances of the human authors. “In fact, God worked in and with the authors in the process of their writing so that, employing their own abilities, cultures, and backgrounds, God moved them to write what He wanted to say” (Klein 1998:323).

A high view of inspiration does not replace the need for interpretation and hermeneutics. Rather, it functions on a presuppositional level determining directions in our methodology and expectations much as the foundation of a building determines its shape and size. The implication of an inspired text as outlined above is at least three-fold. First, the interpreter approaches the Bible with the confidence that it is truthful in all it affirms (Erickson 1985:233; cp. Carson 1986:29-31). Second, the Bible carries God’s authority for the believer. It is not only in the existential moment or the devotional insight, as personally meaningful as these times may be, but God’s authority for his people resides in the message of Scripture itself. One part of what it records, such as the accounts of God’s special revelation, are not presented as more spiritual or authoritative than others. It is the Scriptures which are God breathed and “All Scripture . . . is useful” (2 Tim. 3:16) to sanctify the believer (v. 17). Third, the interpreter expects a wholeness and unity amidst the Bible’s great diversity. Along with revelation and inspiration, the unity of Scripture is a third important component of a biblical theology.

Unity

Evangelical writers have in recent years begun to use the term “canonical” to express an aspect of interpretation in light of this assumed unity (Packer 1985; Moo 1986; Oss 1988; Osborne 1991; Goldsworthy 2000). Although undoubtedly influenced by the movement of “canonical criticism,” the term is used with a different perspective. Sheppard observes, “Canonical criticism, regardless of the theological spectrum that

may find it appealing, is a response from within a more liberal, rather than conservative, assessment of the biblical prehistory” (Sheppard 1992:861). Conservative writers mean by “canonical” that from the vantage point of a completed canon each passage of Scripture should be interpreted in light of the whole. In other words, canonical interpretation relates the part to the whole for contemporary relevance. Douglas Oss illustrates this approach with the prohibition of idolatry in the Old Testament. Exodus 20:4 prohibits carved images as a tangible substitute for the spiritual worship of Yahweh. The immediate concern was probably the influence of pagan deities. Some Christians in history have lived where false gods were a temptation, but many have not. For his own day (where idolatry was still a problem for many) Paul connected the meaning of idolatry with immorality, impurity and greed (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5) and John summarised his warning against the world system in 1 John 5:21 as idolatry. Oss comments, “In the light of the canonical context, the second commandment has far-reaching meaning in the present. The *sensus plenior* of idolatry involves giving anything or anyone higher priority than one should in his life” (Oss 1988:126-127).

Canonical interpretation arose from the need to relate the diversity of Scripture to its unity. The wholeness of Scripture may be inferred from the unity of God or the direct statements of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16) but the phenomena of Scripture pose other challenges. How are the parts related? Efforts to demonstrate the unity of Scripture have followed numerous schemes. First, there is a historical continuity. Though not all history, the Bible’s message is built upon the story line of God’s dealings with his people. The Christians of the New Testament saw themselves as the direct spiritual recipients of what God had been doing throughout history (1 Cor. 10:11). Second, what was promised in the Old Testament was fulfilled in the New (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8, 29).

Third, the covenants provide another connection between the sections of the canon. The old covenant given to Moses anticipated the coming of Christ and was superseded by the new covenant (2 Cor. 3:7-18; Heb. 8:6-13). Many would see the sequence of covenants (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David) as aspects of one covenant of grace fulfilled in Christ. Fourth, much in Old Testament revelation was a type of future realities in Christ (1 Cor 5:7; Heb. 10:1). Fifth, theological themes carry through both testaments (Gen. 1:1 with John 1:1; Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18 with Matt. 22:35-40 and Gal. 5:14). Sixth, New Testament authors cite the Old Testament in various ways to authorise their views and teachings (Acts 15:15-18 cites Amos 9:11,12).

In all of the above lines of evidence there are individual passages where it is difficult to tell how the part relates to the whole. Some take these phenomena of Scripture as changes, differences, or contradictions that cannot be reconciled and therefore reject unity. Others take the direct statements of Scripture and use them as the blanket answer to unclear passages, but without giving real answers. Others use extreme approaches to harmonise dissimilar passages in order to preserve the doctrine of unity. But one need not have all the answers to maintain a confidence in the unity of Scripture. There are working solutions to most questions that bring the problem passages into line with other parts of Scripture. Many of these solutions have been worked, reworked, and are still very much in progress.

With reference to the complexities of New Testament use of the Old, Douglas Moo offers these working solutions. First, sometimes closer study does suggest that the New Testament followed the meaning of the Old Testament text. This is not immediately clear in a quote like “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain” to support apostolic financial support (1Cor. 9:9). But following the work of Kaiser (and I would add Johnson) it can be shown at least in this instance that Paul did not read

something into the text in order to suit his purpose. The divine author intended to establish a principle for people (Moo 1986:189; Kaiser 1978:3-18; Johnson 1980:39-51). Second, some individual passages become clearer in light of the developing redemptive historical framework of Scripture. "Any specific biblical text can legitimately be interpreted in light of its ultimate literary context—the whole canon, which receives its unity from the single divine author of the whole." (Moo 1986:205). Third, Moo suggests that some quotations are used because of the revelatory stance of the New Testament writers. That is, God revealed to them, as biblical authors, how the scriptural plan fit together in ways not immediately evident to the original author. As an example Moo uses the phrase from Psalm 2:7, "you are my son" applied to Christ (Acts 13:13; Heb. 1:5; 5:5). Such a use is consistent with, but not entirely clear in the historical context. Where New Testament passages fall into this category the contemporary reader does not have access to this revelatory hermeneutic. In such instances, "we belong to a different hermeneutical world" (Fee 1991:19).

Neither should we be fearful of living with a certain amount of ambiguity in our biblical understanding. It is truer to our divine conception of Scripture to say that we do not know at some points rather than insist upon a contrived answer that satisfies no one but ourselves. "If God gave us his word this way, and I believe he did, then our task is to hold both realities—its eternity and historical particularity—with equal vigor. If we cannot always have absolute certainty as to meaning or application, we can certainly move toward a higher degree of common understanding" (Fee 1991:35).

The Bible presents an inner coherence which provides consistency and wholeness to biblical interpretation (Packer 1985:43). Many would see this inner continuity as nothing other than the progressive redemptive history which finds its fulfilment in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The above lines of evidence would

ultimately find their fulfilment or true meaning in the redeeming purposes of God in Christ. So again as we did in our discussion of ethics, we find that the Scripture is Christ-centred. From God's promise to bless all peoples through Abraham (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8) to the eschatological kingdom when God will be all and in all (1 Cor. 15:24-28; Eph. 1:9-10) God works out the earthly plane of his plans through the person of the Son (Luke 24:25-27;44-45). The . . ."proper interpretation of any part of the Bible requires us to relate it to the person and work of Jesus" (Goldsworthy 2000:84).

I agree with this statement, but it also needs to be carefully understood. Certainly, Christ is the key to the Old Testament in the sense that he fulfilled its types, promises, and prophecies. But Goldsworthy goes on to say that it could not be empirically demonstrated that Jesus was the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. It required the "self-authenticating" interpretation of Jesus to be understood as such. "The manner of the coming of the kingdom, which the Jews and disciples expected, required radical modification in the light of the person and work of Jesus" (Goldsworthy 2000:97). This would compare to Moo's third category of a revelatory hermeneutic unavailable through human methodology. But this premise seems to contradict the very expectation of Jesus that his generation could and should recognise his identity from the witness of the Jewish Scriptures (Luke 24:25-27;44-45;John 5:39-40). The modification required seems to be in the disciples' personal perceptions not in the message of Scripture.

Another approach to Christological interpretation is presented by Donald Bloesch. He distances himself from liberal, scholastic orthodoxy, fundamentalist, and existentialist approaches. For him through the presence of Christ "we hear God's Word anew speaking to us in and through the written text" (Bloesch 1985:81-82). The Word of God is not in the text or the author's intent, therefore, that Word is not discovered through grammatical-historical exegesis. It is a revelatory experience where God

speaks the message for today. The gospel, too, cannot be identified with any doctrinal formulations. These verbal witnesses become the gospel when God unites his Word with our broken words by his Spirit (Bloesch 1985:99). It is difficult to see how his approach escapes the personal subjectivity or doctrinal relativity of similar approaches especially when he suggests that through Calvin, Barth, and Ritschl God spoke the same message revealed in a new way as the Word for his people at that time (Bloesch 1985:99-100).

A Christological interpretation should relate biblical truth to Christ in the forward looking categories of salvation history. Christ need not be read back into Old Testament texts in order to uncover their “real” meaning. The further light of the New Testament may lift the shadows (Heb. 10:1) and enrich our understanding of the truth already present, but it would not nullify the spiritual value and reality for the believer in that era. A Christological approach relates moral and ethical issues as a living out of one’s salvation in Christ.

Summary

The role of biblical theology is important in one’s approach to interpretation and application. It can be practiced as an historical-descriptive discipline which places authority on the reconstructed historical events behind the text. The biblical theology movement and its descendents accepted the findings of the historical critical method but added an existential methodology to bridge between the “then” and “now.” While this movement brought a more personal meaning to one’s relation to Christ, it did so by detaching history and faith. Postmodern approaches continue to follow a similar methodology with greater emphasis upon the contemporary horizon of reader or reading community.

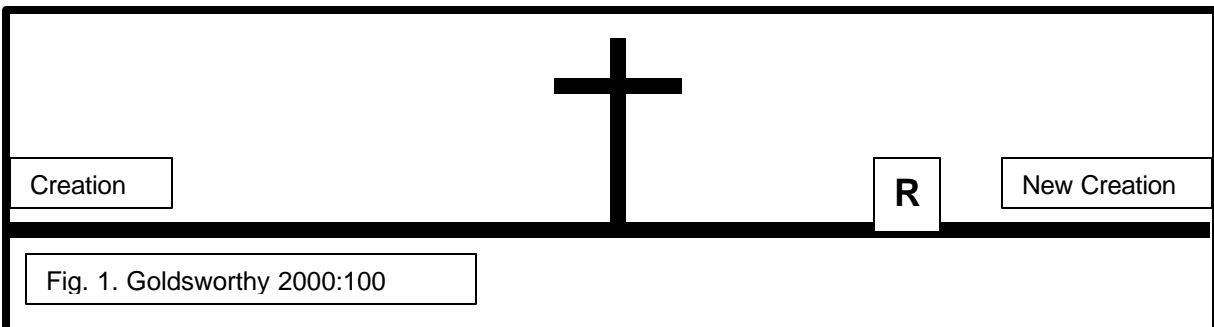
Neither one of these approaches satisfy the concerns of the evangelical interpreter. Both in one way or another remove the *prima facie* witness and authority of the biblical text and make it conform to historical or epistemological assumptions. Biblical theology as presented in this thesis begins with the historical and theological reliability of the text itself. Historical, literary, and linguistic methods are used to dig deeper and refine understanding, but final authority is granted to the Scripture. Correct interpretation takes the Bible on its own terms (Klein 1998:324). Recognising that “its own terms” can mean different things to different people, discussions continue to clarify the nature of revelation, inspiration, and unity. Evangelical presuppositions and methodologies are worked out in conversation with these important theological themes. Because of the divine nature of Scripture its message has normative value for the people of God in all times.

As a tool of exegesis biblical theology assists the interpreter in discerning the prior themes and events which “inform” the text under investigation. Kaiser calls this the “analogy of antecedent Scripture” which involves the examination of explicit affirmations found in the text being exegeted and then the comparison with similar affirmations, themes, and concepts found in passages that have preceded the passage under study (Kaiser 1981:136, but see all of chapter six, “Theological Analysis,” pp. 131-147). Biblical theology stands as an intermediate step between exegesis and application or the “then” and “now.” Exegesis studies the particular expressions of God’s revelation in their historical-grammatical contexts while biblical theology notes the development of these ideas in the progression of God’s revelation and considers underlying larger truth behind the individual expressions (Osborne 1991:265). It is this “whole canon”

consistency that provides an overall perspective for proposed contemporary applications.

From the evangelical preacher's point of view, biblical theology involves the quest for the big picture, or the overview, of biblical revelation. It is of the nature of biblical revelation that it tells a story rather than sets out timeless principles in abstract. It does contain many timeless principles, but not in abstract. They are given in an historical context of progressive revelation. If we allow the Bible to tell its own story, we find a coherent and meaningful whole. To understand this meaningful whole we have to allow the Bible to stand as it is: a remarkable complexity yet a brilliant unity, which tells the story of the creation and the saving plan of God (Goldsworthy 2000:22).

Why is biblical theology important for personal application? First, it helps the reader/interpreter locate a text within the biblical theological context of salvation history. The final meaning of any individual passage must be consistent with, or at least be seen in relation to, the totality of a completed Scripture. Second, a framework of biblical theology assists the interpreter in locating himself/herself in relation to the text under study. The Bible gives a perspective of divine history past, present, and future. Goldsworthy has created a simple timeline of this perspective from "creation" to "new creation" with the cross of Christ at the theological centre.



The reader [R] today does not stand in the same relationship to all the texts throughout the Bible. One will intuitively recognise that he is not an Israelite under the Mosaic code. Events of that period have a different relevance for him via his saving relationship with Christ. Christians today find themselves far removed from many of the cultural and historical realities of the New Testament. Nevertheless, the most important

continuity is the theological unity that we share with New Testament believers as members of the Body of Christ in this historical period between the first and second advents. Further, one's relation to the text is influenced not only by theological/historical categories, but also personal ones. Whether one is a believer or nonbeliever, an adult or a child, a man or a woman, a husband or a wife, a parent, unmarried, a leader or a church member, rich or poor, sick or healthy may have a bearing on the personal application of a passage to the individual.

Though it often operates in the background the perspective of biblical theology is often lacking in discussions of personal application. The Christian life is viewed and interpreted through the perspective of one's individual spirituality and walk with Christ. The Bible is treated as a storehouse of spiritual nuggets to be discovered and mined for personal benefit without regard for the relationship of that "nugget" to the larger theological structure. The result is a spiritual perspective detached from an awareness of God's plan of redemptive history as given in Scripture. There is an individual, devotional experience with God rooted in the personal moment, church tradition, or evangelical culture. It has personal meaning up to a point, but lacks an identity and foundation in the Christologically-centred story line of biblical theology.

Literary Basis for Contemporary Application

A second major consideration for contemporary application is the literary nature of the Bible. God's revelation was communicated through acts and human language in historical and cultural settings. Under divine inspiration it was then recorded and transmitted to us as literary texts. But how are those texts to be used by the people of God today? How do we determine what is relevant, abiding, and normative for the believer? We have suggested that the role of biblical theology is an important starting point. How we approach the particular texts of Scriptures will be influenced by our prior

decisions regarding God, revelation, inspiration, unity and related issues in this biblical theological perspective. This section will consider how biblical texts communicate with the believer today.

Principles

Many have suggested that though the Bible is distant from us in history and culture there are in its message theological and ethical principles that can be applied for today. Principle is meaning abstracted from its context. By its nature a principle becomes universal or programmatic for all or at least a variety of times and circumstances.

Some argue that the nature of written communication invalidates this approach. We have surveyed the view of Richard B. Hays in the overview of this chapter. He insists that each text must be accepted as normative in its own right. This precept is an extension of his conviction that all language communication is by nature culture-bound. Coherence must be achieved by relating the texts as they stand, not by changing them, harmonising them or selecting certain ones over others. The integrity of the text is preserved in this approach, but it seems to conflict with the phenomena of Scripture itself that cite previous Scripture in new and varied historical contexts (Gen. 2:24 with Matt. 19:5 and Eph. 5:31).

Others suggest that the abiding meaning lies in the substructure or deep structure of the text. If I say to my daughter, "The door is open" I am most likely not communicating a simple fact. In the larger context is an implied request to close the door. On the verbal, semantic level I made an assertion. But other factors interpret the purpose or principle as an imperative. The authority of the text lies in this expected response or impact and its normative value comes in finding a dynamic equivalent that

will bring the same response in the contemporary audience. Klein is very close to this view when he says,

“The modern reader might well understand what the ancient author sought to evoke from the original readers, but that does not mean Christians today ought to respond with precisely the *same* response. The objective of application is to seek to apply the *principle* found in the original teaching and to apply that principle in appropriate ways today” (Klein 1998:333).

Many are concerned that practiced too exclusively this approach tends to disregard the biblical setting. “We cannot assume that biblical authority occurs only when Scripture is interpreted down to the ‘deep level’ principles of theological truth. It is clear that the Bible throughout claims authority for itself at the surface level” (Osborne 1991:327). And Geisler expresses the concern that the underlying purpose, determined by interpretation, is used to overturn the affirmation of the text (Geisler 1984:236-240). What is the way forward? Many texts present a meaning that is expressed in cultural or occasional clothing. The New Testament discusses slavery, footwashing, temple feasts, clothing and other cultural particulars that are totally dissimilar to life today. Yet, these passages are teaching important spiritual lessons that are larger than the situation addressed. If we do not have a hermeneutical method for discovering the biblical theological principle then these valuable lessons are lost to us.

Among evangelicals the methodological debate came to a head at Summit III of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. The issues were defined leading up to the mid-1980's and have been discussed and refined and published through the 1990's. J. Robertson McQuilkin proposed that “a fully authoritative Bible means that every teaching in Scripture is universal unless Scripture itself treats it as limited” (McQuilkin 1984:230). By this he meant that cultural form and meaning should be taken

together unless the Scripture itself warrants by statement or example the separation of the principle from its context. In other words, marriage is not only about unconditional love between two people, it should also take the form of monogamous, lifelong marriage between one man and one woman. Six hermeneutical questions guide the interpreter through this process of evaluation. First, does the context limit the recipient or application? Second, does subsequent revelation limit the recipient or the application? Third, is this specific teaching in conflict with other biblical teaching? Fourth, is the reason for a norm given in Scripture and is that reason treated as normative? Fifth, is the specific teaching normative as well as the principle behind it? Sixth, does the Bible treat the historic context as normative? (McQuilkin 1984:230-240; Idem. 1992:279-295; for other similar criteria see Sproul 1977:106-112; Johnson 1984:279-280; Larkin 1988:314-380; Fee 1991:12-15; Marshal 1994:134-136).

