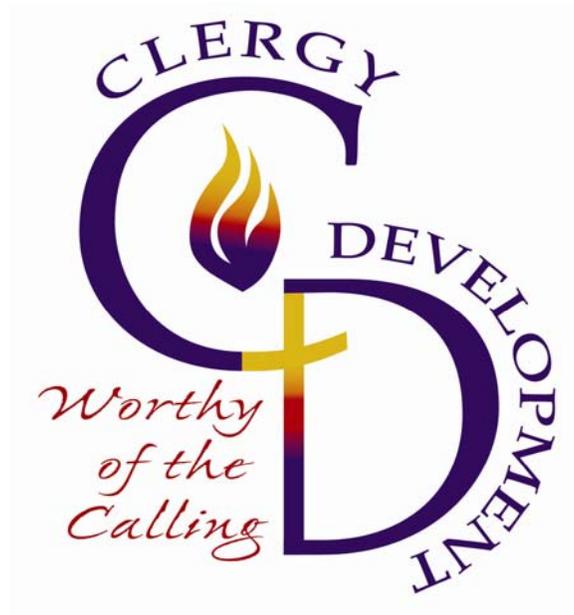

Student Guide

Living Ethical Lives



Clergy Development
Church of the Nazarene
Kansas City, Missouri
816-333-7000 ext. 2468; 800-306-7651 (USA)
2005

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The **Modular Course of Study** is an outcome-based curriculum designed to implement the educational paradigm defined by the Breckenridge Consultations. Clergy Development is responsible for maintaining and distributing the Modular Course of Study for the Church of the Nazarene.

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Series Foreword

A Vision for Christian Ministry: Clergy Education in the Church of the Nazarene

The chief purpose of all persons—indeed, all of the creation—is to worship, love, and serve God. God has made himself known in His deeds of creation and redemption. As the Redeemer, God has called into existence a people: the Church, who embody, celebrate, and declare His name and His ways. The life of God with His people and the world constitutes the Story of God. That story is recorded principally in the Old and New Testaments, and continues to be told by the resurrected Christ who lives and reigns as Head of His Church. The Church lives to declare the whole Story of God. This it does in many ways—in the lives of its members who are even now being transformed by Christ through preaching, the sacraments, in oral testimony, community life, and in mission. All members of the Body of Christ are called to exercise a ministry of witness and service. No one is excluded.

In God's own wisdom He calls some persons to fulfill the ministry of proclaiming the gospel and caring for God's people, in a form referred to as the ordained ministry. God is the initial actor in this call, not humans. In the Church of the Nazarene we believe God calls and persons respond. They do not elect the Christian ministry. All persons whom God calls to the ordained ministry should continue to be amazed that He would call them. They should continue to be humbled by God's call. The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene states, "we recognize and hold that the Head of the Church calls some men and women to the more official and public work of the ministry." It adds, "The church, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, will recognize the Lord's call" (*Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, paragraph 400).

An ordained Christian minister has as his or her chief responsibility to declare in many ways the whole Story of God as fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. His or her charge is to "tend the flock of God . . . not under compulsion, but willingly, not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:2-3, NRSV). The minister fulfills this charge under the supervision of Christ, the chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4). Such ministry can be fulfilled only after a period of careful preparation. Indeed, given the ever-changing demands placed upon the minister, "preparation" never ceases.

A person who enters the Christian ministry becomes in a distinct sense a steward of the gospel of God (Titus 1:7). A steward is one who is entrusted to care for what belongs to another. A steward may be one who takes care of another person or who manages the property of someone else. All Christians are stewards of the grace of God. But in addition, in a peculiar sense a Christian minister is a steward of the "mystery of God," which is Christ, the Redeemer, the Messiah of God. In all faithfulness, the minister is called to "make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" (Eph 6:19, NRSV). Like Paul, he or she must faithfully preach "the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:8-10, NRSV).

In fulfilling this commission, there is plenty of room for diligence and alertness, but no room for laziness or privilege (Titus 1:5-9). Good stewards recognize that they are

stewards only, not the owners, and that they will give an account of their stewardship to the master. Faithfulness to one's charge and to the Lord who issued it is the steward's principal passion. When properly understood, the Christian ministry should never be thought of as a "job." It is ministry—uniquely Christian ministry. No higher responsibility or joy can be known than to become a steward of the Story of God in Christ's Church. The person who embraces God's call to the ordained ministry will stand in the company of the apostles, the Early Fathers of the Church, the Reformers of the Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformers, and many persons around the world today who joyfully serve as stewards of the gospel of God.

Obviously, one who does not recognize, or who understands but rejects, just how complete and inclusive a minister's stewardship must be, should not start down the path that leads to ordination. In a peculiar sense, a Christian minister must in all respects model the gospel of God. He or she is to "shun" the love of money. Instead, the minister must "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness." He or she must "fight the good fight of the faith" and "take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called" (1 Tim 6:11-12, NRSV).

Hence, the Church of the Nazarene believes "the minister of Christ is to be in all things a pattern to the flock—in punctuality, discretion, diligence, earnestness; 'in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left' (2 Cor 6:6-7)" (*Manual, Church of the Nazarene*, paragraph 401.1). The minister of Christ "must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, ⁸but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, ⁹holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching . . . able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict." (Titus 1:7-9, NASB).

In order to be a good steward of God's Story one must, among other things, give oneself to careful and systematic study, both before and after ordination. This will occur not because he or she is forced to do so, but out of a love for God and His people, the world He is working to redeem, and out of an inescapable sense of responsibility. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the attitude one brings to preparation for the ministry reveals much about what he or she thinks of God, the gospel, and Christ's Church. The God who became incarnate in Jesus and who made a way of salvation for all gave His very best in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. In order to be a good steward, a Christian minister must respond in kind. Jesus told numerous parables about stewards who did not recognize the importance of what had been entrusted to them (Mt 21:33-44; 25:14-30; Mk 13:34-37; Lk 12:35-40; 19:11-27; 20:9-18).

Preparation for ministry in Christ's Church—one's education in all its dimensions—should be pursued in full light of the responsibility before God and His people that the ministry involves. This requires that one take advantage of the best educational resources at his or her disposal.

The Church of the Nazarene recognizes how large is the responsibility associated with the ordained Christian ministry and accepts it fully. Part of the way we recognize our responsibility before God is seen in the requirements we make for ordination and the practice of ministry. We believe the call to and practice of Christian ministry is a gift, not a right or privilege. We believe God holds a minister to the highest of religious, moral, personal, and professional standards. We are not reluctant to expect those

standards to be observed from the time of one's call until his or her death. We believe Christian ministry should first be a form of worship. The practice of ministry is both an offering to God and a service to His Church. By the miracle of grace, the work of the ministry can become a means of grace for God's people (Rom 12:1-3). One's education for ministry is also a form of worship.

The modules comprising the Course of Study that may lead a person to candidacy for ordination have been carefully designed to prepare one for the kind of ministry we have described. Their common purpose is to provide a holistic preparation for entrance into the ordained Christian ministry. They reflect the Church's wisdom, experience, and responsibility before God. The modules show how highly the Church of the Nazarene regards the gospel, the people of God, the world for which Christ gave His life, and Christian ministry. Completing the modules will normally take three or four years. But no one should feel pressured to meet this schedule.

The careful study for which the modules call should show that before God and His Church one accepts the stewardly responsibility associated with ordained ministry.

Acknowledgments

Every module is the accumulation of effort by many people. Someone writes the original manuscript, others offer suggestions to strengthen the content and make the material more easily understood, and finally an editor formats the module for publication. This module is not different. Many people have contributed to this module. Every effort has been made to represent accurately the original intent of the principal contributors.

Principal Contributor

The principal contributor for this module is Dr. Henry W. Spaulding, II. Dr. Spaulding is dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, director of the Graduate Program in Religion, and professor of Theology and Philosophy at Trevecca Nazarene University, where he has taught since 1995. Before that he taught at Eastern Nazarene College between 1982 and 1992. Dr. Spaulding has also pastored on the Georgia and Virginia districts. He received his bachelor of arts in religion and history from Trevecca Nazarene University, master of divinity from Nazarene Theological Seminary, and the doctor of philosophy from Florida State University.

He has published several articles in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* and has written a book titled *Untangling the Sexual Revolution* with Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City. He has also written for *Holiness Today* as well as several other denominational publications. He has presented twice at the American Academy of Religion. Spaulding is a Sunday School teacher and he resides in Hendersonville, Tennessee, with his wife and two children. He also has one married child who lives in Tennessee.