Alan Johnson pointed out that McQuilkin's thesis focused almost entirely on truth as proposition and neglected the many and varied ways that Scripture communicated truth. God's revelation was expressed in human language and specific historical/cultural situations. Meaning must relate to both the specific settings as well as the "whole conceptual framework of the Bible itself" (Johnson 1984:260). While arguing for a method which honours the full authority of Scripture he proposed a view of meaning which takes "into account the total language context in which the message is given including the larger biblical, cultural, historical and theological context" (Johnson 1984:279).

The teaching of Scripture interacted with the culture of its day in various ways. First, it might *affirm* or be consistent with the recognised social ideals of nonchristian society. The household codes of Ephesians 5:21-6:9 and Colossians 3:18-25 might be

an example (see ch. 5). In other cases, new life in Christ sharply *challenged* moral practices and attitudes (Eph. 4:17-24). Johnson included a third category of biblical truth *transforming* existing cultural forms to conform to the Lordship of Christ (Johnson 1984:260-262). It seems that the first and third of these, *affirming* and *transforming*, must work together for even in the cultural pattern of the family it can only be affirmed as a Christian institution if its members are relating to one out of their relationship to Christ (cp. Eph. 5:22, 25). The specific ways that biblical revelation impacted culture gives us a compass for assessing its application today.

Larkin noted that the theological and ethical outcomes of the two approaches were not that different and were “both describing the same application process but with different emphases” (Larkin 1988:315).

Grant Osborne took the discussion a step further and showed both when the “principle” approach should be used and then how that principle might be contextualised into the contemporary setting. I find his synthesis to be the most helpful in discerning the applicability of biblical imperatives and practices. His starting point is that the text (and its larger biblical theological context) will indicate to the interpreter whether it is to be transferred to the contemporary situation directly or by means of theological principle (Osborne 1991:326). The criteria or textual clues used to make this decision will come from the nature, statements, or phenomena of Scripture itself.

First, note the extent to which supracultural indicators are found in the passage. “Supracultural indicators” are those which transcend the immediate circumstances being addressed. They might consist in such spiritual realities as previously revealed truths, creation ordinances, or the character of God. Osborne uses the veiling of women (1 Cor. 11:1-16) as one of his test cases throughout. The appeal to creation in verses

8-9 would at first glance indicate that the veil is normative. But he warns that this indicator is not conclusive on its own. The following two must be consulted before a final decision is made.

Second, determine the degree to which the commands are tied to cultural practice current in the first century but not present today. From background studies Osborne suggests that loose hair in public was a scandal and even grounds for divorce. Therefore, Paul's instruction was responding to a social norm of the day. But this fact alone does not mean the wearing of a veil was primarily cultural.

Third, note the distance between the supracultural and cultural indicators. By this Osborne seems to refer to the independent status of the supracultural norm. How closely related are the two? Was the supracultural developed to address this particular situation? Or was it a more general principle (submission) being practiced in a particular way because of unique circumstances (wearing a veil)?

If one concludes that the supracultural factors determine the teaching (the first criterion), then both form and meaning are normative for the church today. If the instruction is given only to address the need of the first century (second criterion), then the teaching is not normative for today. Many personal imperatives or instructions in narrative accounts would fall into this category (Phil. 4:3; Col. 4:15; Acts 23:22). And if the text is a situational application of a deeper, abiding principle (footwashing as an expression of humble service?) then the principle needs to find meaningful expression in the cultural realities of today.

It is important to note that these principles do not determine *if* a text is applicable for the believer, but the *way in which* it is applicable.

It is important to emphasize that we are not arguing for a canon within the canon. We are not dealing here with meaning but with significance. The process of

deciding supracultural/cultural does not entail the former having greater “authority” than the latter. Rather, we seek to delineate *how* a passage applies to us in our context, whether at the level of the surface command (if it is supracultural) or at the deeper level of the underlying principle (if the surface command is cultural, or meant for the first century but not applying literally to today). Both types are inspired and authoritative; the only question is in what way the command applies to our current context” (Osborne 1991:332).

The ongoing challenge for the spiritual life of the believer is what obedience looks like in the contemporary situation. This challenge applies especially to the third criterion that calls for the contextualisation of the biblical principle. If one’s interpretation falls under the first criterion (normative value of both form and meaning) then the proper response is one of implementation. If the second, then there is no need for contemporary application. But it is the third requirement of re-application that calls for careful reflection and spiritual wisdom to find true parallels and avoid the dangers of cultural relativity and personal subjectivism.

One must carefully consider the cultural/spiritual situation being addressed in the Scripture. Application should be limited to what is truly parallel. Fee has an excellent section on extended application in which he expresses the concern for a truly comparable or parallel context between the biblical passage and the contemporary setting. First Corinthians 3:10-15 addresses those with “building” responsibility in the church and warns of the loss they will suffer if they build poorly. He asks if it is legitimate to use a passage addressed to the congregation to illustrate the security of the individual believer. “In ‘translating’ from the first-century context to another, the two contexts must be genuinely comparable” (Fee 1991:16).

The importance of this final embodiment of living the text is noted by Hays. “The value of our exegesis and hermeneutics will be tested by their capacity to produce

persons and communities whose character is commensurate with Jesus Christ and thereby pleasing to God” (Hays 1996:7).

This process of re-application will also require levels of certainty. Not all of our conclusions will carry the same weight of confidence. In this we must be both courageous, honest, and humble (Klein 1998:333).

Literary Genre

Sometimes the whole concept of “principle” seems to be too general and uniform a category. “Doing” is only one aspect of biblical response. Believing is an essential building block of our faith (John 20:31; 1 John 5:13). The Bible promises and expects that inward transformation will take place through the progressive work of the Word and the Spirit changing not merely what we do (behaviour and ethics) but who we are (character, thought processes, attitudes, values, desires, motivations, dispositions; Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:23-24) springing from our new identity in Christ (Eph. 2:1-10; 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Thess. 5:4-8).

Recent discussions of literary genre are providing fresh thinking in regard to the types of responses that are generated by different genre of Scripture. Back in 1970 James Gustafson wrote a seminal article in which he suggested that Scripture presents moral laws, ideals, or analogies for ethics (Gustafson 1970:454). Building on his ideas Hays proposes four modes of ethical appeal to be found in biblical texts. *Rules* are direct commandments or prohibition of specific behaviours. *Principles* are general frameworks of moral consideration by which particular decisions about action are to be governed. *Paradigms* are models of exemplary or negative conduct to be followed. A *symbolic world* creates or shapes the perceptual categories through which we interpret reality, either descriptions of the human condition or the depictions of God’s character (Hays 1996:208-209). Williams expands the idea of symbolic world:

By 'symbolic world' I mean that constellation of values, meanings, and convictions about the nature of things that determine human perception, decision, and action. Socially shared rather than private and idiosyncratic, a symbolic world manifests itself most clearly in those beliefs and values that members of a community or society take for granted, those ideas and practices that need no defense or justification because everyone 'just knows' that they are right or true (Williams 1997:11-12).

Dorani has expanded Hays list to seven ways in which texts produce application—*rules, ideals, doctrines, redemptive acts in narratives, exemplary acts in narrative, biblical images, songs and prayers*. (Dorani 2001:81-92) However, there seems to be a mixing of categories in Dorani's presentation. His definitions and terminology do not clearly define if he is presenting the *content* of application, *method* of application, or the *types* of possible application. He calls these seven "sources" for application (p. 81), "ways" in which the texts instruct us (p. 82), "modes" the Bible uses to convey spiritual and ethical truth (p. 93), "paths" for application (p. 94), "lines" of application, and ways a text can "generate" application (p. 96).

It is obvious that a moral discourse full of imperatives and appeals lends itself to rules for obedience. But a symbol is a literary device used to communicate a certain teaching. A theological principle or ideal is the product of exegesis that needs to be applied. Is a song the result of exegesis or what itself requires exegesis for understanding and application? In the selection of his twenty-eight possibilities for application in any given text he must offer ways of selection that are tied to the meaning of the text and not simply the creativity or subjective preference of the interpreter (Dorani 2001:96). This can be done by considering what Richard calls the *audience-referent* or *audience-trait*. *Audience-reference* is the expected response on the part of the first readers. The first step in discovering the application of Scripture in general is determining what application was expected of the original audience. The outworking of

those same directives for today must not be contradictory or unconnected to the original expectation. Often, however, a direct duplication of the commands or expectations is impossible in our present circumstances. *Audience-trait* then relates a command to the people of God today with the people of God then through our common theological heritage.

The relationship between the present church and the early church is one of direct theological heritage particularized by the ecclesiological factor. This means that application is not based so much on existential analogies between the original audience and today, as on the theological relationship of continuity between the two segments of the church. . . .Common experience is not the application basis of audience traits. It is only because there is a common submission to the Scriptures and a common belonging to the church that audience –trait becomes an effective basis for application” (Richard 1986c:208-209).

With regard to Doriani’s presentation these additions or refinements are minor observations in an otherwise excellent and groundbreaking book. But since it is the cutting edge of what he is presenting, he needs to argue for his thesis and show the derivation of these seven categories and the connection between the application generated and the nature/genre of the text.

Personal Dynamics of Contemporary Application

Contemporary theories of knowledge have alerted us to the important role of the interpreter (see Chapter 1). Barriers to communication and understanding exist both from the side of the text itself and from the side of the reader. The original writing was composed by an author for an intended audience. Between author and recipient existed worldview issues and circumstantial particulars that were assumed in the communication of the text. For those without access to all those external factors a complete recovery of meaning is impossible. Our understanding and use of language itself changes over time and obscures the original meaning. Our Bible comes to us in translated form. Even for those working with the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic most are

working with these languages on an academic, literary level outside of the culture in which it was used for communication. The Bible has been interpreted to us through twenty centuries of history and religious tradition. When we read and study the Scriptures we already have cast in our minds much of the language and theological categories that we expect to find. Finally, each of us is a child of our generation. Our personal experience and contemporary worldview have developed a mindset with its own perspectives and values.

While most acknowledge the above barriers to biblical interpretation, there are different schools of thought as to how important they are and therefore, how and where meaning is to be found. We have noted many of these already: in the author's intention, in the text isolated from the author, in a reconstructed history behind the text, in a dialectic of progressive re-interpretations, in a personal revelation of God through the text, in a merging of the biblical and contemporary worlds, or in the subjective evaluation of the reader. Each of these options reflects certain biblical-theological convictions about the nature of God, man, and the Bible (see Lategan 1992:152-154).

If the above barriers are viewed within a naturalistic or postmodern worldview then the hope of finding or discovering objective, abiding, or universal truth would be highly questionable. But when viewed within a biblical theistic worldview the issue changes. The Bible identifies the barriers to communication not so much as the distance of history and culture, but in the spiritual condition of mankind.

Stance of Faith

The creation account in Genesis 1-2 tells us that humanity was created in the image and likeness of God (יְצַדְקָנוּ; TWOT II 1980:767-768). From the way it is positioned and framed in the narrative, mankind is presented as the pinnacle of God's creative activity. This "image" and "likeness" is what defines what it means to be

human. The grammar of the phrase should probably be taken synonymously to refer to a single concept. Three times in these early chapters (1:26-28;5:1-3;9:6) the phrase is used but never really explained. Contextual clues give us at least these initial observations. Both men and women are created in this image (1:26-27;5:2). The function of the image involves some form of mutual dominion over the rest of the created order (1:26;2:18-24). The first act of this rule was to exercise language skills in naming the animals (2:19-20). The image is analogous to the relationship between father and son (5:3). The image makes life sacred (9:6). The image persists after the events of the Fall (5:1;9:6).

The emphasis of the representation and relationship to God has been interpreted in several ways (See Curtis 1992:389-390). Some take it to mean the whole person rather than some aspect (i.e. spirituality) to the exclusion of others. Others focus on the capacity to relate to God in a way that other forms of life do not possess. Following the Adam-Seth analogy this relationship is seen as believers (like sons) being like God and functioning on his behalf in the world. The capacities of spirituality, personality, rationality, creativity, and communication provide a unity which supersedes the differences of culture and language and provide a vision for humanity (Packer 1978:19-32;Hughes 1989:51-64). From ancient near eastern parallels others have concluded that mankind should be seen as the place where God manifests his presence in the world. Images were not an attempt to visualise qualities or attributes of the deity. They were to mark the place of that god's activity. As biblical history progresses hints of all these appear in the way human beings are viewed and treated. Curtis summarises, "The image of god terminology clearly affirms the pre-eminent position of humanity in the created order and declares the dignity and worth of man and woman as the special creations of God" (Curtis 1992:391).

The capacity to relate positively to God was lost in the Fall. Adam and Eve were alienated from God (Gen. 3:8), themselves (3:10), one another (3:12), and their environment (3:16-19). Every human being has been born with the effects of Adam's choice and has chosen to follow in his path (Rom. 5:12). The human condition is described in terms of a proud heart, a dark mind, the blinding of Satan, and the passions of lust (Jer. 17:9; Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Cor. 4:4; Titus 3:3) which conspire to prevent us from receiving spiritual truth (1 Cor. 2:14). In theological terms total depravity means that this inherent corruption extends to every part of the human personality so that one is unable to know God or to do his will (Barackman 1998:298).

The root barrier to knowledge of God and spiritual truth is the loss of this intellectual and spiritual capacity through the effects of sin. This comes to the fore in the redemptive language of the New Testament. In the incarnation Christ came as the true image of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15) to redeem and restore the image that had been lost and distorted in the Fall (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10; 4:23-24; Col. 3:10). This new creation or renewal is received through faith in Christ as a gift of grace from God (Eph. 2:8-9).

This commitment of faith is followed by a lifelong and progressive process of spiritual growth and service. This transformation takes place as the Scriptures provide theological truth (John 17:17), moral direction (Psa. 119:9-11, 105), and ministry perspectives in one's relationship with Christ through the Spirit. Second Timothy 3:16-17 is the classic passage for the nature of Scripture. But it should also be the classic passage for sanctification. The purpose of Scripture being "God-breathed" is that it gives wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ (3:14-15) and spiritual growth (3:16-17). The Scripture read, studied, and applied fully equips (ἀρτιοῦσιν) a person for

God's will. This term is an adjective that means "complete, proficient, capable=able to meet all demands" (BAGD 1996:110).

Illumination of the Holy Spirit

Making the truth of Scripture personal is not only a matter of information but of relationship. Both must work together. The process must be guided by the constant interaction of methodological principles and dependence upon the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. According to 1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4 this clarifying and illuminating work of the Spirit is a necessary component of spiritual understanding. Not only is he the revealer of the Christian message (2:10) he is the one who enables its communication and reception for the spiritual development of a Christian mindset (2:1-5, 12-16). It was this lack of spiritual receptivity which evoked Paul's severe rebuke and correction (3:1f).

Does the Spirit 's illumination operate for cognitive understanding or acceptance of the message? Or both? The answer probably leans toward the latter but the two ideas cannot be totally separated. The two phrases of 1 Corinthians 2:14 seem to indicate slightly different, though related, aspects of the reason why the natural person does not comprehend spiritual truth. Volitionally, he does not welcome it (*devcomai*). Compare 1 Thessalonians 1:6 where the message of the gospel was welcomed (also *devcomai*) through the power and joy of the Holy Spirit. Intellectually, the message does not make sense so it is viewed as foolishness or irrelevant as far as his own personal life and experience (Wallace 1997:3). Referring to the imagery of the lifting of the veil in 2 Corinthians 3-4, Larkin comments, "By equating hardened thoughts with the veil, stating that the veil is over the heart, and attributing blindness to unbelievers, Paul locates the barrier in the evaluation rather than cognitionThe Holy Spirit illumines

the mind by removing the barrier to a positive judgment and welcoming of the truth of God's Word" (3:14, 15;4:4;Larkin 1988:289).

The Holy Spirit also assists us in seeing the significance and applying the Word in our lives. In Acts 15 the early church wrestled with the cultural/theological issue of circumcision and its relation to the gospel. They considered the implications of Leviticus 17-18 and Amos 9 as they offered the "application" for Gentile Christians. They introduced their conclusions by saying, "It seemed good to us and to the Holy Spirit "(Acts 15:28).

One of the crucial issues for today is seen at this point of personal interaction with the text. Does the Spirit reveal spiritual truth to the interpreter today like he did to the original author? If the Bible is the product of conditioned human witness, then this is the point at which divine revelation comes into play as the Spirit meets afresh with the believer through the Word. Spiritual authority and significance lie in this encounter rather than the grammatical-historical meaning of the text. We have addressed an aspect of this issue under the role of biblical theology with regard to the nature of Scripture. With respect to the process of interpretation and application, appeal is made to the Reformers and Calvin's view of the inner witness of the Spirit (Velthuysen 1988:115-119). The view is that Calvin taught the inward testimony of Scripture to be the basis of its authority, not the written text. There was a difference between the Word of God--acts of revelation to people--and the Holy Scripture which bore witness to those encounters. "The acceptance of the doctrine of the *testimonium Spiritus sancti internum* was tantamount to admitting that there is no objective guarantee for the authority of Scripture" (Velthuysen 1988:117).

Others, however, have come to different conclusions. R.C. Sproul interprets the *testimonium* as offering no new argument or content to the evidence found in Scripture objectively, but brings affirmation and submission to its message on the part of the listener/reader (Sproul 1980:342;also Frame 1986:234). The need for this work of the Spirit is brought about by the sinful condition of fallen man, who, apart from the grace of God refuses to embrace the Scripture. "Thus the *testimonium* is directed primarily at the heart of man, with the effect on the mind being a consequence of the change of the disposition of the heart" (Sproul 1980:349).

Evangelical historian John Woodbridge surveyed the academic research of this issue and found that many scholars were beginning to question and even reverse the historical interpretations which undergirded neoorthodox theological conclusions. By examining the writings of the Reformers and researching the debates with Roman Catholics he concluded, "When this theological context is placed beside the formal statements of the Reformers that they upheld biblical infallibility, only one conclusion follows: like Augustine, the Reformers Luther, Calvin, and Bucer believed that the Bible was without error" (Woodbridge 1985:12).

This convicting, affirming witness of the Spirit is an integral and ongoing dynamic of spiritual growth (Rom. 8:16;1 Cor. 2;1 John 2:20, 27). In this we see the transcendent grace of God who is able by means of Word and Spirit to pierce personal and corporate effects of the Fall (Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12-19) upon our mind, emotion, will, personality, and spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us to embrace the content of Scripture as eternal and spiritual truth and to overcome in our lives the resistance to its implications (Osborne 1991:340-341).

Nor have I ever been able to doubt this since, any more than I have been able to doubt the reality of the biblical Christ whom I honor as my Savior, Lord, and God.

When, years later, I found Calvin declaring that every Christian experiences the inward witness of the Holy Spirit to the divine authority of Scripture, I rejoiced to think that, without ever having heard a word on this subject, I had long known exactly what Calvin was talking about—as by God’s mercy I still do (Packer 1985:40).

Models of Obedience

Many have attempted to construct the relationships between text, reader, and recipient. The pastoral/homiletical model takes the results of study and communicates the message and its relevance to a congregation (Warren 1991:482;Dorioni 2001:60). The theological model applies exegesis to larger theological categories (Wells 1985:177). The translator or missionary contextualises the message for another language and cross-cultural audience (Osborne 1991:325). All of these models involve a two part process in which the interpreter “faces” the text and first internalises scriptural truth for himself. He must then turn and “face” the audience/recipient and effectively communicate that same truth. In some ways every Christian goes through this same hermeneutical transference in their own growth and witness. The integrity of preaching, theologising, or contextualising begins with the first step. The Christian or communicator should not be a pipeline through which spiritual water flows impersonally to others. He should rather be like a tree which has taken the water up through its root structure and then produces fruit as a part of its own growth. “The personal life of the preacher is the foundation upon which his every sermon stands” (Fabarez 2002:25).

The personal dynamic of contemporary application is grounded in a living and vital relationship with God through faith in Christ. The goal of this new life is a progressive transformation in belief, lifestyle, worship, and witness that brings glory to God and points others to his coming kingdom. The central means of this transformation is the activity of Word and Spirit in the believer’s life. But what will the process of

personal growth and application look like? The purpose of this section is not a method of exegesis but a dynamic of personal growth.

One model of learning begins with the biblical passage and draws a straight line with the arrow toward the reader for meaning and significance. This picture leaves the impression that the reader comes without predisposition to the text and receives its teaching directly without interaction, change, or verification. It is the transfer of information from one container to the other.

Theories of learning have taught us that we do not learn in such a direct and immediate fashion (Larkin 1988:37-38, 293-202, 326-334;Osborne 1991:412-413;Doriani 2001:59-60, 70-77). When Christians come to the Scripture it is not in a vacuum, but in the realities of their lives. Consciously or unconsciously they expect the Bible to do something for them in their personal and particular circumstances. These preunderstandings need not be a hindrance to growth, but can be used constructively to ask the right questions of the Bible. The interpreter approaches Scripture not with a notion of neutrality, but with a humble self awareness of his or her own perspectives, values, and beliefs (Oss 1988:111). Believing in the reality of God's existence and the Bible as his revelation we may come to know accurately, if not exhaustively, growing through, but reaching beyond our own preunderstandings in a process of renewal and moral growth (Rom. 12:1-2;Eph. 4:22-24;Col. 3:8-10).

Several writers have put this growth process together in different ways. Dyrness has what he calls the "interactionist" approach based on a dialectic method. We grow by first identifying our experience and world and understanding the message of the Bible in those terms (Dyrness 1985:163). Second, we enter the world of Scripture and begin to grasp the person and work of God through the lives and experience of biblical

characters. Further, we are confronted with our own spiritual need and God's answer in the gospel. This crisis of faith forces us to decide on the Bible's authority.

While we began in a situation in which both our experience and Scripture play a role, we are driven to the place where Scripture is seen to possess a unique authority and where my experience is subject to transformation. Only Scripture possesses this power to renew us by virtue of its message of the gospel (Dyrness 1985:167).

The third stage in this interaction is the "merging" of God's story and my story. The goal of Scripture is a deeper embodiment of God's grace, what Scripture calls Christian maturity, becoming like Christ (Eph. 4:15).

Some writers speak of the fusing of horizons (Larkin 1988; Packer 1984). The historical situation and our own preunderstanding constitute the contemporary horizon. By a conscious choice of distancing the interpreter sets aside his own horizon for the moment so that he can better hear the message of the text. Although he cannot accomplish this fully, he can recognise his own emotional loyalties and theological conclusions, and refuse to read them into the text until the hard work of exegesis is well on the way (can we every say it is finished?). The goal is to allow the Bible to speak for itself, in its own categories, and to set its own agenda. On a more informal basis we might say this is the principle of biblical context. Every passage should be read in its context and as questions arise should be referred back to the context. This has lightly been referred to as the three most important rules of exegesis—context, context, context (Wallace 1997:4). Only as we hear the Bible more and more clearly on its own terms are we then able to bring the horizon of Scripture to adequately address our own.

The dangers of distancing are two-fold. First, to skip this aspect of interpretation is to read our experience into the text and never really know the message of the passage. Who has not found themselves appropriating the verbal parallels of Scripture without their context? We hear God say to us, "I know the plans I have for you"

(Jer. 29:11) perceived only within our personal experience without knowing anything of Jeremiah's message of judgment, exile, and restoration. Distanciation helps us know whether our use is consistent with the context of the biblical passage.

As a sidebar, Fee comments that quite apart from the original context or intent the Holy Spirit sometimes uses a portion of Scripture with great power to speak to our need or situation. These blessings are not normative for others but are "wonderful encounters in God's living word" and "moments with God." He then differentiates between "that use of Scripture" and the sort of exegesis "which has the original intent of the text as its primary goal" (Fee 1991:38-39). Most of us have experienced a similar encounter, but it does raise the hermeneutical question of how the Spirit is relating in/through Scripture. Does Scripture have two (or more) levels of meaning on the formal and devotional levels? Are there two (or more) levels of revelation, one personal and experiential, the other biblical and normative? My own tentative thoughts would be: First, there are not two unrelated levels of meaning in the biblical text. The meaning is the grammatical, historical, contextual meaning of the passage. Second, there is an immediate experience of God's presence and power which occurs at God's prerogative, not ours. The norm is for us to seek God and his will in the Scriptures (John 15:10). He ministers to us indirectly through that Word, but will at times, according to his wisdom and purpose, manifest his presence more immediately. My pastoral observation has been that those who make this expectation of God's manifest presence the norm, drift away from the Word toward an experiential subjectivism. Third, in cases where "God taught me this from that verse" it might not be directly connected to the verse being read, but connected to the whole spectrum of truth that has been implanted in us through many interactions with the Word (Psa. 119:11; James 1:21). Fourth, it might also flow out of the many other interrelated ministries of the Spirit in our

lives--prayer, worship, obedience, and witness (Eph. 6:18;John 4:23-24;Acts 1:8). This is still one of those open questions in the mystery of God's working in our lives.

The second danger of distancing is the spiritual dryness of hard academic study. The rigors of exegesis and theological study may discourage or confuse the spiritual life. It can be so time consuming that private spiritual disciplines are sidelined and personal enthusiasm for the Lord and ministry fade away. Or one may retreat into a more superficial type of devotional piety that is not strongly grounded in the Word (Carson 1996a:23-24).

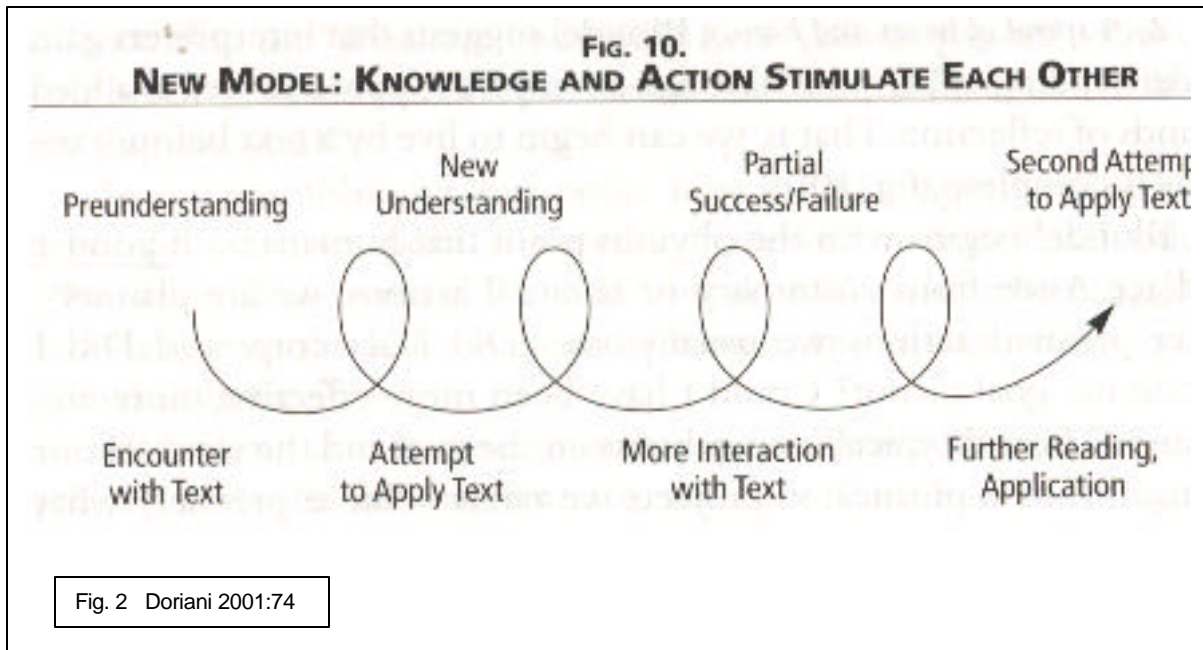
This model of application bears fruits when the horizon of the text is used to address the horizon of historical setting and preunderstanding. The common word is "fusing" of horizons. This may connote the merging of the two realities on an equal basis thereby creating a third synthesis. If the axioms of contemporary culture are assumed as fixed points of reference, then the biblical horizon will be absorbed and lost in the present. Meaning is determined by the contemporary agenda. The evangelical acknowledges the value of the method, but by his commitment to Scripture as the Word of God, the contemporary horizon must be submitted to the transforming power of the biblical. In this process will arise points of contact for communicating the message and relevant needs that may be addressed in the gospel (Larkin 1988:328). On the other hand, some beliefs and behaviours will need to be replaced, corrected, adjusted, or changed. "The biblical word of God, which lives and abides forever, must be set free to relativize all the absolutes, avowed and presuppositional, of our post-Christian, neo-pagan culture and to lead us into truth about ourselves as our Maker has revealed it—truth which, be it said, we only fully know and perceive as truth in the process of actually obeying it" (Packer 1985:54).

There is a third model which, to my mind, presents a clearer conceptual picture of the personal dynamics of application. The previous two models tend to focus on the exegetical episode which determines meaning and then follows with application. Even though there is synthesis and merging the process has a linear feel about it. "After all the careful exegetical work, after reflective consideration of the unity of the New Testament's message, after the imaginative work of correlating our world with the New Testament world, the test that finally proves the value of our theological labor is the 'fruits test'" (Hays 1996:7). Note the "after. . .after. . .after." While it is true that there is a meaning-significance or interpretation-application sequence the outworking of this is neither once-off nor linear. The concept of a spiral seems to best capture the dynamic relationship between these two (and other) factors in an ongoing process of growth and development. "A 'spiral' is a better metaphor because it is not a closed circle but rather an open-ended movement from the horizon of the text to the horizon of the reader. I am not going round and round a closed circle that can never detect the true meaning but am spiralling nearer and hear to the text's intended meaning as I refine my hypotheses and allow the text to continue to challenge and correct those alternative interpretations, then to guide my delineation of its significance for my situation today" (Osborne 1991:6). Osborne's model for personal application involves the interpreter asking questions of the text out of his preunderstanding. The text itself sets the agenda and re-forms the questions being asked. The interpreter's understanding is brought nearer and nearer to the meaning of the text through this process. However, he sees this process as applying first to meaning, and then to contextualisation (application) via a second broader hermeneutical spiral which encompasses the interpreter's life and situation (Osborne 1991:324). This he does to preserve the distinction and relationship between

meaning and significance. It describes the theory of meaning, but not the process of learning.

Daniel Doriani describes the personal dynamic of application as a spiral which includes both knowledge and action. He describes and represents various interactions which are a part of this hermeneutical process. From his or her preunderstanding the reader approaches the text. As he comes to a new understanding from this first encounter there will also be a first response of application. The expectation of the application will be evaluated. Did it meet expectations? How can it be adjusted to bring one nearer the ideal? The need for further growth drives one back to more interaction with the text. The fresh insights will be applied in a further attempt at application, followed by further evaluation, reading, application, etcetera. The process continues not as a finished product, but as a work in progress (Doriani 2001:74).

This spiral of heart and hands is valuable because it includes both knowledge and action in the process. Obedience is a part of not only growth in character but in understanding of Christian truth. "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22). Intellectual understanding and assent fall short of God's purpose for Scripture. Without a response of life one not only stops growing but misrepresents the Christian life as mere orthodoxy. "'Spirituality' must precede exegesis as well as flow from it" (Fee 1994:30).



Action stimulates a desire for further knowledge and development. Jesus used this reality with the training of his disciples (Luke 10:1-20). Lessons were learned from both success and failure in the experiential maturity of their lives. The discipleship vision he left with them involved “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). The Scriptures are given to prepare us for every good work (2 Tim. 3:17) and the role of teaching is to equip the congregation for ministry (Eph. 4:12). All of these are in the context of “on-the-job” training.

This model is not designed to show how exegesis of the text proceeds. Nor does it specifically determine the significance for application. Rather, it shows the dynamic interrelationships between biblical knowledge (the results of interpretation) and a life response which produces experiential maturity. Application begins almost immediately and imperceptibly and itself becomes a part of the quest for further insight and understanding. “So, at the very heart of the sanctification process, there is a hermeneutical process” (Larkin 1988:302)

Conclusion

This chapter has presented and discussed three concepts for the personal application of a scriptural text. That application takes place first of all in a biblical theological framework. The truth of a passage is viewed within the overall biblical progress of God's redemptive purposes. Biblical theology also assists the student to position himself/herself in relation to the passage under study.

God's revelation was communicated through the personalities and styles of human authors in various historical and cultural contexts. The literary nature of these texts makes it necessary to distinguish the abiding theological principles from the merely cultural features or occasional situations. If the biblical form is merely cultural then the principle must be re-applied in a parallel contemporary context. The writers of Scripture used many different genres to communicate their message. These genres suggest ways in which the text invites appropriation in the believer's life.

Finally, three personal dynamics in the interpreter contribute to the relevance of the text. It begins with a stance of faith toward Christ and the Bible; exegesis and the theological process must be done in a prayerful dependence upon the Spirit's illuminating ministry; and the interpreter must be involved in a continual process of obedience and embodiment. These three together give the confidence that God's Word may be both understood and lived with fresh power for today.

The fear sometimes felt, that because of the distance between the cultures and outlooks of the biblical period and our own day, is groundless. God is rational and unchanging, and all men in every generation, being made in God's image, are capable of being addressed by Him. Within every culture in every age it is possible, through overhearing God's words of instruction to men of long ago, to hear God speaking to ourselves, as the Holy Spirit causes these words of long ago to be reapplied in our own minds and consciences. The proof that this is possible is that it actually happens. No proof can be more compelling than that! (Packer 1980:201).

Personal Application of Philippians 4:8 and the Virtue Lists

It is in this biblical theological framework that Philippians 4:8 and the other New Testament ethical lists find their present day relevance. In the process of exegesis careful attention must be given to the cultural, literary, historical, and linguistic features of the text. These may reveal both similarities and differences between that day and ours. But in the final analysis it is the theological continuity that binds present day believers to the message of these texts. We live in the same period of salvation history between the first and second comings of Christ (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; 1 Peter 1:3-6). Christologically, we are justified by the same redeeming events of the cross and resurrection. Christ's self-giving humility in those events continues to be our moral guide and example (Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Pet. 2:21-24). Soteriologically, we are called to the same way of life worthy of the gospel (1:27; Eph. 4:1). Though we are not members of the church at Philippi we are members of the larger Body of Christ to whom the message of the Bible was ultimately addressed. It is our "location" within this biblical theological framework that gives normative value to the warnings and examples of the ethical lists.

Philippians 4:8 contributes to our practice of moral discernment. The Bible at times speaks in the form of commands or prohibitions, but much of its teaching must be applied through a process of moral discernment. Earlier in the letter Paul had prayed for their increasing level of spiritual awareness (1:9-10). Now he was giving them the practical materials for making that discernment. The virtues provided criteria for making sound moral judgments related to unity in the relationships and the common purpose of the congregation. Beyond and behind the individual virtues was the character of Christ himself. For new and different situations any trait might be considered that was worthy of Christ. The list stands as a representative ideal of Christian virtue to address unity and steadfastness in the church today.