Responder

Each module was reviewed by at least one content specialist to ensure that the content did not represent a single, narrow view or opinion. The responder provided suggestions the principal contributor could integrate into this module.

Frank Garton was the responder for this module and contributed several case studies for classroom use. Dr. Garton, an ordained elder in the Church of the Nazarene, is senior counselor for Olivet Nazarene University and teaches in the Psychology Department. He was selected as Olivet Nazarene University *Teacher of the Year* in 1988.

Dr. Garton has pastored in Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan. He has been active in community activities as facilitator/counselor for grief and loss support groups and seminars, served on the county Board of Health and the American Red Cross. Frank was Olivet's "house captain," for the popular Christmas-In-April project, which rehabilitates the homes of low income and elderly of the community.

For five years he served as Early Morning Host of the *Journeys with Frank Garton* over the WONU radio station. Other interests include photography, cycling, motorcycling, collecting, and reading poetry.

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Syllabus

Living Ethical Lives

Educational Institution, Setting, or Educational Provider:

Location of the Course:

Course Dates:

Name of the Instructor:

Instructor's Address, Telephone, and E-mail Address:

Module Vision Statement:

From its very beginning the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition has emphasized the moral implications of the gospel. This theme is not unique to the Holiness tradition because all Christians understand that healthy Christianity bears fruit. The purpose of this module is to call attention to this reality by pointing toward the multiple sources and resources for Christian character found in Scripture, as it has been handed on to each new generation. Special attention will be given to the unique way in which moral reflection has characterized the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

Another trajectory for this module is Christian character. Such things as integrity, fidelity, consistency, and generosity speak to the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Part of the importance of this module is to be found in calling attention to the crucial sense in which embodying the faith should be understood as a material outgrowth of the preaching of the gospel. In other words, to preach the gospel without the intention to live it out is unthinkable in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

This module will be organized into six units. Unit 1 will attempt to define ethics and suggest some of the challenges presented to moral reflection. This section will also set out some of the Old Testament and New Testament for moral reflection. Unit 2 will set out in basic terms some of the major schools of philosophical ethics. Unit 3 will do the same with theological Ethics. Unit 4 will treat Wesleyan-Holiness ethics. Unit 5 will deal with several moral questions currently confronting the Church and the Christian. Here the attempt will be to define the issues and the resources evident in the Holiness tradition for confronting the issues. Unit 6 will conclude the module by addressing the relationship between character development and spiritual formation. The organization of this module is a deliberate attempt to avoid making ethics a purely theoretical exercise. Rather, at every turn the very practical issues of moral decision-making will form the basic argument.

Educational Assumptions

1. The work of the Holy Spirit is essential to any process of Christian education at any level. We will consistently request and expect the Spirit's presence within and among us.
2. Christian teaching and learning is best done in the context of community (people being and working together). Community is the gift of the Spirit but may be enhanced or hindered by human effort. Communities have common values, stories, practices, and goals. Explicit effort will be invested to enhance community within the class. Group work will take place in every lesson.
3. Every adult student has knowledge and experiences to contribute to the class. We learn not only from the instructor and the reading assignments, but also from each other. Each student is valued not only as a learner but also as a teacher. That is one reason so many exercises in this course are cooperative and collaborative in nature.
4. Journaling is an ideal way to bring theory and practice together as students synthesize the principles and content of the lessons with their own experiences, preferences, and ideas.

Outcome Statements

This module contributes to the development of the following abilities as defined in the *U.S. Sourcebook for Ministerial Development*.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- CH1 Ability to apply a basic understanding of ethical theories to teach and nurture ethical behavior in the Christian community
- CH2 Ability to discern and make theologically based ethical decisions in the midst of a complex and/or paradoxical context
- CH3 Ability to teach and model sexual purity
- CH4 Ability to understand and apply the unique ethical dimensions of spiritual leadership in the church
- CH5 Ability to apply Christian ethics to the issues of integrity, specifically as they relate to ministers and laity for authentic Christian faithfulness and public witness
- CH12 Ability to practice faithful stewardship of personal relations including gender relationships, marriage and family, personal finance, and professional conduct
- CX1 Ability to discover sociological dynamics and trends and to apply that information to specific ministry settings
- CX8 Ability to place the ministry context in light of the large schemes of world and national history

Recommended Reading

Each module within the Modular Course of Study is intended to be textbook independent. This does not imply that the modules are textbook irrelevant, or that the module content cannot be enriched by selecting and requiring that students study a textbook along with the lessons provided in this faculty guide.

For this module the following are recommended for reading and for your library:

Diener, Paul W. *Religion and Morality: An Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1966, 1978. Provides an even-handed telling of the some of the major contributors and themes of Western moral reflection.

Wogaman, J. Philip. *Christian Ethics: A Historical Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993. Provides an excellent general introduction to the field. It will fit nicely with part of the organization of the module, in that it is organized historically.

Course Requirements

- 1. Class attendance, attention, and participation** are especially important. Students are responsible for **all** assignments and in-class work. Much of the work in this course is small-group work. Cooperative, small-group work cannot be made up. That makes attendance imperative. Even if one does extra reading or writing, the values of discussion, dialogue, and learning from each other are thwarted. If one lesson is missed, the instructor will require extra work before completion can be acknowledged. If two or more classes are missed, the student will be required to repeat the whole module.

Small-Group Work. Nothing is more important in this course than small-group work. The class members will be assigned to groups of two to four students each. The group members will serve as study partners for explorations and discussion.

- 2. Assignments**

Journaling: The only ongoing assignment for this module is your journal. It is to be used regularly, if not daily. On at least one occasion during the term, the instructor will check the journals. In each lesson a journal assignment is included.

The journal should become the student's friend and treasury of insights, devotions, and ideas. Here the integration of theory and practice occurs. The spiritual life nature of the journal helps guard against the course of study being merely academic as you are repeatedly called upon to apply the principles studied to your own heart and your own ministry situation.

This journal is not a diary, not a catchall. It is, rather, a guided journal or a focused journal in which the educational experience and its implications are selected for reflection and writing.

The framers of this curriculum are concerned about the way that students fall into learning "about" the Bible, or "about" the spiritual life rather than learning—that is coming to know and internalize the Bible and spiritual principles. The journaling experience ensures that the "Be" component of "Be, Know, and Do" is present in the course of study. Be faithful with all journaling assignments.

Daily Work: This module has regular homework assignments. It is called daily work because even though the class may only meet once a week, the student should be working on the module on a "daily" basis. Sometimes the homework

assignments are quite heavy. The assignments are important. Even if homework is not discussed in class every session, the work is to be handed in. This gives the instructor regular information about the student's progress in the course. The normal time for homework to be handed in is at the beginning of each class session. **All** assignments are to be completed.

Course Outline and Schedule

The class will meet for 30 hours according to the following schedule:

Lesson Date	Lesson Time	
		1. Defining Ethics
		2. Major Challenges to Ethical Reflection
		3. Old Testament Perspectives on Ethics
		4. New Testament Perspectives on Ethics
		5. Utilitarianism
		6. Natural Rights
		7. Kantianism
		8. Virtue Ethics
		9. Patristic Ethics
		10. Medieval Ethics
		11. Modern Ethics
		12. Renewal of the Image of God as the Goal of Humanity
		13. Holiness as Holy Conduct
		14. Holiness as Social Holiness
		15. Grace, Justice, and Reconciliation
		16. Facing the Issue of Sexuality
		17. Integrity and Confidentiality within the Church
		18. Setting an Example for Believers in Family Life
		19. Christian Discipleship and the Virtues
		20. Understanding the Church as a Resource for Moral Decision-Making

Course Evaluation

The instructor, the course itself, and the student's progress will be evaluated. These evaluations will be made in several ways.

The progress of students will be evaluated with an eye for enhancing the learning experience by:

1. Carefully observing the small-group work, noting the competence of reports, the balance of discussion, the quality of the relationships, the cooperation level, and the achievement of assigned tasks
2. Careful reading of homework assignments
3. Completion of all homework assignments
4. Journal checks

The course materials and the teacher will be evaluated by frequently asking and discussing the effectiveness and relevance of a certain method, experience, story, lecture, or other activity.

Some evaluation cannot be made during the class itself. Some objectives will not be measurable for years to come. If students encounter the transforming power of God at deeper levels than ever before, learn devotional skills and practice them with discipline, and incorporate the best of this course into their own ministries, the fruit of this educational endeavor could go on for a long time. In truth, that is what we expect.