In relational issues, specifics not addressed, or situations unforeseen by biblical culture and history the ethical lists provide a compact summary for moral reflection. The goal, however, is not mere conformity to a principle or an abstraction, it is likeness to a Person. The life worthy of the gospel is in reality a life worthy of the Lord. Several of the lists present the ideal of this life in contrast to the moral life of the surrounding community (Gal., Eph., Col., James) Others stand on their own as summaries of Christian ethical character (Phil., 1 Pet. 2 Pet.). The purpose of these lists is not merely moral pragmatism or external correctness but inner conformity to the character of Christ (McGrath 1991:297). The progressive development of these virtues requires study, reflection, and active obedience on our part. At the same time they manifest the inner reality and working of the Spirit's presence (Gal. 5:16-25).

In Philippians 4:9 the common motif of "imitation" is used in tandem with Paul's use of the ethical list. Because this appeal is based upon a personal knowledge and relationship between Paul and his readers it is impossible for the believer today to stand in exactly the same relationship. What then is the contemporary value Philippians 4:9? One may observe that even within the Philippian congregation not everyone had the same personal relationship with the apostle. Some would have a high level of personal knowledge and direct participation (Acts 16:11-40; Phil. 1:5, 4:2,3,15-17), but this would not be true of all. Undoubtedly, many had never met the apostle personally. Their imitation would be based upon letters, reports, and the testimony of others that they shared in solidarity with the church as a whole. Paul's summons to follow him was never an ultimate challenge, but always an illustrative one dependent upon his consistency with the example of Christ. He, along with other early Christian leaders, only served as signposts to point the church to the finality of Christ's example. The "imitation of Paul" for us comes in much the same way. Ours is not a direct personal

knowledge but his biographical record has validity through the testimony and authority of Scripture.

If Christlike character is the goal for every believer, local congregations must be led by those who have reached a measure of consistency and maturity (1 Tim. 3, Titus 1). This feature of Christian leadership is given priority over management skills or spiritual giftedness, as a constant (albeit indirect) reminder that the church's call, purpose, and ministry are centred on maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:1-16).

CH. 5 ONE IN CHRIST: THE CONTRIBUTION OF NEW TESTAMENT ETHICAL LISTS TO ISSUES IN MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY

Introduction

Ethnic realities bracket the New Testament message. In what is known as the great commission Jesus instructed his disciples, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). "Ἐθνεῖς" is a flexible expression meaning "peoples" or "nations." It may often have this inclusive and general usage as in Matthew 28:19. In other contexts there is a differentiation between Jew and non-Jew (Eph. 2:11), Christian and non-Christian (Eph. 4:17), or Christians of Gentile background contrasted with Christians of Jewish origin (Gal. 2:12; BAGD 1996:218; *TDNT* II 1964:369-370). At the end of the New Testament John sees in his vision of the end times a numberless multitude before the throne of God from all nations (ἐθνεῖς), tribes (φυλὰς), peoples (λαοὺς), and tongues (γλῶσσαι, Rev. 7:9). Of these terms ἐθνεῖς is the most generic and therefore the least descriptive. Φυλὴν views people as a national unity of common descent; λαόν as a political unity with a common history; and γλῶσσαι as a linguistic unity (*TDNT* II 1964:369). The eschatological hope of the gospel embraces representatives from every people group worshipping God together. Globalisation and urbanisation are bringing together people from diverse ethnic, social, economic, and gender backgrounds. Today much of ministry especially in urban areas is comprised of working with people of widely different worldviews and cultures in the same church environment. It has both an enriching value to the life of the

congregation, but also presents challenges to the unity and harmony of the fellowship when differences of perspective arise.

These challenges were not unknown in the churches of the New Testament. The world of the Greco-Roman empire was highly diverse in peoples, cultures, and religion. The letters of Paul address the growing pains of young churches in urban areas that faced theological and social diversity. How were these people, now “in Christ,” to live and worship in relation to one another? As a practical illustration of this thesis, this chapter explores the teaching or implications of the ethical lists for multicultural ministry. The catalogues of virtue and vice are embedded in contexts which have as their background relationships, perspectives, and conflicts between Jew and Gentile in the early church. What did it mean for these groups so diverse in their background to be one in Christ and worship, fellowship, and minister together in unity? How can the virtues to be affirmed and the vices to be avoided to develop harmony in the midst of contemporary diversity?

Immediately one encounters a problem of definition. Different groups will use the same terms with different connotations of meaning. Multiculturalism for some means affirming differences between various groups allowing each to express their particularity. Others experience it as a subsuming of their unique identity into a larger homogenous whole (Brett 1996:3-22). “Equality” may have the same spectrum of connotations. For one group it means freedom. For another it means the suppression of their individuality. Washington and Kehrein in their book on racial reconciliation give this warning up front,

When African–Americans use the term *racism*, the word covers a broad spectrum. Any action on the part of whites that is different because it is directed at a black person can be racist. . . .But white people use the word *racism* for only extreme actions. . . .But like the Jews who recall relatives lost in death camps,

blacks have a sensitivity defined by their experience (as do Hispanics and Asian-Americans living in the United States). For African-Americans, racism is racism; degree differentiation is only a trick to avoid facing the reality” (Washington and Kehrein 1993:13-14).

Ongoing discussions seek to find common ways of understanding ethnicity, race, culture and the relationships and interactions between them. How are boundaries determined and sanctioned? Where do people find the essence of their identity? For the purposes of this chapter “race” will be used as the basic description for biological characteristics. “Ethnicity”, though often similar to race, is a broader term based on “creation of social bonds between those who share a common culture” (Rex 2003:212). “Culture” is a way of life that provides meaning to existence and social rules for that existence (Hall 2003:133-137). While culture does include the external patterns of behaviour in a group, most today see the essence of culture in the inward values attached to these lifeways.

Culture is that integrated pattern of socially acquired knowledge, particularly ideas, beliefs, and values (ideology) mediated through language, which a people uses to interpret experience and generate patterns of behaviour—technological, economic, social, political, religious, and artistic—so that it can survive by adapting to relentlessly changing circumstances (Larkin 1988:192-193).

Fruitful discussions will require an understanding and sensitivity to the way terms and concepts are used.

A discussion of multicultural ministry is influenced by the kind of problem being addressed. Many current writings on mission or ministry have such topics as racial/ethnic reconciliation (Volf 2000), application of the New Testament to social/global ethics (Mott 1988;Moxnes 1993), Christian-Jewish relationships (Hays 1996:407-443), mission to unreached people groups, dialogue with other religions (Lindemann 1996), or urban ministries (Fuder 1999). Much of the discussion in my opinion is still cross-cultural in nature. As I use it “cross-cultural” ministry seeks to

communicate the Gospel from one culture or target group to another in which both sides of the equation are essentially monocultural. In the early days of the church growth movement homogeneity was presented as an ideal for successful ministry (Britt 1997:136-139). No one doubts the pragmatic value of working with people in a common culture. But does it represent the biblical picture of a people reconciled to one another in the body of Christ (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11)? I will use “multicultural ministry” to refer to the social and ethnic diversities that occur within the same congregations. What sort of unity do the people of God possess? What can be learned from New Testament answers to the many ethnic, social, and economic differences that existed in the churches of the first century A.D? The virtue lists provide one possible approach. They summarise moral qualities which bring coherence to otherwise very different persons. As we shall see it is not, however, a matter of ethics and behaviour which unites them, but the person of Christ, in whose earthly life the virtues were incarnated.

My own starting point is as a middle-aged, North American male involved in church leadership for some twenty years. I grew up in small town America where ethnical diversity was almost non-existent. My first glimpses of other peoples came through the experiences of missionaries who presented their work in our local church. Three years of study in the city of Chicago introduced me to some of the realities of urban life. The last nineteen years have been spent in church ministries in the political, ethnic, and spiritual complexities of Johannesburg, South Africa. My theological views are conservative and evangelical as outlined in the previous chapter. They are studied and lived in the context of a faith commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

The Social Composition of New Testament Congregations

The Christian mission, as recorded for us in the New Testament, took place primarily in the urban centres of the Roman Empire (Rupprecht 1979:483-400;Meeks

1983:9-32). The empire itself was largely a matter of urbanisation made possible by the network of roads and the relative peace enforced by the Roman armies. Cities were used to establish outposts of stability and loyalty to Rome in the far reaching portions of the empire. Cities were established or re-colonised. Veterans were rewarded by grants of land and power as in Philippi. A generally tolerant attitude allowed the free flow of people, goods, and ideas. Merchants and artisans followed their fortunes along these trade routes. Slaves and freedmen provided the workforce. Roman citizens enjoyed greater privileges and freedoms. Most cities had an active community of Diaspora Jews. Other foreign nationals were allowed to erect temples and introduce their local cults, clubs, and philosophical organisations as long as the general balance of things was not upset.

Meeks provides a simple stratification of Greco-Roman society at this time. On the lowest end of privilege and access were the farm workers, either slave or free. Land owners increasingly lived in the cities. Individual land tenants could not make a living. Their numbers were depleted by migration to the urban centres or recruitment into the Roman armies. Absent landlords made themselves rich through the unrewarded labours of their slaves. The countryside was increasingly marginalised as life more and more revolved around the city. In the middle were the artisans and workers in the city, also both slave or free(d). As a tentmaker Paul fell into this class of "hand workers." They possessed a fair range of status and means from subsistence to comfort and independence. The highest place of privilege was held by the elite classes of aristocrats who possessed power, position, and wealth. Compared to modern expectations social mobility was limited. Greco-Roman society was stratified and stable. The army provided some means of advancement. The most common change of status was from slavery to freedom or vice versa. Manumission could be granted or

paid for. Freedom did not guarantee a better life. Poor freedmen worked alongside slaves. Many slaves were physicians or teachers or administrators within the Roman household and its affairs. If able to obtain manumission the person often continued in a patron/client relationship with his former owner. Skills had been developed which continued to benefit the patron and the freed person. Senators were not allowed to carry on their own trade so they often functioned through the efforts of these commercial representatives. "The threshold between slave and free remained fundamental in a perception of one's place in society" (Meeks 1983:21).

How did Christianity fit in to this very diverse social stratification? Several answers have been given. E.P. Sanders proposed that outside of Palestine itself the churches were Gentile. "It is an argument from silence, but nevertheless a striking one, to observe that there is not a single passage to indicate that there was a single Jewish member in any of the churches founded by Paul" (Sanders 1978:178). In order to do this he discounts the historical record of the book of Acts, reconstructing the early years of the Christian movement from a critical study of the Pauline epistles.

Most would argue that the early congregations outside of Palestine were a cross-section of Greco-Roman society. After the death of Stephen the gospel was established among the Samaritans (Acts 8). The next breakthrough came at Syrian Antioch, one of the most important cities of the region (Acts 11:19-30; Greenway 2000:54-65; Gornik 2002:92-93). Paul and his associates followed the pattern of visiting the synagogue first in a new community (Acts 13:5,14;14:1;17:2,10,17; 18:4,19;19:8). This pattern is demonstrated in passages like Roman 1:16, "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." These missions produced converts from both Jews and Jewish proselytes, God-fearers, and Greek men and women (Acts 13:43, 48;14:1;17:4,12;18:4;19:9,10;20:21). Evangelistic teams were composed of

Palestinian Jews (John Mark), Diaspora Jews (Barnabas), half-Jews (Timothy), and Gentiles (Titus, Luke).

In his letters he addresses men and women, slaves and homeowners, leaders and congregations. Lists of greetings often conclude his writings showing a mix of social class (Rom. 16). Prosopography is the compilation of biographical information used by social historians to reveal larger patterns in a historical period. To summarise Meeks study: Some sixty five names in the Pauline letters (he excludes the Pastorals) yield thirty names that reveal something of their position in society. In many cases it is the name itself. For instance, from Clement in Philippi (4:3) he surmises that to have a Latin name in a Roman colony where Latin was the predominant official language may indicate that he belonged to the original stock of colonists, who tended to get ahead. Others are accompanied by a brief description indicating a profession. Tertius was a scribe (Rom. 16:22). Luke was a doctor (Col. 4:14). Those able to travel had some means, either at their own expense or in service of a patron. Perhaps this was the situation of those from Chloe's household (1 Cor. 1:11). Names like Ampliatus (Rom. 16:8) and Epenetus (16:5) suggest they had been former slaves. Gaius had a house to accommodate large gatherings (Rom. 16:23). Erastus was a public official of Corinth (Rom. 16:23). Then there is that tantalising greeting from those who "belong to Caesar's household" (Phil 4:22). The phrase itself does not tell the role these individuals had in the imperial household. They may have been slave or free, high or low. Nevertheless, it is an important insight into the early penetration of the gospel message. These gleanings lead to the conclusion that the early Christian movement was representative of Greco-Roman society. Even though the majority came from the common and lower classes (1 Cor. 1:26-29) people with standing in the community

were well represented. Meeks notes that the evidence lacks both the extreme top and bottom social strata (Meeks 1983:72-73; see the larger discussion pp. 51-73).

What an incredible mixture of diversity! No wonder many issues arose in the dynamic interaction of church life. People who had little real contact or only prescribed forms of interaction entered into the *ajgaphv* and *koinwniva* of the Christian community. The working out of these new relationships and attitudes lie behind some of the issues addressed in the epistles.

Thiessen argues strongly for social stratification behind the misconduct at the Lord's Table in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 (Thiessen 2003:377-381). Meals were common in religious and social clubs. The way that meals were arranged often enacted social status in the community. "The well-to-do people in the Corinthian congregation adopted from their environment a pattern of behaviour that some criticised already at that time, namely that the rich ate more and better food than the poor at the Lord's Supper. It is this against which Paul protests" (Thiessen 2003:380-381). Whether we accept his view of rigid stratification, there is no doubt that social differences formed a background for the theological/ethical issues at stake.

But more than the problems addressed, we should be amazed at the basic unity and coherence of these churches, for in spite of the problems, they had a strong sense of identity that bound them together. What kind of unity held these multi-ethnic and socially diverse congregations together?

Unity Within the New Testament Congregations

In the four main epistles where virtue lists in some way amplify Christian unity (Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians) Paul was addressing the oneness of Jew and Gentile as groups in salvation history. That is, he was not primarily concerned with social propriety about dress or eating habits or marriage customs when

a Cappadocian encountered a North African or a Palestinian an Italian in the churches of the empire. The kinds of eating or observance of days discussed in Romans 14:1-10 related specifically to Jewish heritage as the people of God through whom the Messiah had come. If they were the chosen race to whom God had revealed his Word and the human family through whom Messiah had come, then should not non-Jewish people also keep the regulations to enter into the blessing of Abraham? It was an irrelevant question during the church's earliest years when the vast majority of Christians were Jews and the believers worshiped in the synagogues. Gentiles, such as Cornelius, were accepted as proselytes. The church at Antioch breached the ethnic barrier and opened the way for the first mission into Pamphylia and Galatia (Acts 13-14). In light of this evangelistic success "some Jews" went from Jerusalem to Antioch teaching that Gentiles must also be circumcised in order to be saved (Acts 15:1). Over the next years of the Christian mission the issue resurfaced in various permutations and required an answer in the Gentile churches.

So when we approach these texts from our twenty-first century context, we must expect indirect rather than direct answers to our questions of unity, equality, and multiculturalism. We must first hear the answers (and the questions) in their own context and reflect on their implications for our own.

Galatians 3:26-29

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

This paragraph is arguing that Jew and Gentile are equally heirs of the Abrahamic promises through faith in Christ. The status of sonship is in contrast to their

former status under the law (v. 24). The law served as a “slave attendant” or childminder (παῖδαγωγὸν~) who walked the under-aged heir back and forth to school and watched over his conduct during the day (BAGD 1996:603). This is not the language of personal spiritual experience, but the time-related categories of redemptive history. The law had a preparatory purpose in the historical development of salvation. But the law itself did not bring justification before God, even for the Jews. “We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified” (Gal. 2:15-16). For Gentiles the faith principle was also present implicitly in the original promise to Abraham. “The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you’” (Gal. 3:8). For Jews in the congregation it would be a reminder that that time is now past. For Gentiles it would demonstrate that circumcision would be going backwards in God’s programme. “All” (πάντες~) should be read in the same way = both Jew and Gentile. The means of this changed status before God is the statement “through faith in Christ Jesus.” That is the requirement for both Jew and Gentile.

Verses 27 and 28 reinforce (γὰρ) and expand (ὅτι) this initial thought. Their changed status of sonship through faith in Christ was given public testimony at their baptism. Behind the language may be the illustration of the Roman youth passing from childhood to adulthood. The young man was invested with a special toga and given full rights and recognition as a man in Roman society (Rendall 1974:174). For the believer that investiture is Christ. Here the expression is the putting on of Christ as the

ethical result of the inward decision (“faith in Christ Jesus”) and the outward testimony (baptism). Whoever has been baptised has put on Christ. Williams suggests that the usage has an Old Testament background in Psalm 93:1 (92:1 LXX) and related passages where God is robed in majesty. The person in the metaphor is “characterized by the named quality or attribute” (Williams 97:105). When a person has “put on” Christ their way of life is Christ-like. It is this common faith and life which constitutes Christian unity.

The three sections of the paragraph restate and complement Paul's thesis. Verse 26 is an *affirmation* of their spiritual standing with God by means of faith. Verses 27 and 28 *reinforce* and *expand* that thought by referring to their common experience in baptism as the basis for their unity in Christ. In both of these sections the “you all” (παντες) of Jew and Gentile together is prominent. The third section draws out the *implication* for his argument, namely, their connection to the Abrahamic promise (as interpreted through Christ in 3:8).

When the paragraph is viewed as a whole, the phrases, “you are all sons of God,” “you are all one in Christ Jesus,” and “you are Abraham's seed” are all parallel expressing or relating to the concept of oneness in salvation (Kostenberger 1998:n.p.electronic).

Into this context is introduced the three phrases that are so important to discussions of social and ethnic diversity. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female” [AT]. Several observations must be made. First, the series is introduced without direct grammatical connection. One is left to infer that the three pairs illustrate those who have equally put on Christ. Second, the first pair is central to Paul's argument. The second and third expand the application of

the principle and suggest that all similar distinctions would be included. Third, the three pairs are grammatically parallel to one another, but not necessarily conceptually parallel outside this context (Davis 1976:204). The relationship of Jew and Greek (read “Gentile” or “nonchristian”) are terms of salvation history having a background in God’s call and promise to Abraham (Gen.12:1-3). Jew and Gentile had a providentially established relationship in the purpose of God throughout the course of human history. This statement is not about social or political rivalries and bad feelings although they would be included in its implications. The Jews also had bad relations with the Samaritans, but mending fences is not the argument here. Paul is explaining how the two streams of humanity are related in bringing the one gospel to all. Both became sons of God through “faith in Christ Jesus.”

“Slave or free” refer to particular social designations within the Roman Empire. From the human point of view such a standing was arbitrary to fortunes of birth, politics, war, and the economic system of that time. There was no necessary conflict between the parties known as “slave” or “free.” These were designations of one’s status within society. The point of their use is the difference in the way that society viewed and treated them. The slave was property, a human tool to be used at the will of the owner. The free person had rights and privileges and some measure of self determination.

“Male and female” is a grammatical unit taken from the creation account in Genesis 1:27 (LXX). God made both man and woman in his image and put them together in a unity of partnership in the marriage relationship. Paul reminds the Galatians of the original relationship between husband and wife. In Greco-Roman society and Hellenistic Judaism the status of husband and wife was viewed much differently. The Roman husband had the right to determine his wife’s religion. The Jew thanked God he was not created a woman.

The point of Paul's use of these phrases seems to be something like this: "Does God view these ethnic, social, and marital groups with the same discrimination that society views them?" In context the primary concern is not the correction of social behaviour of one party toward the other. That may be an implication of the principle, but no clarity or guidelines for that behaviour are given in this text.

Christian unity as expressed in these verses has been interpreted in at least three ways. First, some hold to a soteriological interpretation. All people are equal in salvation. Each one must be saved in the same way through faith in Christ. Positive or negative status in religion, society, or family has no bearing with God. All have equal access to God through Christ. This vertical equality does not mean that social roles are erased, for Jews do not become Gentiles culturally and vice versa. Slaves and free still maintain that status in society. Men and women have roles to play in the home and family. These roles may change in individual experience but not as a direct and necessary result of salvation (1 Cor. 7:1-24). Wayne House presents the distinction between essence and function.

In society these three pairs—none of which were ontologically unequal by creation—are unequally privileged, but in Christ's offer of salvation, Paul argued there is no distinction. So then in Galatians 3:26-28, Paul was saying that no kind of person is excluded from the position of being a child of Abraham who has faith in Jesus Christ. . . .Any implications drawn from the exegesis of the text should reflect the argument of the apostle pertaining to entrance into the Abrahamic Covenant, not functions within the church" (House 1988:54,55).

The second major interpretation is sociological. The issue in Galatia is seen as an intergroup conflict between Jews on the "outside," Jews on the "inside," and Gentiles on the "inside." Baptism is viewed as a physical ceremony of outward identification. Such ceremonies were common among the cultic religions and clubs of the day. The rites of passage integrated one into the group and established a strong sense of group

identity. “The act signified a crossing of the real but invisible boundaries that defined the Christian community and distinguished it from those life-ways characteristic of the impure world. To be ‘baptized into Christ’ was to experience a reconfiguration of one’s symbolic world. It was to undergo relocation into a new order of existence created through the death and resurrection of Christ” (Williams 1997:104; see also Wright 1992:447). Within this new group identity all individuals were accepted in their own right without the prejudices of society. This gave them some escape from the rigid stratification of Greco-Roman culture. In working out this ideal equality however, Paul had to put some limits to maintain order and ensure that the group would continue. Thus, in one place he will speak of equality (as in Gal. 3:28) and in another he will maintain social expectations (1 Cor. 11:2-16; Meeks 1983:87-89). So Paul was establishing social boundaries that gave Christians “an identity distinct from both Jew and Gentile” (Esler 1996:238).

A third interpretation is closely related to the soteriological but goes beyond the sharp distinction between the vertical and the horizontal. I call it the theological-ethical view for it seeks to take seriously the primacy of one’s relationship with God without ignoring the implied ethical responsibilities in the “putting on of Christ.” Even though equality in salvation is the primary focus of the passage, there must be social implications within the ministry and fellowship of the church. Some suggest this line of thinking without giving it content. “Paul simply means that having become one with God as his sons, Christians now belong to each other in such a way that distinctions that formerly divided them lose significance” (Boice 1976:468).

Stephen Lowe probes possible meanings for the other two clauses (slave/free, male/female) by using the Jew/Gentile clause as a paradigm (Lowe 1991:59-75).

Romans and Ephesians argue for the spiritual equality of Jew and Gentile through faith

in Christ (Rom. 4:9-11; Eph. 2:14). This same thought is carried through into the hortatory section of Romans 12-16 and Ephesians 4-6. In these chapters of ethical instruction Lowe suggests that the many “one anothers” (αλληλοϋμωσι) find their primary application in the Jew/Gentile relationship of acceptance and equality. In addition the treatment of spiritual gifts in both of these contexts demonstrates a spiritual and functional equality in the body. “In summary, what is true of Gentiles at the level of soteriology (status) is operationalized at the ministry level (function). Simply to have in theory the privileges of equal status without the accompanying experiencing of that equal status would seem to have been insufficient from Paul’s perspective” (Lowe 1991:67). Lowe then follows this line of thinking in equating soteriology and ministry in his application to the male/female relationship in the church. “Full participation of women in all ministry functions is the new creation ideal, which is constrained only by the realities of a hostile target culture that may as yet be unwilling to permit women such freedom” (Lowe 1991:73).

Lowe has presented some good ideas in his thinking, but perhaps has made too great a leap in summarising his conclusions. His outlines of Romans and Ephesians are excellent. He makes the reader aware of the contextual nature of the ethical instructions. Relationships and ministry within the church must be qualitatively different than in society. Paul, after all, had these specific relationships come to mind as he wrote. They are there for a reason.

But there are several points at which his logic seems to break down. First, his model assumes that each of the clauses have the same relationship with each other outside of this context. As we have seen, they differ in several ways and are not simply three examples of the same problem (Davis 1976:204). Second, the discussion of

spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 4:7-13) could be used to argue exactly the opposite, which I would. “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function (*praxin*)” (Rom. 12:4). It is not equality of ministry function but diversity of ministry function that is being argued. To say that all have gifts or that the gifts are equally available is not to say that all the gifts function equally. They are sovereignly bestowed (Rom. 12:6; Eph. 4:7; 1 Cor. 12:4-11). Here we have differentiated ministry in the body. His idea of equality at this point is very close to uniformity rather than diversity in unity. Further, spiritual gifts are not determinative of one’s ministry. Character, spiritual growth, maturity, and the recognition and recommendation of the community are also important factors (Gal. 5:22-23; 1 Tim. 3; Heb. 13:17). In a similar way he uses the concept of “mystery” in Ephesians 5:32 as parallel to the mystery of Jew and Gentile together in the church (Eph. 3:6). Again, the parallels appear to break down, for the mystery in Ephesians 5 undergirds instructions to the differentiated roles of headship and submission. The meaning of mystery here is either in comparison of the Christ/church relationship to marriage (see full discussion Barth 1974:643-647). Third, he fails to discuss passages which give direct instructions to husbands, wives, and slaves. How do these interface with the “new creation ideal?” He has leapt right over them without building them into his model.

Even though one cannot ignore the social ethical implications of the Gospel it does not appear to be prominent in Galatians 3:28. The thought in each of these pairs is how they relate to God in salvation, not how they relate to one another in sanctification (House 1988:54). Nothing, either positive or negative, in the way that birth, history, or society differentiates between people can stand in the way of a person’s acceptance before God. All are equally sons of God who embrace faith in Christ Jesus.

What each had in common is that they had “put on” Christ. If that phrase implies a Christlike quality of life as *e jnduvomai* usually does (Rom. 13:14), then the vice and virtue lists (5:16-25) serve to instruct the believer in Christlike conduct or its opposite. Scroggs makes this connection by calling the virtue list an interpretation of 3:28 which illuminates Christian personology (Scroggs 1979:395). The equality here is a moral equality of interpersonal relationships. The law and the flesh lead only to bondage. Only through life in the Spirit can one find that true unity which is rooted in the fruit of the Spirit. Dignity and respect is afforded to each believer in the congregation as a person belonging to God through creation and redemption (Cook 1983:146).

The individual roles implied in the three clauses are not worked out in this passage. Do they disappear? Are they given new motivation and importance? Are they different inside or outside the church? Galatians 3:28 lays a foundation, but does not specifically answer questions of role and function. It is clear that the social, ethnic, gender, and economic distinctions which stratify people in society are not to be observed in the church *per se*. But that does not necessarily mean that there are *no* distinctions at all, or that there are not overlaps. Rather, the criteria change from a human perspective to a spiritual perspective (2 Cor. 5:16) and must be determined by a study of Scripture.

When Timothy is admonished not to appoint a recent convert as an elder at Ephesus (1 Tim. 3:6) there is a spiritual judgment taking place between who is mature and who is not yet ready. This evaluation in part (3:1-7) determines one’s role and ministry in the church. Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 4:7-11, and 1 Corinthians 12 all argue for spiritual equality in Christ but differences in ministry according to the gifts bestowed by God. We must not value our particular role as more or less important than

someone else's (Rom. 12:3) because our place in the body has been determined by God (1 Cor. 12:18). How we function in the various roles of life, home, and church must be substantiated from passages which specifically address them (House 1988:55).

Ephesians 2:14-16

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

A second major passage for Christian unity and the ethical lists is Ephesians 2:11-22. After rejoicing in the grace of God's salvation (2:1-10) Paul explains how the cross brought Jew and Gentile together in one body (2:11-22). This was a time of temporal transition in redemptive history. Note the "formerly" of verse 11 and the "now" in verse 13. They were apart from Christ, that is, they had no national hope of Messiah, excluded from the covenant blessings of Israel (2:12). Not that salvation was unavailable to the Gentiles, but God's means of salvation was not through the Gentiles. It was through the Jewish nation. There has always been one way of salvation through faith. Paul makes that clear in Romans 4. But Gentiles were spatially and religiously distant from God's means of working in the world. The cross changed the terms of redemptive history. A new dispensation was initiated that could not have been anticipated in the Old Testament (Eph. 3:6). It was a mystery made known to Paul for the benefit of the Gentile and the church.

Ephesians 3:3,6 (NIV)

3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. . . .6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

The word “mystery” does not occur in verse 6 but the NIV repeats its antecedent from verse 3 to show that verse 6 gives the content of the mystery, namely “through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together. . .” Chapter 2:14 -16 has described how this unity came about. Through the cross Christ made peace between Jew and Gentile. Reference to the cross is repeated in 13b, 14b (if “in his flesh” refers to the cross) and 16b. The theme of both (αἰμαφόρα) or two (δύο) becoming one is emphasised in 14, 15, 16, and 18.

This was accomplished by removing the socio-religious wall of partition that had long separated Jew from Gentile. Most understand this to be an allusion to the wall in the Temple which separated the Gentiles from the inner sanctuaries upon pain of death (Acts 21:27-31; Abbot 1979:61; Keener 2003:212; Perkins 1997:71; see Barth 1974:283-287 for a discussion of other options). But that was only a picture or analogy of the real problem. Even the law itself was not the real problem (Abbot 1979:63). The law had been interpreted and lived in such a way as to exclude people from the blessings of God rather than include them. Christ’s death rendered the law inoperative (κατήργησα) because he had fulfilled its purpose and requirements (Matt. 5:17; Gal. 3:23-25). The nullifying of the law removed the cause of enmity between Jew and Gentile.

The removal of the law cleared the way for the two groups to be united in one body. Paul makes clear that this unity did not come by absorbing one group into the other. In verse 15 it is pictured as the creation of a new man on the basis of a common relationship with Christ (ἐν αὐτῷ). Here the “new man” terminology is collective to distinguish it from Jew and Gentile and mark out a new phase of redemptive history. The same truth is expressed in verse 16 using the body image.

Both are reconciled to one another in one body and then together reconciled to God. The order appears to be reversed from our expectations. We would normally expect our reconciliation with God to be the basis for our unity with others. But individual experience is not the particular concern of this paragraph. Paul is outlining the mutual relationship of Jew and Gentile as groups in God's present economy. Perhaps also Paul desires to emphasise his message to Jewish Christians. There were not two ways of salvation or two ways of living in the church. The Jewish Christians could not practice faith plus the law for themselves and allow the Gentiles to live by faith alone. The wall had to be removed. Together they must be reconciled to God on the same basis of Christ's peace through the cross. Though the clause is not used, this paragraph is a dynamic exposition of the phrase in Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile."

From verse 14 onward Paul has been conversing in the first person plural including himself in the unity of the one new man. He reverts to the second person in verses 19-22 again addressing their new spiritual status as Gentiles. Their blessings in Christ answer to the spiritual deprivation of verses 11 and 12. The material privileges of nation and covenant he interprets as foreshadowing the more abundant spiritual blessings in Christ.

This manifesto of Jew-Gentile unity through the cross is followed by the ethical instruction of chapters 4 through 6. These exhortations are not an addendum, but link directly to the themes of Jew and Gentile together. After the general call to live worthy of our calling in Christ, the first topic addressed is the unity, diversity, and maturity of the congregation (4:2-16). The unity of the Spirit has been established through the gospel, but must be maintained through ethical responsibility. What does that look like? The first series of virtues (humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance) comprises the

personal qualities which make for interpersonal peace. But unity is not sameness. As we have discussed previously, verses 7 and following demonstrate how the different graces bestowed by Christ work together for the maturing of the congregation.

The second listing (4:31-32) summarises the way of “new man” versus the way of the “old” (4:17-32). Here we have again the “putting on” language of Gal. 3:27. There the believer “clothes” himself with Christ signalling a change in status before God to sonship. Here the emphasis is clearly ethical. Both verbs to “strip off” and to “put on” are aorist participles most closely connected to “You were taught” (εἰδιδάvcqhte;v.21). This section re-presents moral instruction commonly used in the early church. What is put on is the “new man.” I take it to be a personal expression of God’s new creation of the “one new man” in salvation (2:10,15) which is being renewed in the image of its creator (4:23;Col. 3:10). The following instructions (4:25-30) further define the moral behaviour of the new man in specific situations. The old and new men are summarised by the vice and virtue list of 4:31-32 with its emphasis upon forgiveness as the genuine expression of kindness and compassion.

The third is a short series that describes the benefits and results of the “light” in contrast to the fruitlessness of “darkness.” The teaching is presented as a contrast between the before and after of their lives (5:8-11).

The “armour of God” concludes the moral teaching of the book by reminding us that “we” are not the enemy. Behind the need for Christian unity stands a spiritual force that seeks to divide us. It is probably better to see these descriptions not of ethical behaviour between people, but spiritual realities true of our salvation.

Within these ethical instructions are included role expectations for six groups in the congregation. These instructions are modelled after and reflect the typical groups in

a Greco-Roman household. Most would agree that the house tables are conventional in form and Christian in content (Coetzer 1984:39-41; Barth 1974:609,651-655; Yates 1991:247-250; Perkins 1997:126-140). The husband-wife and parent-child relationships cannot be separated from spiritual commitment to Christ. They must be lived out “in the Lord,” or “as Christ loved the church” (5:22,25-29). The warrant for these role expectations is grounded in Christ, creation, and command (5:31[Gen. 2:24];6:2[Deut. 5:16]). Such is not the case for the slave-master relationship, though motive, attitude and perspective is prominent (6:5-9;cp. 1 Cor. 7:21). Whatever the overlap with conventional morality, the New Testament sets these relationships in a biblical worldview and infuses them with Christian graces. Not only are the individual injunctions important, but the world and life setting in which they are received, perceived, and lived. Recent trends in ethics seek to understand behaviour within “the larger cultural context that surround individual norms” (Moxnes 1993:156).

“The intention of Paul is to show that the “Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” gives husband and wife the basis, the strength, and the example which they need in order to live in the “peace to [or by] which God has called” them (1 Cor 7:15). The “peace” between God and man, Jews and Gentiles, of which Paul spoke in Ephesians 2:14-16 shall be extended into every house and praised by the conduct of husband and wife” (Barth 1974:655).

The virtue lists in Ephesians are interwoven with other forms of ethical instruction to demonstrate, amplify, and reinforce the kind of personal qualities and behaviour that live out the spiritual unity of the “one new man.”

Philippians 1:27;4:8

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

The unity of Jew and Gentile in the context of redemptive history is not an explicit theme of the Philippian letter. But Paul is concerned for the internal unity of the congregation. Personal disagreements have already taken place (4:3) and external opposition was coming from the larger community (1:28). The letter as a whole is one of encouragement and moral exhortation. The body or central portion of the letter opens with the common ethical exhortation to live worthy of the gospel (1:27). In their particular setting as a Roman colony Paul used the imagery of living as a good citizen (*politeuomai*) rather than his more typical “walk” (*peripateuon*). This worthy life is demonstrated first of all by their internal solidarity standing firm “in one spirit” and “contending as one man” for the gospel (1:27). This is not the “one man” terminology of Ephesians but rather a unity of disposition or purpose (*synch*).

The urgency of his thought is pushed along in the opening of chapter two. Self-giving humility is commended on the basis of their common experience in salvation. They are “united in Christ” (lit. “encouragement in Christ”), have experienced the “fellowship with the Spirit” (*koinwnia*) and should therefore be “like-minded,” (*to; aujto; fronh`te*), have the “same” love for one another, and be “one in spirit and purpose,” a phrase constructed from two expressions in the Greek (*sumsucoi, to; en frnou`nte*). Christ’s self-giving humility is the capstone of his appeal to unity and harmony (2:5-11).