Additional Information

A reasonable effort to assist every student will be made. Any student who has handicaps, learning disabilities, or other conditions that make the achievement of the class requirements exceedingly difficult should make an appointment with the instructor as soon as possible to see what special arrangements can be made. Any student who is having trouble understanding the assignments, lectures, or other learning activities should talk to the instructor to see what can be done to help.

Instructor's Availability

Good faith efforts to serve the students both in and beyond the classroom will be made.

Journaling: A Tool for Personal Reflection and Integration

Participating in the Course of Study is the heart of your preparation for ministry. To complete each module you will be required to listen to lectures, read books and articles, participate in discussions, and write papers. Content mastery is the goal.

An equally important part of ministerial preparation is spiritual formation. Some might choose to call spiritual formation devotions, while others might refer to it as growth in grace. Whichever title you place on the process, it is the intentional cultivation of your relationship with God. The module work will be helpful in adding to your knowledge, your skills, and your ability to do ministry. The spiritual formation work will weave all you learn into the fabric of your being, allowing your education to flow freely from your head through your heart to those you serve.

Although there are many spiritual disciplines to help you cultivate your relationship with God, journaling is the critical skill that ties them all together. Journaling simply means keeping a record of your experiences and the insights you have gained along the way. It is a discipline because it does require a good deal of work faithfully to spend daily time in your journal. Many people confess this is a practice they tend to push aside when pressed by their many other responsibilities. Even five minutes a day spent journaling can make a major difference in your education and your spiritual development. Let me explain.

Consider journaling time spent with your best friend. Onto the pages of a journal you will pour out your candid responses to the events of the day, the insights you gained from class, a quote gleaned from a book, and an 'ah-ha' that came to you as two ideas connected. This is not the same as keeping a diary, since a diary seems to be a chronicle of events without the personal dialogue. The journal is the repository for all of your thoughts, reactions, prayers, insights, visions, and plans. Though some people like to keep complex journals with sections for each type of reflection, others find a simple running commentary more helpful. In either case, record the date and the location at the beginning of every journal entry. It will help you when it comes time to review your thoughts.

It is important to chat briefly about the logistics of journaling. All you will need is a pen and paper to begin. Some folks prefer loose-leaf paper that can be placed in a three-ring binder, others like spiral-bound notebooks, while others enjoy using composition books. Whichever style you choose, it is important to develop a pattern that works for you.

Establishing a time and a place for writing in your journal is essential. If there is no space etched out for journaling, it will not happen with the regularity needed to make it valuable. It seems natural to spend time journaling after the day is over and you can sift through all that has transpired. Yet family commitments, evening activities, and fatigue militate against this time slot. Morning offers another possibility. Sleep filters much of the previous day's experiences, and processes deep insights, that can be recorded first thing in the morning. In conjunction with devotions, journaling enables you to begin to weave your experiences with the Word, and also with module material that has been steeping on the back burner of your mind. You will probably find that carrying your journal will allow you to jot down ideas that come to you at odd times throughout the day.

It seems we have been suggesting that journaling is a handwritten exercise. Some may be wondering about doing their work on a computer. Traditionally, there is a special bond between hand, pen, and paper. It is more personal, direct, and aesthetic. And it is flexible, portable, and available.

With regular use, your journal is the repository of your journey. As important as it is to make daily entries, it is equally important to review your work. Read over each week's record at the end of the week. Make a summary statement and note movements of the Holy Spirit or your own growth. Do a monthly review of your journal every 30 days. This might best be done on a half-day retreat where you can prayerfully focus on your thoughts in solitude and silence. As you do this, you will begin to see the accumulated value of the Word, your module work, and your experience in ministry all coming together in ways you had not considered possible. This is integration—weaving together faith development and learning. Integration moves information from your head to your heart so that ministry is a matter of being

rather than doing. Journaling will help you answer the central question of education: "Why do I do what I do when I do it?"

Journaling really is the linchpin in ministerial preparation. Your journal is the chronicle of your journey into spiritual maturity as well as content mastery. These volumes will hold the rich insights that will pull your education together. A journal is the tool for integration. May you treasure the journaling process!

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Unit 1: The Nature of Ethical Reflection

Lesson 1: Defining Ethics

Due This Lesson

None

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- define ethics
- identify the major streams of moral reflection
- link faith to ethical reflection
- define the relationship between “what is real,” “how we know,” and “how I should act”
- identify the relationship and difference between philosophical and theological ethics

Homework Assignments

Write a 2- to 3-page essay in which you define ethics and reflect on what might make such reflection difficult.

Make a journal entry that locates and discusses at least five scriptural passages that might inform ethical reflection.

A Basic Definition of Philosophy

Ethics is one of the “practices” of philosophy and theology.

A simple definition of philosophy is the search for wisdom.

- Socrates, the father of Western philosophy, once said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.”
- Philosophy reaches to every aspect of life.
- Philosophy is about everything.
- Philosophy is an activity of reason.

The Basic Streams of Western Philosophy and How They Are Connected

The basic streams of Western philosophy are:

- Metaphysics
- Epistemology
- Ethics

Metaphysics is sometimes called “first philosophy” because it asks the most basic philosophical question: “what is real?”

Epistemology concerns how we know anything.

Traditionally, it has been understood that knowledge comes by experience or by reason. Regarding experience knowledge comes by the seeing, hearing, touching, etc.

- The root word of “epistemology” is the same word translated in the New Testament as faith.
- Epistemology is how we test what we think is real.

Ethics is the most practical stream of philosophy. A simple definition of ethics is “a disciplined reflection on the formation of a healthy character and its relationship to virtuous action.” A basic question for ethics is “What ought I to do?”

- The first ethical question is never what should I do, but what is God like?

Two Basic Streams of Ethics

Deontological ethics is the type of moral reflection characterized by deciding what is right by use of reason unaffected by circumstances. Therefore, there is no interest in consequences of actions. There is a certain form of ethical action that renders it virtuous. Immanuel Kant is a good example of this kind of ethical theory.

Teleological ethics is the type of moral reflection characterized by happiness or the embodying of character. Here the end is crucial to the moral life. Aristotle is the first example of this in Western philosophy.

- The moral act establishes a person.

A Basic Description of How Philosophical and Theological Ethics Are Related

The relationship between philosophical and theological ethics enjoys a long history. Augustine depends upon Platonism/Neo-Platonism.

- Platonism locates the form of the good in an eternal category.
- Neo-Platonism is a late Greek philosophy; important feature here is that goodness becomes evil by being emptied or deprived of the good.

What philosophical and theological ethics share:

- the use of reason
- a concern for virtue
- dependence upon a metaphysic
- either a deontological or teleological orientation

What makes philosophical and theological ethics different:

- theological ethics presupposes revelation and philosophical ethics does not
- philosophical ethics assumes the cardinal virtues—wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance—but theological ethics completes them with the virtues of faith, hope, and love
- philosophical ethics searches for an appropriate orientation while theological ethics finds its natural orientation in Scripture; for a Wesleyan this is expanded to include tradition, reason, and experience
- philosophical ethics is interminable, it has no place finally to arbitrate its perception of virtue, while theological ethics can finally come to rest in a life of faith-lived-in-community

The Moral Imagination

Thomas McCollough in *The Moral Imagination* characterizes the moral imagination in the following way:

- Capacity to empathize
- Discerning of creative possibilities for ethical actions
- Ability to see in light of the whole
- Leaning toward a hopeful future
- Broadens and deepens the context of decision-making

Lesson 2: Major Challenges to Ethical Reflection

Due This Lesson

Essay
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- define some of the major issues that make ethical reflection difficult
- understand the problem presented by egoism
- understand the problem with relativism
- understand the problem with determinism
- define the importance of the distinction between sympathy and morality
- understand the relationship between morality and religion

Homework Assignments

Read a newspaper and find a story that reflects either a disregard for moral implications, lazy sympathy, or bad morality. Write a short 2- to 3-page essay that points to these problems.

Make a journal entry that reflects upon the Closing Thought.

Closing Thought

"As Christians we will speak more truthfully to our society and be of greater service by refusing to continue the illusion that the larger social order knows what it is talking about when it calls for justice."¹

Challenges to Moral Decision-Making

Egoism

- attempts to frame every decision in light of personal benefit

Relativism/Pluralism

- attempts to level all moral distinctions by suggesting nothing is more true than anything else
- the intellectual conviction that multiple and equal centers of value exist

Determinism

- suggests all human choices are affected by outside forces in some fashion
- The extreme form of this is called “hard determinism,” which holds that all human freedom is an illusion.
- “Soft determinism”—our choices are affected, but not compelled.