As we have seen these themes are carried through to the closing hortatory section of the body using the same terms from these opening verses. Unity in the sense of harmony and agreement is urged upon the two leading ladies in the fellowship (4:2-3). Steadfastness “in everything” is commended (4:4-7) through rejoicing, forbearance, and prayer. Both moral themes are drawn together in the beautiful qualities of the

catalogue (4:8). Here the virtue list is used as an exemplar, taking qualities idealised in Hellenistic culture and infusing them with the spiritual realities of one's relationship to Christ.

Though Philippi apparently had no significant Jewish population, there would still be the diversities of Greco-Roman culture represented in the congregation. It was not necessary to discuss the Jew –Gentile relationship in terms of redemptive historical categories as in the Galatian or Ephesian letters. But the results of those discussions, namely oneness in Christ, is applied as an entailment of their common experience of salvation (2:1-4) through one Saviour (2:5-11). This is important for current discussions of multicultural ministry because most are not faced with the Jew-Gentile question. In Philippians Paul shows us that “neither Jew nor Greek” in God's salvific programme established a foundational principle that is applicable to the complex pluralism of larger society.

Colossians 3:11

Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

The Colossian statement of ethnic unity in Christ is not found in the theological portion of the letter, but in the ethical admonitions of 3:1-4:6. The Colossian church seemed to be exposed to a pre-gnostic form of mysticism (2:18-19) and asceticism (2:20-23) which had the potential to lead them back into a pagan lifestyle (Hendriksen 1962:16-18;Vaughn 1976:166;Abbot 1979:xlvi-1). The concern was not, as in Galatians, a return to circumcision and Judaism *per se*, but a synthesis with local religions that may have included some influence of Jewish practice (1:16-17;note imagery of “uncircumcision of your sinful nature” [lit. “flesh”] in 2:13 and reference to the

stipulations of the law in 2:14). In this perspective, the person and work of Christ was devalued. Paul argues for the uniqueness of Christ and his complete sufficiency in salvation (1:15-23). In regard to his person he is the creator, the head of the church, and supreme over everything in the universe (1:15-18). He is the fullness of God (1:19;2:9). All wisdom and knowledge reside in him (2:3). In regard to his saving work their reconciliation to God is based entirely on the cross of Christ (1:21-24). They were made spiritually alive through the forgiveness of sins provided by the atonement. Christ's death removed the guilt of the law and the power of spiritual forces (2:13-15). Neither the law nor the "powers and authorities" could provide reconciliation with God or holiness for the believer (1:21;2:23).

Paul reminds them by a personal reflection that Jew and Gentile alike share this reconciliation with God through Christ. He had been commissioned as the messenger of this new phase of salvation history which had "been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints." What could have been perceived as an extension or offshoot of Judaism and therefore, primarily for Jews, was actually a message for Jew and Gentile alike. He struggles to find words to express "the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (1:24-27). In context "in you" (ἐν ὑμῖν) refers primarily to the gospel going to the Gentiles, not to the spiritual experience of the individual believer. This spiritual unity of Jew and Gentile is expressed indirectly in the next verse. Three times the phrase "every man" (πάντα ἀνθρώπων) announces forcefully that ministry and maturity in Christ are available to everyone, Jew and non-Jew alike (1:28).

In contrast the appearance of piety on the part of the false teachers, growth in true holiness begins within the framework of our dying and rising with Christ (3:1-4).

“The death of Christ is the event to which Colossians returns again and again. Thus *nekṛwvadte* [sic] of v.5 and *ajpekḁusavmeno i* of v. 9 are reminiscent of the description of Christ’s death in Col. 2:14-15” (Yates 1991:244).

The Christian way of life is presented using vice and virtue lists (3:5-14), proverbial sayings (3:15-17;4:2-6), and instructions to Christian households (3:18-4:1). The ethical lists give concrete examples of the “old man” and the “new man” in Christ. The first list of vice (3:5-6) seems to be typical of the immorality of paganism (Vaughn 1976:212). If we hear Jesus’ words to a Jewish audience in Mark 7:20-23, however, we must not limit their spiritual referent. More broadly, they describe the lifestyle of any people in rebellion against God that ultimately invites his wrath. Neither must they think that idolatry is limited to worshiping in the pagan shrine. The love of money that supplants the love of God is also a violation of the second commandment.

The second grouping of vices focuses on social attitudes that express themselves in words and bring division between people and groups. If there was a particular problem between social groups at Colossae, truth-telling seems to be the point of conflict. Lying is singled out and given its own amplification. Verses 9b-11 modify and support the prohibition of 9a, “Do not lie to one another” (present imperative). Lying, scheming, manipulation, misinforming, or avoiding communication are not appropriate because in salvation (pictured in baptism) they have taken off the old man and put on Christ (Gal. 3:27). Some have taken these aorist participles to be imperatival, describing the manner or means by which the lying is stopped (Yates 1991:247) Paul uses *e jnduw* of ethical exhortations, both in the imperative and the participle (Rom. 13:12;Eph. 6:11,14;1 Thess. 5:8). The similarity to Ephesians 4:24 has also been pointed out as an imperatival emphasis. But in this context it seems best

to take them as causal participles having an indicative force. Both are aorist infinitives in Ephesians 4:24, dependent for their completion of meaning upon $\epsilon\acute{\jmath}\delta\iota\delta\alpha\nu\sigma\tau\eta$. In Colossians 3:9-10 it is because they have “put off” and “put on” that Paul can exhort them to live consistently with their new life in Christ. Abbot offers three reasons for this position. First, in what precedes there is nothing to correspond with $\epsilon\acute{\jmath}\nu\delta\upsilon\sigma\alpha\nu\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\iota$, as the Christian graces are not referred to. In other words, there is nothing yet in the context to “put on.” Second, verse 11 (“Where there is no Greek or Jew. . .”) fits best as an argument rather than an exhortation. Third, the imperatives of verse 12ff are introduced with $\omicron\upsilon\ \grave{\alpha}\nu$. Because the above is true, namely verses 9b to 11, “therefore. . .clothe yourselves (Abbot 1979:283-284). Johnson offers a fourth reason: $\text{A}\ \acute{\jmath}\rho\epsilon\kappa\delta\upsilon\nu\omega$ has been previously used in Colossians to describe the effects of the cross. In 2:11 the old nature (lit. “body of flesh”) has been stripped away (noun form) in salvation. Again, in 2:15 the spiritual powers and authorities have been put off as a part of our being made alive in Christ (Johnson 1964:28). In this context the “new man” is not merely an ethical lifestyle, but the regenerate self (Peake 1974:539) or the new nature which believers possess as members of Christ (Hendriksen 1964:149). The fact, however, that it is being re-imaged shows there is an expected ethical response and growth in the knowledge of Christ (3:10b).

Verses 12-14 then present familiar graces of the Christian life that describe the “new man” in Christ. This is a succinct parallel to the larger context of the Ephesian letter. $\text{E}\ \acute{\jmath}\nu\delta\upsilon\nu\omega$ is now used in the imperative. He appeals to them as elect, saints, and beloved (by God), descriptions which apply equally to all believers, regardless of their individual level of maturity. What is consistent for people who hold this high status with God is that they “bear with” one another and, where necessary, forgive each other

using the virtues of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and forbearance. The oneness of the body is demonstrated when believers exercise these qualities as Christ forgave our sins (2:11-13). All can be bound together by Christian love.

Now into the middle of this ethical context on the unity of the body Paul specifies some of the groups that are now one in Christ. Like Galatians 3:28 is it introduced without a clear connection to the context. The normal definition of οἱ Ἕλληνες is locative, but can also introduce a subordinate clause (BAGD 1996:576) “locating” it in its surrounding context. It either modifies the “putting off” and “putting on” . . . “where there is no Greek or Jew” (Rendall 1979:539); or it may refer to the process of “being renewed” . . . “where there is no Greek or Jew” (Hendriksen 1964:151). The latter is probably the better understanding for in the moral renewal of their lives they work through the relational issues that bind them together in spite of ethnic, religious, cultural, or social differences. Vaughn nicely combines the two possibilities, “In the realm of the new self—that is, where the image of God is truly reflected—these distinctions have no real significance” (Vaughn 1976:213-214).

Several differences from Galatians are to be noted. First, the term “Greek” precedes “Jew”. The term “Greek” (Ἕλληνας) is used with the same flexibility as “Gentile” (ἐθνη). Here it must refer to Greek-speaking Christians because he will also mention the “uncultured” Christian. The reversal of the order may be a stylistic change. He was not specifically arguing the redemptive historical relationship between Jew and Gentile, which he was in Galatians and Ephesians. In such contexts the Jews were mentioned in terms of historical priority (Rom. 1:16). Here it is in the background rather than the foreground. The emphasis seems to be on their ethnic and racial recognition in society.

Second, the first two pairs seem to duplicate one another. Circumcision and uncircumcision also designated Jew and Gentile. If the former term viewed Jew and Gentile in their ethnic and historical differences, this pair emphasised the religious differences between them.

Third, the last four members are understood to be two pairs, but there is no grammatical connection. They are simply listed “barbarian, Scythian, slave, free.” The barbarian was considered the uncultured person who did not speak Greek. It is an onomatopoeic word which mimicked the garbled sound of their language (BAGD 1996:133). The Scythians were considered to be the ethnic ancestors of the barbarians. They were the lowest on the cultural scale of esteem. They were mocked for their uncouth ways and speech (Bruce 1957:256). It should be noted that “barbarian” and “Scythian” are not polarities but degrees of the same cultural perspective. Both Jew and Greek were prejudiced against them. Fourth, slave and free are the same terms of Galatians 3:28 designating an important threshold of identity and esteem in the community. The power of these barriers removed within the Christian community did not go without notice. Slaves were often gifted leaders followed by the free men and women of the community of faith. In the area of Carthage in A.D. 202 the Roman matron Perpetua and her slave Felicitas stood hand in hand as they faced a common death for a common faith (Bruce 1957:257). Fifth, outside of the Jew-Gentile pairing, the other variations of style and terminology in similar lists are probably due to their representative nature. The unity between Jew and Gentile brought to mind other diversities that would be bridged by the gospel. As we have mentioned not all the pairs are parallel in syntax or in meaning. What unity means in each case must be worked out within the principles of Scripture and the context of the Christian community. What is

affirmed is that the divisions which sin and society bring to make people enemies have been removed in the gospel and must be lived out in the fellowship of the church.

Sixth, what has replaced the differences between these groups is not a substance but a person. "Christ is all, and in all." A vital and living relationship with Christ has brought them into a new unity with one another that supersedes, removes, or transforms their former divisions. This grand declaration sums up the theme of Christ's supremacy (1:15-18, 26-27;2:3,6,9;3:1) The uniqueness of Christ must not simply be a doctrinal formulation, but an ethical motivation. Christian behaviour is not a merely a matter of right conduct or form. Christian forms of legalism, mysticism, or asceticism (2:16-23) must not be substituted for Jewish or pagan practices. All must be compared to and referred to Christ. How much more can be said from this phrase is difficult to know. The form $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\ \pi\alpha\acute{\sigma}\iota\varsigma$ can be either neuter or masculine. Galatians 3:28 is masculine. It would be easy to over analyse a phrase intended to communicate a totality (Vaugh 1976:214). If we were to venture in that direction I would follow the suggestion of Johnson, "Christ is all that matters and in all who believe" (Johnson 1964:28 and n.17).

Conclusions: What Kind of Unity Do Believers Possess?

What kind of unity do Christians possess in the New Testament? From our survey of these key passages several themes have emerged. First, the multicultural Christian communities were united by a common experience of salvation in Christ. Through faith in Christ they were forgiven, reconciled, and made sons (heirs) of God. The Holy Spirit was bestowed upon them (Gal. 3:2-5;5:16-25). Baptism was the outward sign of their faith. The soteriological aspect of their unity was most prominent in Galatians 3:26-29 and in the picture of reconciliation to God (Eph. 2:16), but salvation is always the assumption of New Testament ethical discussions. It forms the foundation

and motivation for Christian conduct. Note Colossians 3:1-3 as the introduction to the relational and moral instructions which follow.

Second, this relationship with Christ brought them into a new relationship with other Christians. They were one new man (Ephesians 2:15). They were spiritually fellow-citizens with one another, members of God's household, and a holy temple indwelt by the Spirit of God (Eph. 2:19-22). There is little doubt that the corporate "one new man" and the more individual "new man" were understood to be Christ himself. In Galatians 3:27 Christians had "clothed yourselves with Christ." "To 'put on' Christ is the necessary corollary of being 'in Christ.'" (Bruce 1957:273). Unity in Christ forged an identity that superseded the ethnic, historical, and social divisions of their human past. They often struggled to live out this unity in practice (Gal. 2:11-14). Nevertheless, spiritual oneness in Christ was affirmed as a spiritual reality that should be implemented, even if only provisionally realised until the coming of Christ. One expression of this identity is found in 2 Corinthians 5:16. Verse 15 has presented the life changing power of the cross. Then verse sixteen details one of those changes. "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer." The distinctions of Jew-Gentile that were prominent in society (at least from a Jewish perspective) no longer mattered to him. He had once looked on Jesus in this way, that is "according to the flesh" (*kata; savrz*). Though some have taken this to mean Christ in his earthly existence (the historical Jesus), it is better with the parallel of the first phrase and the context of the transforming power of the cross, to understand it as the NIV translates, "a worldly point of view." Christ had transformed his outlook on human life (Harris 1976:353).

In a prior letter to the Corinthian church he had distinguished between the “Jews, Greeks, or the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32). “Jews” and “Greeks” represent the spectrum of non-Christian society which needs to hear the gospel. In contrast to these first two groups there is the third group, “the church of God,” in which these former distinctions no longer mattered. The early Christians held “the concept of belonging to a single, universal people of God” (Meeks 1983:108). The strength of this identity held them together, but also led to their persecution. Greco-Roman society had an easy pluralism in which people were often involved in a variety of philosophies, cults, clubs, or religions. Religious activity itself was no threat. What disturbed them, according to N.T. Wright, was the undermining of the pagan worldview. “It was a new family, a ‘third race’, neither Jew nor Gentile but ‘in Christ’. Its very existence threatened the foundational assumptions of pagan society” (Wright 1992:450). What will be important in our thinking about contemporary application is that the early church chose their loyalty to Christ and to one another over their identity by birth or upbringing. This concept of the “third race” continued through the patristic period until the time of Constantine (Wright 2003:131-141).

Third, the vice and virtue lists gave concrete reality to life in the flesh versus life in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25) or the Christian way of life contrasted as the old man and the new man in Christ (Eph. 4; Col. 3). The lists were used (along with other modes of instruction) to teach and exhort Christlike behaviour, attitudes, words, and responses (Gal. 5:21; Eph. 4:22; Phil. 4:9). How did one promote and maintain unity in a mixed multitude? What would it look like? By accepting the truth as it is in Jesus (Eph. 4:21). The lists were not viewed as the values of one culture over another even though expressed in the forms and language of Hellenism or Judaism. Rather, they were the personal moral qualities of the One who had redeemed them and reconciled them.

Philippians 2:1-11 is an outstanding example of this. Self giving humility in the congregation (2:1-4) must be patterned after conformity to Christ's obedience (2:5-11; Hays 1996:28-31).

Fourth, it was a theological unity. The multi-ethnic churches of the New Testament were bound together by "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph. 4:5-6). Differences in lifestyle did not bother the apostle, but he strongly defended the truth of the gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). It was not merely a matter of creed, or belief, or personal loyalty to him as a leader in the church. Changing the message of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-5) was equivalent to turning away from God who had called them into salvation through the grace of Christ (Gal. 1:6). This is definitive for Christian unity versus other kinds of cooperation or common interests. The solidarity and continuity of the people of God, in spite of its many vagaries and inconsistencies, has been due to those who were willing to live, serve, and die for the Christ of the gospel.

Fifth, the New Testament experienced and practiced diversity in unity. We encounter many differences among the very people who are united in Christ. Unity did not mean uniformity. Neither was the early Christian movement perfect. From the very beginning it had to wrestle with many of the same issues that we continue to explore in our day. What did they do in practical terms with social/gender roles, status, and cultural practices? A study of the virtue lists has not brought us into contact with the specific issues apart from our brief encounter with the household tables.

At least three directions were taken towards roles and culture when brought into oneness in Christ. Some behaviours and lifestyles were *rejected* as contrary to Christian faith and worship. Most prominent were the idolatry (1 Thess. 1:9-10) and

sexual sins of paganism. The latter were often mentioned in the vice lists (Gal. 5:19; Col. 3:5). To be saved was to be cleansed from sexual sins (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Spiritual freedom was not to be used to indulge the sensual appetites (Gal. 5:13). A particularly complex question was the eating of meat offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 8-10. Here Paul maintains his worldview that "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (10:25 quoting Psa. 24:1). Considered in isolation the meat had no inherent moral or spiritual influence. It may be eaten as God's provision (Gen. 9:3). However, two restraints must govern the Christian's freedom. One is the weak conscience of a person still formulating his or her understanding of God and salvation. Christian love requires that we do nothing to violate their conscience because spirituality is not a matter of what we eat or don't eat (1 Cor. 8:1-13). The second restraint prohibits direct participation in idol ceremonies because this amounts to fellowship with demons, even as the eucharist is fellowship with Christ (1 Cor. 10:14-22). Including also the problem of the Lord's Table in chapter 11, Thiessen summed up Paul's teaching:

In any event, Paul tried to solve these conflicts by a certain pragmatism, which takes into account not only the real distribution of power and influence, but also the norms of a group with its ethos of equality. His management of these conflicts is not cynical. He tried to privatize the conflicts concerning meals: everybody should eat enough to be filled at home, but within the congregation there should be equality! Anyone may eat in private rooms meat that is sacrificed, but it must not be a part of a ritual to the gods. In public the refutation of idolatry should be unmistakable. Cohesion within the community and demarcation from the outside world are practised in a viable way. The more the basic axioms are accepted, the more flexibly they may be applied (Thiessen 2003:391).