Sympathy

- as a moral concern is the more or less emotional reaction to a circumstance with little or no interest in moral reasoning

Bad Morality

- is the inappropriate moral reflection that justifies a vice in the name of a virtue
- Bad morality arises out of need to be correct and refuses to be critiqued.

Religion and Morality

- Does morality have anything to do with religion? Can a religious person not be moral? Must a moral person be religious?

Lesson 3: Old Testament Perspectives on Ethics

Due This Lesson

Essay
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- define and apply the major themes of the Old Testament to moral reflection
- understand the particular importance of covenant for moral reflection
- understand the prophetic voice in the Old Testament for morality
- understand the practical wisdom of the Old Testament for morality

Homework Assignments

Write a 2-or 3-page essay on the moral implications of the following passage of scripture. Be sure to define the theological issues as well as the moral implications of the passage. Look at Jeremiah 15:1-8.

Make a journal entry reflecting your interaction with the content of this lesson. Reflect on the "Thought for Consideration."

Thought for Consideration

A conviction is a belief that endures and defines a particular person or community. Further a conviction, because it endures, will not be surrendered easily and when it is, a significant change emerges.

God Creates

The point is simply this—“whatever *is*, depends upon God.” This implies at the very least that evil is a “rootless” fact that pales in comparison to God’s “good” creation.

Several **theological** implications arise from Genesis 1 and 2:

- there would be nothing if God had not created
- God intends creation to be orderly
- material things like water, earth, and bodies are good
- human beings enjoy a special status and a special responsibility in and to creation
- human beings, as creatures made in the image of God, are made for communion

Several **moral** implications arise from the creation story:

- whatever is moral must find its origin in God
- human beings are to be stewards of creation—be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion (1:28)
- whatever it means to be a human being, it is not possible to be so apart from communion with the Creator
- male and female are co-human in that God made human beings for each other (1:27)

God Makes Promises

The Old Testament depicts a God who makes and keeps promises to His people.

- Genesis 6—Noah
- Joel 2:28-3:2—return of the Southern Kingdom to Jerusalem

Several **theological** implications arise from the conviction that God makes promises:

- the love of God always informs His judgment
- God seeks to redeem the world
- God's actions are always purposeful
- God will always be faithful to His nature

Several **moral** implications arise from the conviction that God makes promises:

- purpose always conditions principles
- it is possible to live the life defined in the promise
- there is always hope in life because God is always present in life
- the nature of a God who makes promises informs the shape and expression of godly character in human beings

God Delivers

One of the crucial, turning-point events in the Old Testament is the exodus. It depicts a God who delivers His people.

Several **theological** implications arise from the conviction that God delivers:

- evil is never more powerful than righteousness
- the power of God is sufficient to sustain His people during times of difficulty
- God is active in history and in the lives of His people and His nation
- God seeks to redeem

Several **moral** implications arise from the conviction that God delivers:

- God will lead His people
- God provides resources for morality
- God's people are to be defined by His nature and not the cultural surrounding
- it is the appropriate worship of God that morality and character are properly resourced

God Seeks a Relationship

There is no doubt that the one single and most important theme in the Old Testament is covenant.

- God makes a covenant with Noah (Gen 8:21-22) promising never to destroy the earth as He did in the time of Noah.
- He makes a covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:1-14) promising him a multitude of nations.
- No doubt the central covenant of the Old Testament is made to Moses after the exodus (Ex 20:1-21) promising to bless Israel if they obey.

Several **theological** implications arise from the conviction that God seeks a relationship:

- God's love always reaches to creation
- God chooses to make room for us in His life
- God's relationship with creation is defined as holy love
- God's relationship to creation establishes our capacity to exist

Several **moral** implications arise from the conviction that God seeks a relationship:

- our relationship to God defines our relationship to each other
- morality is not about what we must do, but what we come to do naturally
- any distinction between spirituality and morality is false
- the moral act establishes us as participants in covenantal fidelity

God Requires Obedience

The Old Testament teaches that God calls His people to a standard of holy behavior that makes them a peculiar people.

- Leviticus 18-19
- Deuteronomy 6:17-18
- Proverbs

Several **theological** implications arise from the conviction that God requires obedience:

- the love of God is not permissive but redemptive
- God seeks a relationship with humankind that finally reflects the sanctity of His presence
- God seeks an active relationship, one that is responsive
- God has a will for His creatures

Several **moral** implications arise from the conviction that God requires obedience:

- God is interested in the details of human life, things like honesty, sexual purity, and the treatment of parents
- the moral life is really an outgrowth of a relationship with God
- faith must be embodied

Small Groups

Review Amos for its intertwining of theological and moral implications.

Look particularly at:

Amos 3

Amos 4:1-3

Amos 6:4-8

Amos 7:7-9

Amos 9:11-15

What conclusions do you draw from Amos concerning the prophetic voice?

Lesson 4: New Testament Perspectives on Ethics

Due This Lesson

Essay
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- define and apply the major themes and their moral implications of the New Testament
- define the major theological themes of the New Testament as indicative of the resources for moral reflection
- understand the moral implications of discipleship
- understand the moral implications of the Sermon on the Mount
- understand the distinction and relationship between law and grace
- understand the major themes of Christian behavior

Homework Assignments

This lesson is the end of the first unit in this module. Write a 3- to 4-page essay that pulls the major insights of these lessons. Make sure to connect metaphysics with the process of ethical reflection.

Make a journal entry reflecting on the use of the New Testament in moral reflection.

Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount is true to the basic theological perspective of the New Testament in that along with the theology the moral implications are equally indicated.

- “You are the salt of the earth”—a disciple of Christ is to affect the world positively where he or she lives.
- Be light for the world—“so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven”

The ethic of the kingdom of heaven fulfills the law by being a vehicle of grace.

- First, Jesus shows that murder is linked to hatred.
- Second, Jesus indicates that adultery is more than a physical act.
- Third, Jesus suggests that divorce is an accommodation to a “hard-hearted generation.”
- Fourth, Jesus directs that the law of proportionate vengeance must give way to forgiveness.
- Finally, Jesus spells out an ethic of love for neighbor and enemy alike.

Jesus wants His disciples to understand that any attempt to separate morality (behavior) from faith (thoughts), is a failed project; love defines the ethic Jesus sets forth in the Sermon on the Mount.

Chapter 6

The point Jesus seems to be making is precisely that only hypocrites convince themselves the inner and the outer can be separated. Rather it is from the heart transformed by the grace of God that morality emerges.

Chapter 7

This closing chapter of the Sermon on the Mount clearly indicates the ethic proposed by Jesus is not intended to be easy, but rather calls for daily obedience.

Discipleship

The comprehensive nature of the Sermon on the Mount can in some measure be understood in the gospel conception of discipleship. Luke 14:25-34 indicates a measure of the meaning of discipleship:

- putting nothing before Christ, not even father, mother, wife, or children
- carrying the cross
- giving up of all possessions

While love is the key to understanding a New Testament ethic it is important to assign a Christian content to love. This means above all that love must embrace a moral life.

Grace/Love

The grace of God results in walking, which is a metaphor for morality. 1 John 4:11-12 also indicates that love should result in action, "Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us." The writer adds to this, "For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments" (1 John 5:3a).

The most basic category for New Testament ethics is love: one that reaches to human life and from human life to the world. This represents a merging of the inner and the outer in a life of discipleship.

Law

The major conclusion regarding the law is that it has the holy purpose of pointing to sin, but it lacks power to deliver. The law also exhibits the tendency to link with human weakness by wrapping itself in the merely external.

Two tendencies continually present themselves to theological ethics.

- The first is to raise the standard of righteousness to the expense of all grace.
- The second is to push grace to the extent that all understanding of righteousness is lost.

A New Testament ethic requires grace and law balanced by a continued attendance to the means of grace and grace-saturated accountability.

Small Groups

In your group examine the moral behavior indicated in your assigned chapter of Ephesians.

You will have approximately 5 to 7 minutes to study your chapter and then each group will give a 3-minute report of the critical emphasis of the chapter.

Chapter 4 includes the following indications of moral virtue:

- maintain unity in the Spirit (v 3)
- speak the truth in love (v 15)
- do not live like the Gentiles (v 17)
- avoid hardness of heart (v 18)
- avoid licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity (v 19)
- put away corrupt and deluded lusts (v 22)
- clothe yourself with the new self (v 24)
- put away falsehood (v 25)
- speak the truth in love (v 25)
- do not sin (v 26)
- share with the needy (v 28)
- no evil talk (v 29)
- put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, wrangling, slander, malice (v 31)
- be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving (v 32)

Chapter 5 includes the following indications of moral virtue:

- imitate God (v 1)
- live in love (v 2)
- do not even mention fornication and impurity or greed (v 3)
- avoid obscene, silly, and vulgar talk (v 4)
- no fornication or impurity or greed or idolatry (v 5)
- the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true (v 9)
- take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness (v 11)
- be careful how you live (v 15)
- do not get drunk with wine (v 18)
- sing psalms and hymns (v 19)
- give thanks to God the Father (v 20)
- be subject to one another (v 21)
- wives, be subject to your husband (v 22)
- husbands, love your wife (v 25)
- husbands, love your wife as yourself, and a wife should respect her husband

Chapter 6 includes the following indications of moral virtue:

- children, obey your parents (v 1)
- fathers, do not provoke your children but bring them up in discipline and instruction (v 4)
- slaves, obey your earthly masters (v 5)
- masters, do not threaten your slaves (v 9)
- be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power (v 10)
- put on the whole armor of God (v 11)
- fasten the belt of truth (v 14)
- put on the breastplate of righteousness (v 14)
- take the shield of faith (v 16)
- helmet of salvation (v 17)
- pray in the Spirit (v 18)

Christian Behavior

There are several places in the New Testament where specific behavior is spelled out:

- Let love be genuine and hold fast to what is good (Rom 12:9)
- Love one another with mutual affection (Rom 12:10)
- Outdo one another in showing honor (Rom 12:10)
- Do not lag in zeal (Rom 12:11)
- Contribute to the needs of the saints (Rom 12:13)
- Live according to the Spirit (Rom 8:5)
- Present your bodies as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1)
- Do not love the world (1 Jn 1:15)
- Live by the Spirit (Gal 5:16)
- Avoid the works of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21)
- Embrace the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-26)

Ethics Observations

Frank Matera summarizes New Testament ethics in *New Testament Ethics*² with the following observations:

- The moral life of believers is a response to God's work of salvation.
- Believers live the moral life in light of God's coming salvation and judgment.
- The moral life is lived in and with a community of disciples who form the church.
- The personal example of Jesus and Paul instructs and sustains believers in the moral life.
- The moral life consists in doing God's will.
- The moral life expresses itself in love for God, love of neighbor, and love for one's enemy.
- The moral life is an expression of faith.

Unit 2: Philosophical Ethics

Lesson 5: Utilitarianism

Due This Lesson

Essay
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- define utilitarianism
- define the three major types of utilitarianism
- apply the principles of utilitarianism to conflicts of duty
- understand the limitations of utilitarianism

Homework Assignments

Write a 2- to 3-page essay on limitations of utilitarianism, offering at least one specific example from current events to illustrate your argument.

Read and respond to Resource 5-8.

Make a journal entry regarding your engagement with utilitarianism.

Definition

The entire theory is based upon the “greatest happiness” principle. It is the attempt to define everything in terms of utility. The attempt is to discover some calculus or process of “moral” arithmetic by means of which uniform results will arise.

Utilitarianism became influential with the work of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), who defined utility in terms of pleasure and pain.

- This position is known as hedonistic or quantitative utilitarianism.
- Sometimes this is called pig’s philosophy.

John Stuart Mill (1806-73) sought to revise the emphasis on sensual pleasure.

- emphasized happiness instead of pleasure
- called eudaemonistic/qualitative utilitarianism

Happiness/Pleasure

Happiness/pleasure can be characterized in the following way:

- **Intensity:** pleasure/happiness should be as strong as possible
- **Duration:** pleasure/happiness that lasts longer is generally better
- **Certainty:** pleasure/happiness we are certain to enjoy is better
- **Remoteness:** pleasure/happiness that can be enjoyed immediately is better
- **Fruitfulness:** the likelihood the pleasure/happiness will be followed by similar pleasures
- **Purity:** the likelihood of the pleasure/happiness not being followed by their opposite
- **Extent:** the number to whom the pleasure/happiness extends

Utilitarianism is a teleological moral theory. That is, it assesses the morality of any action in light of its capacity to engender the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people.

The Various Interpretations of Utility

Hedonistic utilitarianism emphasizes pleasure. It is also called quantitative utilitarianism.

Eudaemonistic utilitarianism emphasizes happiness. It is also called qualitative utilitarianism.

Ideal utilitarianism emphasizes the ideal of justice and freedom.

Types of Utilitarianism

Act Utilitarianism

- Appeals directly to the principle of utility
- The crucial question becomes, What effect will my action have on the capacity for the greatest number to have pleasure/happiness?

General Utilitarianism

- Less concerned with action than defining the general parameters for morality.
- Crucial question becomes, What would happen if everyone were to do the such and such in a particular situation?

Rule Utilitarianism

- Emphasizes the centrality of rules in morality.
- Which rules will promote the greatest general good for everyone?

Things That Commend Utilitarianism

- The concern for the whole makes a great deal of sense; any sacrifice a person may make can be justified in light of the larger good produced by it.
- This way of looking at things offers general rules. Since there appears to be an inherent good at stake in the greatest happiness principle, it is possible for this logic to guide our actions without prescribing them.
- Since utilitarianism is a teleological view, it requires the active engagement of morally sensitive people in order to provide a sufficient basis for moral reflection.

Things That Suggest the Limitations of Utilitarianism

- Happiness can be an elusive moral quality; happiness can become an end unto itself and in fact, it tends to lend itself to such excess. Happiness, as it is usually interpreted by its proponents, is limited in its capacity to provide direction for moral reflection.
- Greatest happiness is difficult if not impossible to calculate. It appears that greatest happiness, even when it is qualified by intensity, duration, certainty, etc., is nearly meaningless as a vehicle for moral decision-making.
- The leveling of all moral claims cannot be finally sustained. The leveling of moral claims when attached to the greatest happiness principle will lead either to the complete breakdown of moral reflection or to an inordinate sacrifice by some group.

Small Groups

In your group read and discuss the way in which Rawls employs utilitarianism. You might consider how the greatest happiness principle is employed. You might also ask if the particular utilitarianism is quantitative, qualitative, or ideal. You might want to think of ways in which a "social contract" compares and can be contrasted with a covenantal understanding.

John Rawls who wrote *A Theory of Justice* was a major philosopher of the 20th century. This book made a significant contribution to political philosophy. Part of his theory employs utilitarianism. Rawls' theory is a version of what is called the "Social Contract Theory." It asks us to imagine a fictional time, which he calls the original position, in which all members of the society participate in choosing the principles according to how their society will be governed. To guard against unfair advantage, they choose these principles under what he calls the veil of ignorance. No one knows to which race, gender, or socioeconomic class he or she will belong. They don't know whether they will be tall or short, fat or skinny, or even the generation into which they will be born. Since no one knows what their fate in the natural lottery might be, Rawls believes they would establish principles to maximize their position if perchance they should end up on the short end of the stick.

Two principles are an important part of Rawls' theory:

- Principle of equal basic liberty for all, which guarantees everyone the same fundamental rights and freedoms.
- Difference principle talks about social and economic inequalities as being just only if they benefit all members of the society, especially the least advantaged.

INTRODUCTION TO A SET OF CASE STUDIES

Rev. Roger Nupastor is a district licensed minister in the Church of the Nazarene. He is 26 years of age, married to Melissa, and they have one child, Lisa. Melissa is pregnant with their second child.

In his first charge, Roger was appointed pastor of Small Church of the Nazarene located in the suburbs of Majorcity. He has been in the ministry just six months and as part of his pastoral development plan is already involved with the Ministerial Course of Study for the Church of the Nazarene.

Academically, both he and Melissa have completed a two-year course at Majorcity Junior College, he in business and she in general studies. Roger has supported his young family as a new car salesman. Religiously, since teenage years, they have attended the First Church of the Nazarene in Majorcity, Anystate, USA. It was at First Church that he and Melissa felt the call to pastoral ministry following their conversion two years ago, under the pastoral guidance of Rev. Brian Oldtimer.

Because of their close association, the District Board of Ministry assigned Rev. Brian Oldtimer to mentor the young couple, and both acknowledge the relationship has been helpful. The friendship with a mature and caring pastor is important to Roger and Melissa, both professionally and personally.

Roger is focused on continuing his education, in preparation for ordination. Brian, a master teacher, is presently the instructor for the district course "Living Ethical Lives" that is part of the clergy education program provided by Clergy Development Department of the Church of the Nazarene from their offices in Kansas City, Missouri. Roger is enrolled in the class.

The class is discussing a variety of ethical issues, and the conversation often spills over into extended talks with fellow ministers on Roger's zone. Roger, the class, and Rev. Oldtimer—his mentor and district instructor—are interacting with questions faced by both inexperienced and experienced pastors in the field.