But not all cultural characteristics were rejected. Some were *relativised* by changing their value or interpretation. Circumcision is the main example of this approach. The gospel of grace in Christ made the physical rite of circumcision a matter of personal choice. "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what

counts is a new creation” (Gal. 6:15;also 5:6;1 Cor. 7:19). As a cultural expression Paul had no problem with circumcision. It was a part of being Jewish. He could have Timothy circumcised in order to have rapport with his Jewish audience for the Gospel (Acts 16:3). About vegetarian eating habits or the observance of “sacred” days he was non-judgmental for “the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). This flexibility (ambivalence?) toward cultural matters is seen in his evangelistic strategy. “To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings” (1 Cor. 9:22-23). On the other hand he was vociferous against those who wanted to make circumcision (and law-keeping) a part of the gospel message (Gal. 2:15-16;5:2-4). In that case he refused to have Titus, a Gentile, circumcised because it would confuse the very message he was trying to preach (Gal. 2:3). And he warned the Colossians not to make spiritual opinions on the basis of food or festival (Col. 2:16). The spiritual value of the food laws had been fulfilled in Christ (2:17). To assign spirituality to the religious eating and drinking at this stage of redemptive history was to demote the value and work of Christ, a problem which this letter addresses head on.

For many cultural expressions, then there is no “yes or no” answer that applies in every context. The criterion appears to be its impact upon the gospel. If it is seen to be spiritually neutral (Rom. 14:14) then it would be viewed as cultural. But if it is understood or practiced in such a way as to add to or confuse the gospel message, then it must be avoided. This means that any church will need to be in dialogue with those in the congregation from their diversities to assess the spiritual understanding of various practices and lifestyles. Vegetarianism can be a matter of religion or tradition

or health. This would need to be done in an open atmosphere of prayer, scriptural study, and mutual communication.

A third way that diversity is treated in the New Testament is through *renewal*. This means that the gospel transforms existing structures by changing their motives, behaviours, and context. After reviewing the tendency of modern scholarship to reject the household codes as outdated and culturally defined, Wessels analyses the difference between the biblical record and the traditional material. He offers these three major distinctions from prevailing views. First, the role obligations are reciprocal. The Stoic codes are addressed to the individual instructing him or her to accept their duty as assigned by the gods in the natural order of things. Second, the duty of submission itself is a mutual one (Eph. 5:21; the verb is not repeated in v. 22). Third, the relationship is placed within a Christological context of Christ and the church (Wessels 1989:70-71; see also Hays 1996:64-65 for an almost identical analysis). The most unconventional part of the code (at least the marital section) was the instruction for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church. This direct breach of expectation, along with the reciprocity and new Christological perspective transformed or renewed the Christian marriage relationship without changing radically its form. Both Jesus and Paul affirmed monogamous lifelong marriage as the biblical ideal reaching back to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 (Matt. 19:4-6; Eph. 5:31).

Within the renewal of existing realities there were the seeds that would eventuate in moral and social change. Meeks gives an excellent historical overview of the hermeneutical contortions for and against slavery in the American context. He does not come to any final viewpoint in this very complex subject but rather an ethos of decisions making. "Moral argument is a matter of persuasion and consensus, always grounded in

a particular historical situation. The job of hermeneutics is to set the rules for a fair argument” (Meeks 1996:252). He questions the idea of what he calls “the seed growing secretly” view. Referring to Hays’ analysis he responds,

What can it mean for ‘conventional authority structures’ to be ‘subverted even while they are left in place’? Either they are authoritative or they are not. . . . Finally, the most obvious problem with all seed-growing-secretly constructions is the unwanted implication that, if the effects of the egalitarian gospel were invisible for so very many centuries, it cannot have had much force to begin with (Meeks 1996:250).

I would suggest that it is not fair to equate Christian marriage and the institution of slavery even though they appear as parallel elements in the list. As we have seen in Galatians 3:28 the pairs are parallel in the context, but not necessarily outside the present context. Husband-wife, parent-child, and master-slave are relationships that can and must also be examined in their wider biblical context outside the household tables.

Hermeneutical Issues

How are these texts of Christian unity to be used today? What practical direction and hope do they offer for developing harmony and cooperation in the increasingly diverse urban realities in which Christian congregations must live and minister? Biblical scholars have centred on the key relationship between Judaism and the emerging Christian community in Scripture as something of a paradigm for relations with Jews (and other religions) in our multicultural world. In our introduction we mentioned topics of globalisation, racial reconciliation, and social reform that are being discussed on the basis of these findings.

In our investigation of key texts on Christian unity two biblical perspectives have surfaced. Relationships between Christian and non-Christian are viewed from the perspective of evangelism (1 Cor. 9). Paul discusses how he relates to other religious

and culture groups for the sake of the gospel. The other perspective is the internal development of unity and ministry within the congregations. We are concerned with how texts can be appropriated in regards to this latter issue.

Most of the hermeneutical approaches begin with the use of Galatians 3:28. In the field of critical studies Galatians is seen as representing the earliest and therefore more genuine of Paul's thinking about the gospel. The entire epistle is a charter of freedom through the reception of the Spirit at baptism and individual equality set within the expectation of the coming kingdom. In this view Ephesians and Colossians came much later in the first century and reflect the loss of immanency in the eschatological hope. The earthly church had replaced the hope of the kingdom. Role distinctions, such as in the household codes, had replaced the earlier message of personal freedom. Galatians 3:28 then becomes the hermeneutical filter through which the supposedly much later books are read. Wessels presents this view though he doesn't hold it himself, "For a number of New Testament scholars, Ephesians represents a phase in the history of early Christianity which, instead of serving as a guideline for Christian living today, should serve as an indication of a wrong development (and therefore as a warning not to repeat the same mistake)" (Wessels 1989:67). This approach sets one portion of Scripture against another and forces the interpreter to choose, change, or reject one over the other (contra see Kostenberger 1998:1).

A critical reconstruction opens the door to a related approach. In this case, however, the hermeneutical criterion comes not from Scripture itself (as in Gal. 3:28), but from the values and perspectives of contemporary culture. I have purposely used the term "equality" very sparsely because it is loaded with ideological baggage. When used as a hermeneutical tool the radical egalitarian and undifferentiated individualism of contemporary "equality" is assumed to be Paul's meaning in "neither Jew nor Greek,

slave nor free, male and female.” In this view any differentiation or roles are seen as oppressive and limiting of self determination. Roles between men and women are the result of sin and domination and cultural inculcation. I would not deny that unspeakable abuses have occurred in the name of Christianity. Many examples could be cited. Neither would I deny that the reconciliation of New Testament passages can be a difficult undertaking. But neither misuse nor interpretive challenges in themselves negate the teaching of Scripture. Rather, they call for a better clarity and proper application. Assuming postmodern definitions of equality tends to be a reactive approach to human relationships by denying traditional roles (or the concept of roles altogether) but having little to put in its place except the ideal of individual freedom. All authority and structure is viewed with suspicion because both originate outside the individual. These amorphous relationships, however, have little practical value because all of us live in a network of personal relationships in domestic, religious, vocational, and civic institutions that cry for appropriate interaction and definition. In this approach, too, Paul will be turned back on himself to limit application or rewrite what is seen to be in contradiction with the self-evident truth of contemporary values.

Another approach reads New Testament documents through the lens of the surrounding Hellenistic culture. The Jewish cultural critic, Daniel Boyarin, also chooses Galatians 3:28 as his starting point but because he sees it as an expression of the Hellenistic ideal of one common humanity that Paul was seeking to make a part of early Christianity. “Paul was motivated by a Hellenistic desire for the One, which among other things produced an ideal of a universal human essence, beyond difference and hierarchy” (Boyarin 1994:7). He has a refreshing discussion of hermeneutical starting points which determine in large measure the outcomes of our investigations. “The choice of starting point is primarily a theological, ethical, political decision, not a

‘scientific’ one” (Boyarin 1996:6-7). Boyarin interacts with the apostle Paul as one Jewish cultural critic to another. In seeking to understand Paul in his context he assimilates the spirit-flesh dualism of Greek philosophy along with the allegorism of Judaism. Through this grid he interprets the difference between Paul’s spiritual ideal of equality in Galatians and what he calls “rigidly hierarchical” relationships between the sexes in Corinthians. What he proposes is that Galatians provides a theology of the spirit and Corinthians a theology of the body. He arrives at this conclusion because the pneumatics in the Corinthian congregation seemed to be both superspiritual and libertarian. In light of the practical danger to the Christian mission he sets down the instructions of 1 Corinthians. In relating these two concepts, he says, “In the life of the spirit, in Paul as in Philo, there may be no male and female, but in the life of the body there certainly is. . . .Paul’s is a dualism that makes room for the body, however much the spirit is more highly valued” (Boyarin 1994:185).

Reading as a Jew he rejects what he sees as Paul’s grand conception of universal humanity. Such a vision necessarily assimilates the identity and value of particular groups.

What will appear from the Christian perspective as tolerance, namely Paul’s willingness—indeed insistence—that within the Christian community all cultural practice is equally to be tolerated, from the rabbinic Jewish perspective is simply an eradication of the entire value system which insists that our cultural practice is our task and calling in the world and must not be abandoned or reduced to a matter of taste (Boyarin 1994:32).

Though we may disagree with Boyarin’s cultural hermeneutic he alerts us to the caution needed in translating Christian ecclesial principles into social ideals. “Neither Jew nor Greek” describes the spiritual relationships of those who have crossed the boundary of faith. Multicultural unity in the church is only “in Christ.” As illustrated in the long and bitter experience of the Jewish community, when enforced through political

power or social engineering, multiculturalism and tolerance become assimilation and eradication. An undifferentiated and unthinking egalitarianism endangers the freedom and identity of ethnic and religious minorities (Levenson 1996:167).

A fourth way of appropriating these texts is through the hermeneutical lens of community. Rather than seeing Scripture as a finished and final product, the contemporary church is seen in continuity with the emerging congregations of the first century. Scripture gives us the process of how they took spiritual ideals and interacted with the realities of their day. We need not adopt the answers they came up with, but rather need to discern the process by which they arrived at those answers. What we receive as Scripture are examples of their wrestling with their historical situation. Their applications were often provisional even in their own day, first steps that are helpful and suggestive rather than final. Doctrine and ethics for today should be worked out through a dialogue with the total situation of the text, principle, and cultural setting together. This is in contrast to discerning a biblical action or form (i.e. their “answer”) and applying it directly into our context. The “otherness” of the ancient social setting was too great to make such an uncritical leap. Biblical teaching must be studied in its interconnectedness with its own surrounding culture for there were multiple moral worlds in Scripture itself. The gaps between then and now are not bridged by the specific instructions of Scripture but by analogies between their historical situation and ours (Moxnes 1993:163-165).

An excellent example of this approach is Lisa Cahill's appropriation of Galatians 3:28 for ethics and gender. All biblical ethics recognise their basis in God's saving act in Jesus Christ. The ethical heritage of neighbour love focused love not only on those who are lovable but precisely those who in our estimation are unlovable (Cahill 2000:450). The church practiced this kind of radical love in relation to the status

differentiation of economics, religion, ethnicity, class, and gender which confronted them in Greco-Roman society. One of the strategies to achieve that value was the meeting in the house church. The Mediterranean household was itself a stratified institution with areas for men, women, slaves, eating, sleeping, and business. Within this protected environment relationships could be transformed and equality practiced in leadership and ministry. Not only was it a place of worship. Benevolence, education, and social services took place through the patronage of wealthier Christians. It is assumed by this view that women were afforded status and opportunities in the early years of the church which they were denied in society. It is also assumed that the role instructions encoded in the household tables of Ephesians, Colossians, the Pastorals, and 1 Peter were capitulations to “social pressures that were opposite to the transforming impetus of Christianity.” Contemporary appropriation need not conform to these injunctions. Rather, we must notice the way that the early church did make some headway in transforming the status relationships in their own culture. “Today we may not adopt the same strategies for advancing that vision. But we will discern the kinds of things that Christian moral behavior should involve” (Cahill 2000:459). “The initial, but unfinished, progress of the New Testament house churches suggests possibilities for the transformed Christian family in which women lead and participate, subverting institutions of marriage, motherhood, and kinship what have always kept us ‘in our place’” (Cahill 2000:459). Other moral issues she suggests for consideration would be celibacy of the clergy (within her Roman Catholic tradition), marriage itself, and prohibition of divorce. The issue in modern ethics is whether these institutions fulfil the assumed ideals for which they were originally given. If first century divorce was prohibited to protect women from male whim and control, does it still serve that aim today? Ethical strategies in the community of faith are not a matter of biblical instruction

but functional purpose. Halvor Moxnes comments, "It is this 'shift from a predominant concentration on moral rules' to 'ideas and values concerning the meaning of individual and social existence' that is the most significant result of the influence of anthropology on New Testament studies" (Moxnes 1993:157).

The emphasis upon historical context is an important one for interpretation. Wider knowledge of Mediterranean life and culture will enhance and deepen our understanding of the biblical world. Scholars using the sociological approach have made huge contributions to our knowledge of the Greco-Roman world. As we have seen above, however, Cahill also appropriates her understanding of egalitarianism in Galatians 3:28 to critique and reinterpret other portions of Scripture. One of the assumptions of this whole approach is that earlier means better. Even within critical circles this approach has been cautioned. Wayne Meeks calls it the golden age argument. He points out that historical reconstructions are subject to alternative interpretations. "Our" reconstruction can be what best suits our ideology and intention. The weight of our argument is proportional to the validity of our reconstruction. A second problem is the shift of authority from the text of Scripture to the principle that the interpreter uses to determine what in the Bible is good and what is unacceptable. If appeal is made to the witness of Scripture as a whole, the way in which Scripture makes that witness is still in need of specification (Meeks 1996:247-249).

Finally, I have proposed a reading of oneness in Christ in continuity with the unfolding plan of salvation in biblical history. The motivating context of the Christian message was neither the cosmopolitan diversity of the Greco-Roman empire nor the theology of second temple Judaism. The gospel is viewed by Paul and the New Testament authors as the fulfilment of God's purposed and prophecied plans running as a thread throughout the message of the Old Testament (Rom. 1:1-3). Indeed, in the

mind of God, his saving grace was intentional from eternity past (Eph. 1:4-6). The mystery of the gospel was not *that* Gentiles would be included but *how* they would be incorporated into the people of God. No one had envisioned the one new man in which Jew and Gentile together would be reconciled to God through the cross (Eph. 2:14-16). “Neither Jew nor Greek” connects first of all to the accessibility of saving grace for all people through faith in the Jewish Messiah. This common salvation is what unites people in their status as sons and heirs of the living God. The virtue lists offer both a model of Christlike personal qualities which preserve and promote this oneness. Unity did not mean uniformity. I have tried to give an account of both the unity and the diversity encountered in several key texts.

The Christian church of today stands in theological continuity with our first century predecessors. We may appropriate their teaching, example, and possibilities for the embodiment of our own unity today. What remains is to offer several contemporary possibilities for this unity in diversity.

Contemporary Possibilities

Christian Identity

One of the great needs of the contemporary church is the need for a spiritual identity in Christ which transcends the divisive differences of human culture. Too often our sense of personal identity is a self-referent expression of modern individualism and self sufficiency. Biblical identity begins with the indicatives of what God has done for us in salvation. “You are all sons of God” (Gal. 3:26). “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace” (Eph. 1:7). “God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins” (Col. 2:13-14). Through faith in Christ we received a new spiritual identity in salvation. Part of spiritual maturity is to embrace this identity in the practical reality of our thinking and behaviour.

But for the issue of multicultural ministry it also means that we see other Christians as sharing this same identity. This unity in Christ forms a bond that is higher and stronger than the human identities of family and culture. Paul testified that he used to evaluate people by their ethnic, religious, and cultural characteristics. “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view” (2 Cor. 5:16). The critical factor of human identity is whether a person is in Christ or apart from Christ; a new creation or still in the old creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

Miroslav Volf has wrestled with the problems of Christian identity in situations of social conflict. Using the agonising example of Rwanda in 1994 he notes that Christians stood on both sides of the atrocities. What was more puzzling was that Rwanda was supposedly one of Africa’s most evangelised nations. “How could the members of churches that had emerged from what was described as a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of communion and the Spirit of life—either participate in or avert their eyes from that genocide?” His answer was that in spite of an explicit verbal allegiance to the gospel, “many Christians in fact seem to have an overriding commitment to their respective culture, ethnic group, or nation. In conflict situations, they tend to fight on the side of their group and are tempted to employ faith as a weapon in the struggle” (Volf 2000:159). Their fundamental sense of identity remained rooted in ethnic and cultural realities.

In many less dramatic ways the same moral decisions must be made by the choice of Christ or culture. It is this loyalty to identity in Christ that is the fundamental basis of our horizontal unity with one another in the body of Christ. It is likewise the choice not to remain faithful to this identity which results in special interests, disunity, spiritual confusion, and a mixed message to the non-Christian world.

Multicultural Congregations

Multicultural ministry should reflect the diversity in unity presented in the New Testament. Richard Hays summarises: “Thus, the New Testament makes a compelling case for the church to live as a community that transcends racial and ethnic differences. Insofar as the church lives the reality of this vision, it has a powerful effect in society; insofar as it fails to live this reality, it compromises the truth of the gospel” (Hays 1996:441).

The foundation for this vision of multicultural ministry is laid in the new creation in Christ and his Word. A commitment to the New Testament’s soteriological starting point is important. When horizontal unity is primary the gospel is relativised and Christians choose between competing social agendas. The message of the church conforms to and sounds little different from the choices of society. The unity of the church begins by standing together under the authority and message of Scripture.

The relational side of this vision is realised when individual Christians “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (Rom. 15:7). The coherence of this vision comes from individual believers discovering how their individuality and diversity fit into the overall ministry of the church. In contrast to the radical individualism of many modern societies, the New Testament affirms the importance of personal identity and function, but within the context of the Christian family. It is not an either/or but a both/and (Moxnes 1993:159). “God makes individuals only in the context of community” (Cook 1979:144). The means for discerning one’s role in the church will differ from that of culture. A leader in the business world is not necessarily a leader in the church. Spiritual leadership is servanthood and Christlike maturity in attitudes, social behaviour, family relationships, and doctrinal understanding (Mark 10:41-45; 1 Tim. 3:1-13). God bestows the gifts of leadership on those he

chooses to serve in the body (Eph. 4:7-11; 1 Cor. 12). These gifts and abilities are recognised and affirmed by the congregation.

This vision for the church faces many challenges within a given historical situation. Methodologies, structures, relationships, and styles of ministry reflect the culture in which the congregation exists. As the church becomes more diverse the way ministry is conducted may marginalise those who are unfamiliar culturally or unable economically to participate. As the church sets about its calling the various values and approaches of different individuals and cultures must be examined in light of Scripture and the practical realities of the church. As we have seen they may be rejected, relativised, or renewed for use within the Christian context. The church that is sensitive to social changes will constantly review and revise their ministries to be inclusive of those they are trying to reach for the gospel.

But these are only the first steps for a vision of multicultural ministry. Difficult questions will sooner or later have to be addressed. How diverse can one be without losing coherence? What are fundamental values and theological perspectives that must be preserved in spite of pressure to change? At what point does ministry cater to too many, making all ministries ineffective? When Paul announced his evangelistic strategy of “all things to all men” (1 Cor. 9:22) he did not mean that he was all things to all men all the time! Under the guidance of God there was an appropriate time and place for the effective use of each strategy.

Various models have been used to address these complex issues. Models for church growth are human, conceptual arrangements of reality, “more than abstract theories and less than empirical observations” (Conn 1997:195).

The first is that of *assimilation*. Assimilation can be viewed positively or negatively. In the first assimilation welcomes newcomers into the existing ministries and relationships of the church. It assumes, however, that the values and structures of the church are stable and fixed. Thus, assimilation can be viewed negatively as requiring conformity and maintaining the *status quo* of stratification within society (Foster and Brelsford 1996:21-25). Unity is viewed as homogeneity.

A positive example is Emerald Hill Community Church, situated North-West of Harare in one of the newer residential areas. It is an English speaking, multicultural, nondenominational church that is pastored by a Black Zimbabwean. The racial composition is almost 50-50. People who come to Emerald Hill are looking for a church where people from all backgrounds can worship together. Maids and managers, black and white worship and serve together. Pastor Sam Ndogo relates that language is a challenge. He targets the widest group, but seeks to be as inclusive and representative as possible. With the events of recent years he rejoices to lead a group of people who, though different in so many ways, are one in Christ (Ndogo 2003).

One has to ask the question, "Is it wrong to have a monocultural church?" To which we must probably answer both "yes" and "no." Yes, if the church has become an expression of one cultural group with a purpose to preserve that identity. It will by the nature of the case exclude all who are socially not a part of that group. Oneness in Christ has been subordinated to other concerns. On the other hand, many churches may find themselves ministering in a relatively homogenous community. Their structures, values, and ministries will have a similarity for all who join them. Such a church must not allow the "sameness" of their community to blind them to future needs and opportunities. Neither should the comfort of similarity make them resistant to

change as their community changes. The given is not their structure and existence. The given is oneness in Christ. If assimilation is used to exclude and maintain the status quo of the church then the vision of the gospel is lost and the church becomes a cultural institution.

Stephen Britt has investigated the relationship of growing churches to their surrounding communities. His preliminary findings suggest that effective ministry is strongly related to the congruence between the symbols of the church and its local community. Pluralism in urban life quickly brings city dwellers into contact with different values and points of view. Though people in the city may assimilate many different or conflicting values, even city people tend to gather around shared values. The groups and interests with which they associate will tend to reinforce their views and beliefs. "If the values they see celebrated in worship are congruent or consistent with those they know elsewhere, the gospel message seems more familiar and acceptable" (Britt 1997:143-144). Some might see this as a reverse assimilation of the church into society. But he is speaking at the level of methodology, not theology, very much like Paul's strategy of "all things to all men."

The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa has historically been highly homogenous and therefore followed the model of assimilation in the negative sense. Recent years have seen several responses to the forces of change. Professor H. Jurgen Hendriks identifies four: The first response is to retreat from these changes and preserve the *status quo*. This has been a minority choice. A second response is cultural disintegration, manifested by dissociation from all Afrikaans establishments and identities, including the church. Emigration is the easiest way to follow this through. Third, others choose to disengage from the DRC. They may become inactive members

or move to other churches. The growth of charismatic and evangelical (house) churches from 1980 to 1991 was 111% in the white population group. Fourth, the majority have entered a process of transformation. Hendriks article points out that while many changes have and are taking on the denominational level the most dramatic changes are taking place in local congregations. We shall return to this in considering how these changes are being implemented.

A second model is founded upon *diversity*. Values, structures, and ministries are designed to incorporate as much of the congregational diversity as possible. Mark Gornik has founded and pastored an inner city church in Baltimore, Maryland, USA. When people are reconciled to Christ it does not lead to the end of colour, language, and difference, but the celebration of a new community of all persons who love and honour one another (Gornik 2002:86). The internal coherence of the congregation is maintained through the common life of grace, welcome, reconciliation and sharing. Grace between people is a grace patterned after the grace of God in salvation. "Grace is the healing power of God applied to hearts and lives that have been crushed and have often become hurtful to others." (76). A place of welcome creates a "safe spiritual and social home" for those who come. New Song Community emphasises hospitality, affirmation, and safety with a come-as-you-are atmosphere. Referring to two of the passages we have examined (Gal. 3:28; Eph 2:16-18) Gornik bases the repentance and forgiveness of the congregation toward one another on the reconciliation achieved by Christ through the cross. "The desire for reconciliation must come from the transformed hearts of all those who recognize that Christ also died for them as one whose way of life and sin have worked against God's reconciling plan for the world." A last quality which builds communal life is the mutual sharing of material possessions.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us” (1 Thess. 2:8). The ethos of caring for material needs at New Song is one of “non-competitive giving and receiving” in a community of equals (Gornik 2002:76-88).

Diversity for its own sake, however, can lead to relativity in other areas. This seems to be the approach of Foster and Brelsford in their study of cultural diversity in congregational life of three urban mainline churches. The driving force in these cases was the pursuit of diversity rather than oneness in Christ. They accept pluralism as an axiom of all culture, an awareness of irreducibly diverse cultures, traditions, and perspectives. Theology and morals, at least in the way they are expressed, also are culturally conditioned. What is emphasised is the group dynamic of togetherness and communal equality, and the value of many voices.

“When a congregation seeks to embrace diversity, it rejects the notion that any one cultural perspective should establish the criteria for judgments about what is important. It begins to recognize the presence of cultural bias in theological statements, liturgical actions, and organizational structures. Congregational leaders consequently begin to assert the value of a multiplicity of voices and perspectives contributing to the identity and mission of the congregation” (Foster and Brelsford 1996:114).

The study did not indicate that any of the three churches found final authority in Scripture or unity in Christ. Rather, the movement was away from these historic Christian truths into wider inclusiveness of moral and religious diversity. This in my view is not multicultural ministry, for though pluralism may be the social reality, the churches’ theological and spiritual moorings must remain anchored to Christ and the Scriptures.

Rob Robertson, was one of the pioneers of multiracial church congregations in South Africa. In 1962 he and his wife moved into the North End of East London to establish the North End Presbyterian church. “The aim of the North End experiment was

simple. It set out quietly to demonstrate just one thing, namely that a Presbyterian congregation could function in all the usual aspects of church life on a racially integrated basis, and that it could do this within the restrictions of apartheid laws” (Robertson 1997:10). The congregation was never large. Its ministries and structures incorporated people from many levels of society on an equal footing. In 1970 it was dissolved into other Presbyterian congregations taking up the example of diversity in their own churches. “A lot more had to be done, but it was the small beginning of a process that interlocked with what others were doing and that contributed to the comparatively peaceful South African transition to a shared society” (Robertson 1997:162).

Robertson’s next experiment in diversity was at St. Antony’s United Church in Pageview, Johannesburg (1975-1990). The goal was to develop a congregation of black and white, rich and poor, spanning as much of the city as possible. The ethos of this group was built upon an informal, inclusive, multiethnic, and multilingual family atmosphere. People were welcomed as they came. Worship incorporated a variety of styles and languages. Sermons were followed by lively discussions, sometimes disagreeing with the speaker. During the turbulent 80’s many of the St. Antony’s members were involved in various forms of activism and protest for social justice. News was shared weekly for information and prayer. Lynn Stevenson, a former newspaper journalist, observed, “St Ant’s goers had a wider and deeper understanding of what was happening during those times than even the daring *Rand Daily Mail* could give its readers.” Though widely involved in these social issues, Rev. Robertson maintained the importance of personal faith and moral integrity. Regarding sexual morality within marriage, he wrote, “I also preached on this subject, believing that our personal lives, as well as the life of our society, should conform to Christ’s teaching”

(Robertson 1999:23,35,39). The church's response to the world is based upon Christian faith. "Faith is the perception of, and obedience to, the self-revelation of God, the creator and Redeemer, in history. Christian faith is faith in Jesus as the centre of that revelation, both before and after his advent." The method of Christian influence is always non-violence. "We do not claim the secular world in an imperialist or triumphalist sense. It is claimed, as Jesus did, by accepting our place in it, living simply and joyfully in it, loving, helping and healing it, and by suffering for it in the struggle against its evil (Phil 2:5-11)" (Robertson 1999:197).

Interestingly, both of these congregations served as catalysts in the wider church communities. Both were disbanded by the choice of the members as they sensed the conclusion of their "mission." Members moved on to other callings, but these involvements remain a point of reference in their lives (Robertson 1999:196). Today most established churches in urban communities are working through the attitudinal and practical issues of diversity. For North End and St. Antony's perhaps the outward challenges were legal and political. After the first decade of democratic reform these challenges are more cultural, moral, and economic. But the underlying spiritual issues remain the same. "When the Powers fall they don't simply give up. They transform into other systems that still try to dominate our human scene" (Robertson 1999:188). These two churches showed the possibilities of diversity within a framework of oneness in Christ.

Another model for multicultural ministry is *networking*. Networking can take place within the church and local community itself or it may take place through partnerships outside the local congregation. First Baptist church of Flushing, New York has been in that urban neighbourhood through many years of demographic change. The members

took a decision to remain and minister to the international community. Because of language constraints they have Spanish, Portuguese, and Chinese congregations in addition to their English speaking services. Other ministries reach out to Jews, Indians, and Afghans in the immediate vicinity. As a city church they are faced with enormous personal needs and so have day care, counselling, and food pantry. Their facilities are utilised for programmes of Bible education and internship. The unity of First Baptist Flushing is maintained through the close working together of its leadership. The ethnic congregations are pastored by someone from that language group. That pastor is part of the staff at First Baptist. They regularly meet, train, and pray together as a ministry team. All participate in the Sunday morning services. Each of the ethnic congregations is identified as a part of First Baptist Church of Flushing (Travis 1997:231-234).

In the research of Hendriks cited previously, he notes that the most vital growth of the DRC is in urban megachurches (in 1999 they numbered 62 averaging 3260 members). Though still highly homogenous, attitudes toward members of other racial groups has changed over the last decade. Active partnerships of evangelism and missions reach across cultural difference in their communities. Parachurch organisations are flourishing and they supplement congregational work. "DRC members form the backbone of most of these parachurch organisations" (Hendriks 1999:336). Many are involved in projects of community development from a Christian rather than secular perspective. Dr. Anna-Marie du Toit is involved in development both in the government and in her local DRC church. "God-centred development means that the purpose in development is to seek God's will. Christian are called to focus on what God intends for human beings" (du Toit 2002:92).

In my own ministry at Midrand Chapel, networking means partnering with other ministries to reach culturally diverse parts of our society for which we are not equipped.

One African pastor oversees two different language congregations in our own community of Midrand. One of those groups meets in our building on Sunday morning. We share pastoral wisdom and advice across the cultural issues that each of us faces. Once or twice a year we meet together for a service of celebration. In August we plan together for overseas teams to come for evangelism, medical, children's and training ministries. Another partner plants churches and trains pastors and leaders in Limpopo province. Some of those students then go back to Mozambique to further their own ministries. Another reaches schools and school teachers Soweto and Eldorado Park. Another shows the JESUS film up and down the west and eastern Cape. Another leads a ministry in Harare which has links to 21 countries in east and southern Africa. For us this networking is one response to the overwhelming reality of cultural pluralism. Though we have members from all race groups in South Africa, southern Africa, Europe, Korea, and North America, we are constrained by language, cultural understanding, and financial resources in reaching the great diversity of our own local community. Networking with ministry partners helps us in some way to bridge that chasm.

Conclusions and Summary

The intentionality of multicultural ministry is a narrow path on which to walk.

“Intentionality is the purposeful, positive, and planned activity that facilitates reconciliation (Key verses: Ephesians 2:14-15)” (Washington and Kehrein 1993:125). God's plan to save men and women was intentional and incarnated in the life of Christ. From the final commission to the heavenly vision the body of Christ is to live out an “all nations” (=all peoples) perspective for the Gospel. On the one side of the path drops the precipice of postmodern cultural relativity. Multiculturalism is not an end in itself, but a focus in ministry or a context for ministry. We may become anesthetised by the ideals of tolerance and self expression. Removed from the Scripture and the gospel of Christ

the message of the church is barely distinguishable from the social aspirations of society. The church loses its ability to speak a prophetic word of divine grace and coming glory.

On the other side of the path lie the green pastures of material prosperity and personal security. It is emotionally taxing to build bridges to those separated by history and custom. But to remain in the green pastures means that our ministry becomes a function of our social grouping. “Neither Jew nor Greek” keeps pulling us back to the larger calling of the gospel for all people. Referring to the historical and cultural boundary that existed between Jew and Gentile in the ancient world, D. F. Wright admonishes us,

“The crucial point is that, once the first boundary had been breached no other boundary—religious, racial, cultural, linguistic, or geographical—possessed any sanctity. Christianity could tolerate no “no-go” areas. This point is emphasized not only because it was influential in the making of the early Christians, but also because some believers in Western Christianity seem to be turning their backs on the missionary imperative, without whose vigor in earlier centuries they would not now exist. Christianity, after all, was indigenous in only one setting—first century Palestinian Judaism. Everywhere else, from Antioch and Alexandria to Argentina and America, it arrived by cross-cultural translation. To lose sight of this fact is to run the risk of absolutizing some later inculturated expression of Christian faith, as when, for example, Celtic spirituality is presented as indigenous to parts of the British Isles. It is even more disastrous in an age of religious pluralism to abandon mission to adherents of other faiths, selfishly content to go on enjoying for ourselves the Christian legacy of earlier missionary achievements.” (Wright 2003:132-133).

I have sought to describe oneness in Christ from the larger contexts of the vice and virtue lists of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. My concern has been the functioning of local congregations. These texts present a model of ethnic diversity in Christian unity. Christian unity results from the shared life of commitment to Christ and the gospel. No other foundation provides an identity which can transcend the differences which divide.

Biblical diversity must be understood on two levels. First, there are the diversities of birth, history, and life experience. These differences between people must find unity through their spiritual oneness in Christ. All come to Christ through faith and are saved by the atonement of the cross. But second, diversity must also be seen within the functioning and gifts of the church. To say that we are one in Christ does not mean that we are all the same or do the same thing. Unity is not uniformity. Within the larger context of Christian unity Christ has gifted and equipped each person to fulfil an important and vital role for the maturity of the body (Eph. 4:7-16; 1 Cor. 12). The recognition and functioning of these diversities enrich and deepen the worship and outreach of the church.

All involved in leadership and ministries must discern the shape of Christian unity for a given time and place. From the many discussions and decisions of doctrine, philosophy of ministry, leadership, structures, demographics, target groups, ministries, and values, a collective ethos will emerge. This identity should be the result of the study and application of biblical principles, prayer, and a discernment of the context of ministry. I do not believe that we can be all things to all people in any cultural sense. Decisions do have to be made (such as the choice of language and methods of ministry) that will more readily include some and exclude others. That is not their intention, but the practical result. In contrast to this perspective Venter argues that the *status quo* in South African churches is maintained by class values attached to language preference. "But the increasing domination of class values does not move churches away from race as an issue, for it is *European* upper and middle class interests which now dominate local congregational structures" (Venter 1998:35-36). We must hear what Venter is saying, but he offers no constructive alternative to what he

is criticising. I do not think that one can realistically expect to isolate oneself from the influence of language whether ministering in the townships or in middle class suburbs. Each congregation must discern the most appropriate approach for their context of ministry. At the same time, they must seek a network of ministry partners who are better equipped to reach other diversities. God's will for today must never be completely fixed, but a flexible line that can be stretched, reshaped, or redirected as God leads.

Christian unity also means a constant evaluation of what is cultural (and therefore relative) and what is biblical (and must not change). What cultural patterns must be rejected, relativised, or renewed? All of this must be done in a spirit of brother love and the self giving example of Christ (Eph. 4:2,15,29,32;Phil. 2:3-11;Col. 3:14).

The greatest challenge to congregational unity will not be cultural, but spiritual. The baggage of the past life, the temptations and stubbornness of the sin nature, the rapidly changing cultural context of ministry, and the heritage of history all create frustration and misunderstanding in Christian relationships. Nevertheless, our oneness is affirmed as theological truth (Gal. 3:28;Eph. 2:15;Col. 3:11) and we are instructed to work out its implications through the enabling of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:1-3). In spite of the seemingly insurmountable challenges, we may expect, by God's grace, to experience the fellowship of Christian unity now, and bear witness to our eschatological hope when Christ will truly be all and in all. The lists of virtue and vice are one way in which the New Testament provides a moral compass to keep us moving in the right direction.

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