The case study stories represent certain issues Rev. Roger Nupastor brought to the class discussion; some may require extended conversation with his mentor, Rev. Brian Oldtimer, or other district colleagues. Roger acknowledges that certain issues are more personal in nature while others have to do with members of his congregation and his ministry to the community. At times, it is not clear whose ethical issue is under discussion; perhaps the issues belong to all.

As you interact with the issues, what approaches would you recommend to Nupastor? How have your experiences been different?

Welcome to the practical study of "Living Ethical Lives." You may want to share your own "stories." Each of us is responsible for "Living Ethical Lives." Learning and helping others in ethical living is part of the pastoral call.

Case Study 1: Ethics Related to Church and Community Weddings

It seems Rev. Nupastor has become a favorite within the community, especially with the young people. Only a few of them are attending his church; most are members of other community churches and other denominations.

The ethical quandary that has surfaced has to do with a pending marriage.

1. Roger has been asked to officiate at a coming wedding to be held in another denominational sanctuary.
2. A secondary issue has arisen between the bride and the bridegroom, uncovered in a recent counseling session with Roger. Both bride and bridegroom have participated in certain sexual behaviors which could affect the health of the other.
3. The bridegroom has adamantly refused to take an STD (sexually transmitted disease) or HIV exam.

What are the ethical procedures facing Rev. Nupastor? What steps should Roger initiate before accepting the option to participate in a wedding at any other church? What do you see as the ethical protocol for counseling members of other congregations? Officiating at weddings for persons not of your congregation?

Lesson 6: Natural Rights

Due This Lesson

Essay
Case study response
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- define the principles of natural rights
 - apply the principles of natural rights
 - understand the limitations of natural rights

Homework Assignments

Write a 2- or 3-page analysis of 1 Corinthians 4 and use it to critique the logic of moral rights.

Read Resource 6-8.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with this lesson.

Rights

When we talk about rights, we must understand that two parties are present:

- rights holders—gives permission, obligates others
- rights observers—refuses to interfere, limits the claims

The first are those who have the rights. The second are those who are called to recognize or honor these rights.

To say that I have a right is to say I have permission to act or I have an entitlement to act, to enjoy, or to demand.

It is also true that to have a right is to have a certain responsibility.

Ways to Think of Rights

Negative Rights: Life, liberty, property, pursuit of happiness

- These rights place an obligation on the rights holder—avoid interfering with life, with expressions of liberty, with holding property, and with pursuing happiness.

Positive Rights: Basic subsistence, basic health care

- These rights place an obligation toward the rights holders to provide minimal subsistence needs of food, shelter, and clothing, provide basic health care.

Absolute Rights: Strongest kind of right

- These rights cannot be overridden by other considerations—sometimes these rights are called “trump cards.”

Prima Facie Rights: At first glance it appears to be the case—a real right, but there is a question as to whether it applies in this particular case.

- It is also called a presumptive right, one that we initially presume to be relevant, but it is subject to further scrutiny.

Justification of Natural Rights

Natural rights are those belonging to people simply by virtue of their nature.

Four main approaches to justifying rights:

- Self-evidence
- Divine foundation
- Natural law
- Human nature

Arguments That Appeal to Human Nature

- Establish that some characteristic of human nature, such as the ability to make free choices, is a rights-conferring property, a property that is: essential to human life, either morally good or morally neutral
- Establish that certain empirical conditions, such as the absence of physical constraints, are necessary for the existence or the exercise of that characteristic.
- Conclude that people have a right to those empirical conditions.
- These establish the right, but there is also the need to establish the obligation.
- Conclude that people have a duty not to interfere with the pursuit of those empirical conditions.
- The final step in arguments for positive rights is to conclude that people—state, society, or some other specified party—have a duty to provide those empirical conditions.

Things That Commend Natural Rights

Natural rights establish the essential dignity of human beings.

Natural rights are rational and translatable.

Natural rights lead to fixed moral principles.

Limitations of Natural Rights

- Natural rights tend to diminish the Christian understanding of gift. The logic of natural rights leans toward entitlement, but the logic of the Christian faith is gift.
- Reason cannot establish the moral claims of natural rights. The centrality of reason for natural rights is clear. It is by the resources of reason that moral claims are grounded in defensible categories.

Moral decisions are much more than rational.

Søren Kierkegaard, a 19th-century philosopher, makes it clear that only faith can take us to the place where the most difficult decisions can be made.

Neither faith nor emotion is allowed by the rationality of natural rights. Since natural rights do not allow for either, then it is limited in its capacity to establish its moral claims.

- Natural rights are insufficient by themselves to engender a moral life.

Natural rights envision a world where the rights of others can be established, respected, and embodied in the normal course of life. Yet, when one realistically reflects on this vision, it is difficult to find these values actually lived out.

- Natural rights too easily become detached from the narratives that sustain them.

Rules, no matter how clear or how loudly demanded, can be ineffective unless the totality of a story calls us to action. Rights established by reason cannot finally be meaningful apart from a particular narrative.

Ethics of Hobbes

Hobbes—in *Leviathan*—proposes two concepts that are significant for our consideration.

- First, he proposes the “Right of nature” is the freedom for self-preservation: passion. Human nature is most foundationally defined as the search for freedom and the desire to survive. The problem is that these two “rights” come into conflict with each other. This leads to the need for another principle.
- Second, Hobbes proposes the “Law of nature” as a precept or general rule, found out by reason, by which a person is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his or her life: reason.

For Hobbes reason is necessary to counter our passion. Therefore, our right to freedom is countered by our right rationally to impose a rule or law that establishes the maximum amount of freedom. He calls this the social contract enforced by a civil authority.

Kant

Prior to Kant two different schools of modern philosophy were juxtaposed to one another. First, the philosophy of Rene Descartes (continental rationalism) thought reason was the best and perhaps only source of knowledge. In fact, Descartes disregarded everything that experience, common sense, and tradition taught. Second, David Hume (empiricism) thought only experience was a reliable source of knowledge. Hume distrusted reason because it was capable of concluding things experience would reject. He even resisted ideas because they represented faded, less vital reflections of experience.

Kant saw truth in both of these because he felt experience was vital to any real understanding, but he rejected the deprecation of reason in empiricism. Therefore, he concluded that even simple experience was dependent upon the rational constructs of space and time. While no one can experience either space or time, all experience takes place in time and space. Kant concluded that the mind and thus reason structures experience by using rational categories. This is the way in which Kant makes a significant contribution by combining rationalism and empiricism. This is suggestive of his contribution to moral reflection.

Lesson 7: Kantianism

Due This Lesson

Essay
Reading
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- define the principles of Kantianism
 - apply the principles of Kantianism
 - understand the limitations of Kantianism

Homework Assignments

Write a 2- to 3-page essay on the Ten Commandments. Express these commandments in the form of universals.

Make a journal entry that reflects an interaction with the material of the lesson.

Kant

Ethics, like physics, is partly empirical and partly deductive. Ethics according to Kant must first and most importantly be based on pure reason without recourse to experience.

A primary source for his ethical theory is *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). It is comprised of a critical examination of purely practical reason and establishes the supreme principle of morality. The order of inquiry is from common moral knowledge to the supreme principle—analysis, then back to application in practice—synthesis.

Three Theorems of Kantian Ethics

- When practical principles presuppose a material object as a determining foundation for the will, they are empirical and as such cannot formulate moral law.
- Any practical principle is at the same time to be understood under the general principle of self-love or one's own happiness.
- If a rational being can think of his or her maxims as practical universal laws, he or she can do so only by considering them as principles that contain the determining grounds of the will because of their form and not because of their matter.

Goodwill

The *goodwill* should be understood as *rational will* and action is focused from the beginning on the will—motive. The goodwill's motive is to do its duty for the sake of doing its duty. Whatever it intends, it does so because of its duty.

The goodwill, which is the rational will, acts not merely in accordance with duty but from duty.

- nothing is good without qualification, except the goodwill
- it is good not because of its ability to attain
- not effect, but in conception
- importance of pure reason

A central idea in Kant's work is that the moral worth of action performed from duty lies not in its purpose but in the maxim—rule, principle—by which it is determined.

The goodwill wills as obedient to the moral law—this leads to the conception of duty. Duty consists in observing the categorical imperative.

Three Forms of the Categorical Imperative

First Form: Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become universal law.

Second Form: Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or that of another, always as an end and never as a means only.

Third Form: Act always as if you were legislating for a universal realm of ends.

Hypothetical and Categorical Imperatives

Hypothetical imperatives are expressed as practically necessary for possible action as contributing to something else. This type of imperative envisions an end. It is an object of practical reason.

Categorical imperatives are expressed as necessary without reference to an end. It is an object of pure reason.

Things that Commend Kantianism

- Kantianism resists being controlled by the situation. Ethics can too easily become reactionary.
- Kantianism does not attempt to offer support to cultural mores.
- Kantianism places responsibility for moral decision-making on the individual. Kantianism requires personal engagement in moral decision-making.

Limitation of Kantianism

- Kantianism becomes abstract too easily; morality requires a narrative or a history in order to be understood.
- Kantianism depends upon reason only. The point to be understood concerns the idea that reason is most useful as a vehicle of the will to embody virtue.
- Kantianism is closed to new insight; moral reflection is dependent upon new insight in order to proceed.

Small Groups

In your group read the following and discuss the questions.

Immanuel Kant talks about sexual impulse in a famous lecture. The essential points he raises are:

- Human beings have many inclinations, one of these is sexual.
- The sexual impulse is primarily to enjoy the flesh of another.
- While human beings can use others for many purposes it is only in the sexual impulse that another can be made into an object of indulgence.
- When another is made into an object of indulgence there is little concern for the general happiness of that person.
- The sexual impulse can lead to using another for no other reason than satisfaction of desire.
- When a man and a woman come together according to the sexual impulse they satisfy desire and not human nature, therefore it is immoral.
- Uses of sexuality that are immoral are: masturbation, homosexuality, and certain sexual acts between men and women, i.e., sodomy.
- While the sexual impulse is immoral it is possible for sexual love to be moral when sexual expression is more than the satisfaction of desire.

This argument provides a clear picture of how deontological argument works. Reflect on the basic steps of Kant's argument.

What types of sexual expression does this argument allow, if any?

What types of sexual expression does this argument call immoral, if any? Be sure to state the essential Kantian principle.

Lesson 8: Virtue Ethics

Due This Lesson

Essay
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- define virtue ethics
 - apply virtue ethics
 - understand the limitations of virtue ethics

Homework Assignments

Write a 2- to 3-page essay on a suggested curriculum of virtues for a specific age-group. This should just be a full outline at this point.

Read and respond to Resource 8-8.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this lesson.

Aristotle

Aristotle (385-322 BC) is one of the best examples of a virtue ethicist. He is one of the greatest philosophers of the West. He has significantly influenced Christian thought, especially through Thomas Aquinas. He was a student of Plato's, but he charted another course.

His primary interest, as was Plato's, was to reaffirm the existence of a public and knowable reality and to answer the question—"What is the good life for man?"

Aristotle's ethical theory is a good example of teleological ethics. It is understood as a practical discipline associated with action.

Aristotle talks about three kinds of life:

1. Enjoyment
2. Statesman
3. Contemplation

The three kinds of life are shaped by three levels of activity.

- The first is unreflective and its virtues diminish quickly.
- The second reflects an action for the other and it is a more mature way to live.
- The third life is the most mature in that it is given to the one activity that will last for a lifetime.

Aristotle's Ethics

Nicomachean ethics is the best source for understanding Aristotle's ethics. He argues that the first principle of ethics is the conception of the good. One defines the good by the end toward which it aims. Aristotle employs reason, balance, and contemplation in order to comprehend moral reflection. All action aims at some good.

Politics is the master science of human good for Aristotle. Happiness is the first principle of politics. This recognizes the basic role of association/friendship in the life of virtue.

The nature of happiness, for Aristotle, is the person who exercises his or her reason and cultivates it, and has it in the best condition; They seem also to be the most beloved of heaven.

Virtue is both intellectual and moral for Aristotle. Intellectual virtue is fostered by teaching, and it demands experience and time. Moral virtue is the outcome of habit.

Practice/Habit

According to MacIntyre³ a practice:

- Is coherent
- Is complex
- Is socially established
- Embodies internal goods
- Is informed by standards of excellence
- Enhances the human powers to achieve excellence
- Provides a pathway toward the extending human excellence

Virtue as a Mean

Virtue exists for Aristotle as a mean between two vices: deficit and excess. In other words, a virtue/mean is neither too little nor too much.

Activity	Vice	Virtue/Mean	Vice
Facing Death	Cowardice	Courage	Foolhardiness
Bodily Actions	Profligacy	Temperance	Insensitivity
Giving Money	Prodigality	Liberality	Illiberality
Claiming Honors	Vanity	Pride	Humility
Social Contact	Obsequiousness	Friendliness	Sulkiness

Aristotle's ethical theory is both teleological and virtue oriented. It has provided a way to think about character, virtue, good habits, and happiness for generations.

Virtue ethics asks a simple question: "What kind of person should I be?" This character can be envisioned in narratives or in principles, but it comes to rest in persons. Therefore, a virtue is an acquired human excellence.

Things That Commend Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics are embedded in tradition, history, and narrative. The virtues espoused by this theory are rendered more meaningful in the light of the history and narratives that surround it.

- Virtue ethics appropriately emphasizes character. Ethics is often understood as the science of choice. Quandaries call ethics to action.

Virtue ethics understands that whatever else we bring to the table in moral reflection we bring a person or an agent. No amount of principles or rules will be sufficient if the agent does not bring a mature character to the situation.

Good character is the habituated life of a person whose life has been and is being shaped by the truth.

- Virtue ethics recognizes the importance of practical rationality.

Virtue ethics clearly accentuates reason, but it understands better than any of the other positions that ethics is a practice of practical rationality.

Limitations of Virtue Ethics

- Virtue ethics can become mere traditionalism. One significant challenge for virtue ethics is to maintain a living faith of the dead (tradition) as opposed to a dead faith of the living (traditionalism).

Virtue ethics must always be willing to allow its virtues to be in conversation with the people involved in moral reflection.

- Virtue ethics can become reactionary. The challenge for ethics, at the point of a mere response to whatever, is the “hot-button” issue that makes it significant.

Virtues must arise out of the essential history, language, tradition, and faith of a people who are intent upon more than telling a story, but are most interested in being the story.

- Virtue ethics, because it is teleological, can easily dismiss the labors of historical wisdom.

The challenge for any virtue ethic is never to allow the labors of historical wisdom to become secondary.

Friendships

Having friends is important for several reasons.

- First, friends offer us objective knowledge of ourselves. They can actually function much like a mirror in our life.
- Second, friends protect us from boredom by calling us toward things we might not otherwise consider. Friends open us to a larger world than we might otherwise be able to see.
- Third, friends call us to live more than a private life. Friends encourage us to be public persons, to reach outward.
- Fourth, it is likely that without friends we will not achieve the virtue necessary to a healthy character. This means friends free us to be good by joining us in that endeavor.

Case Study 2: Employing Ethical Principles in the “Business” of the Church

In the “ethics class” discussion, it was noted that all professions have a code of ethical behavior, that governs the practice and the conduct of individual members. Rev. Oldtimer had introduced a few samples of codes of ethics—some from local businesses and others from textbook examples.

One example was a college code of ethics for a practicum experience. In this field experience, interns are expected to practice a certain code of ethics. Ten statements were offered:

1. The intern should submit himself or herself to the highest standards of professional education, practice, and ethics.
2. The intern will strive to become and remain proficient in professional functions. He or she should act in accordance with the highest standards of professional conduct and integrity. When engaged in study and research, he or she should be guided by the conventions of scholarly inquiry.
3. The intern has an ethical responsibility to clients. He or she should make every effort to foster maximum self-determination on the part of clients. He or she should respect the privacy of clients and hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of professional service.
4. The intern has an ethical responsibility to professional colleagues. He or she should treat colleagues with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith. When the participant is required to relate to the clients of colleagues, he or she will do so with full professional consideration.
5. The intern has responsibility to employers and employing organizations and should adhere to the commitments made to the employing organization.
6. The intern has responsibility to the profession he or she has chosen. He or she should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of that profession.
7. The intern should take responsibility for identifying, developing, and fully utilizing knowledge in professional practice.
8. The intern should promote the general welfare of society, recognizing that every individual is a person of worth, with basic human rights and essential human responsibilities.
9. The intern should understand the uniqueness of each human being and the distinctiveness of social groups derive from factors such as age, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nation origin, religion, life philosophy, family, culture, and economic and social structures.
10. The intern should recognize that human beings are interdependent with each other and with their social and physical environments.

Pastor Oldtimer asked the class to consider items 4 and 6 for discussion. They were asked to apply their comments in terms of their own ministry.

Oldtimer instructed the class by saying, “The ‘pastor’ has an ethical responsibility to professional colleagues, of all denominations. He or she should treat those colleagues with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith. When it is required that the ‘pastor’ relate to the parishioners/clients of colleagues, he or she will do so with full

professional consideration.” Oldtimer offered the following questions to give direction to the discussion:

1. What ethical demeanor and behavior should a Nazarene pastor have toward fellow denominational ministers?
2. Is the professional treatment different for ministers in other denominations? How?
3. What should be the ethical behavior toward community colleagues?
4. What should be the ethical response when invited to join in the conversation where a community pastor is being criticized by the local grocer or other community person? By other community ministers?
5. The “pastor” has responsibility to the profession he or she has chosen and should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of that profession. How do you think Roger dealt with this issue?
6. Which of the other statements seems important to you? Why?

Unit 3: Theological Ethics

Lesson 9: Patristic Ethics

Due This Lesson

Essay—outline
Case study response
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- define the major issues and concerns of moral reflection in the Early Church
- use the resources of moral reflection in the Early Church for contemporary moral problems
- define the ways in which moral reflection in the patristic church inform Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection

Homework Assignments

Write a 2- or 3-page essay of the major insights of patristic ethics and how they might be important for ministry in the Church of the 21st century.

Read Resource 9-11.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement of the material of this lesson.

Patristic Period

The patristic period begins with a struggle on two fronts.

- First, the Early Church needed to define itself in light of the history of Israel. The initial movements in this history can be traced back to the New Testament, but they continue well into the patristic period. Just what does it mean to say that the Church is the new covenant and the sign of the second covenant is baptism? Why does the Christian Church call the Hebrew Bible the Old Testament? What will the Church do with the Law now that grace has been defined by Jesus on a cross?
- The second struggle for the Early Church was to define itself in light of classical culture. At first this takes shape with the attempt to use philosophical categories to express the faith. The philosophy of Plato and its later version in Neo-Platonism were very important in the shape of the Early Church's theology. These two struggles—Judaism and classical culture—helped shape much of the way patristic theology and ethics emerged.

During this period the Church settled the question of the divinity and humanity of Jesus.

Scripture was canonized during the patristic period.

This period of time was crucial defining the liturgy and patterns of worship for the Church.

Clement of Rome

Clement of Rome (ca. AD 96) is a very early theologian in the patristic period; he counsels his readers to define themselves by God. Clement further depicts God as creator and giver; Christians should not be concerned with offending people, rather they should be concerned with offending the God who has gifted them for holiness.

Clement does not employ the language of morality; rather he defines this good behavior as holiness and faithfulness.

Two things are very evident in the moral reflections of Clement.

- First, moral advice grows materially out of theological convictions.
- Second, the language of morality or virtue is defined in such a way that it is clear that whatever life emerges from the gospel is both a gift of God and a response in time by a human creature.

Those within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition know this as holiness in heart and life.

The *Didache*

The *Didache* (early 2nd century AD) is essentially an early attempt to order the faith for purposes of instruction. It contrasts life and death or for our purposes virtue and vice.

The first of the ways defined in the book is called the “way of life,” defined by integrity, honesty, graciousness, and character. It avoids even the appearance of evil; the *Didache* admonishes that those who seek to inherit eternal life should listen to the gospel and then do the gospel.

Another way characterized in the *Didache* is the way of death. Wickedness and blasphemy define this way of being in the world.

This early document from the 2nd century illustrates the importance the early church placed upon morality. They understood that what one believes, if they truly believe it, will serve as a guide to behavior.

Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr (ca AD 155) belongs to that group of Early Church theologians called "apologists;" sought to offer a reasoned defense of the Christian faith to Jews and pagans.

Justin counsels his readers to live as honorable citizens of the empire.

Justin is very critical of an early heretic named Marcion who did not believe God could have created the universe.

Justin is clear in his understanding that evil is not created by God, rather human beings freed to be like God can become evil.

Justin also affirms the Christian responsibility to care for the needy, the widows, and the orphans.

Tertullian

Tertullian (early 3rd century AD) was also an apologist. He is best known for the rhetorical question: "What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?" The answer is absolutely nothing. Tertullian is unrelenting in his call for Christians to live a distinctive life characterized by morality.

Tertullian condemns all forms of vengeance in his writing. He feels the wrath of the mob almost always acts immorally.

Tertullian reflects on the characteristics of Christian society. These characteristics are:

- common Christian profession
- commitment to Christian discipline
- a unique hope in the world to come

Tertullian's moral reflection is very practical. He needs no theory because he has a theology of a holy God.

Clement of Alexandria

Clement of Alexandria's (ca. AD 215) theology reflected philosophical depth and indebtedness to Greek categories of thought. Clement read Scripture and found much that connected with philosophical sensibilities regarding God.

He was particularly impressed with the transcendence of God. This led him to be fairly reserved in making theological claims about God.

Clement also instructed his readers to give attention to the body, so its craving may not be unwisely satisfied. He did not so much deny the importance and role of the material in life as he decried its excess.

The theology and moral reflection of Clement of Alexandria illustrates a continuing tension in the Early Church. The language and thought forms of Greek philosophy led to the necessity of walking a very tight line.

The Early Church struggled to pull together transcendence and immanence, but it always had a Christological language for such an endeavor. The Christian faith is lived in the material world with the spiritual reality as inspiration.

Ambrose

Ambrose (339-397) is best known as the preacher whose sermon convinced Augustine to convert; the familiar tension between the rich and the poor and the condemnation of greed find expression in his theology.

Augustine

Augustine (354-430) is in some sense the last of the patristic period and the first of the medieval period. His theology as well as his moral vision sum up the Early Church and anticipate the medieval church, even extending to the Protestant Reformation.

Augustine had an acute moral sense. Even before he was a Christian he sought to live his life, however unsuccessfully, morally.

It was finally his nuanced doctrine of Christian charity that enabled him to define a Christian morality. Augustine refused to be satisfied with any morality that fell below the pattern set in Jesus Christ.

Augustine's moral philosophy focused on the human will as it is pulled in two directions; human beings love themselves first and last. Yet, human beings were created to love and worship God.

Augustine thought our life can be defined by charity, that is, an ordered love.

What is finally real and therefore good is found in God. Goodness is God-ness for Augustine.

Augustine was fully committed to the idea that human beings are created by God as social beings. This places him firmly in the classical tradition of political philosophy.

The greatest achievement of Augustine's thought is the *City of God*. He sets forth a comprehensive treatment of the Christian faith in this book.

The Importance of Patristic Ethics for Wesleyan-Holiness Theology

First, the patristic theology gives us a picture of the most significant issues that faced the generation that followed the New Testament.

Second, reading the Early Church fathers will help to define such central theological and moral convictions as eternal and temporal, infinite and finite, material and spiritual in the attempt to distinguish classical Greek culture from the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith.

Third, reading the Early Church fathers will remind those in the contemporary church to refuse a merely intellectual faith; the message of heart holiness is one of integrity of thought and life. This is what the Early Church understood, and it is what the contemporary church cannot afford to forget.

City of God

Augustine was the first systematic theologian of the Christian Church. The *City of God* is a masterpiece of Christian thought in that it attempts to treat the Christian faith comprehensively. The *City of God* is at one level an early statement of the Christian faith, but at another level it is the affirmation that two realities—City of Man and City of God—define life.

Augustine sought to defend the Church from the charge that it had so destabilized the Roman Empire that it actually contributed to its fall. He argues that the City of Man will always pass, because it latches on to what cannot last. It is fixed on the “earthly” and upon self-love/self-interest. The City of Man exhibits a disordered love. There is a sense in which the City of Man is built of sand and cannot last in the face of the pressures of history.

The City of God is just the opposite. It is founded on a love ordered by God and a love of the eternal. The City of God will survive the twists and turns of history because it is fixed upon what will finally last. The *City of God* stands as a clear statement of what God calls the faithful to be in all periods of history.

Thomas Aquinas

A story form G.K. Chesterton's *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Dumb Ox*

Among the students thronging into the lecture rooms there was one student, conspicuous by his tall and bulky figure, and completely failing by refusing to be conspicuous for anything else. He was so dumb in the debates that his fellows began to call him dumb; for he appeared to be rather dull. It is clear that, before long, even his imposing stature began to have only the ignominious immensity of the big boy left behind in the lowest form. He was called the Dumb Ox. He was the object, not merely of mockery, but most of all pity. One good-natured student pitied him so much as to try to help him with his lessons, going over the elements of logic like an alphabet in a horn-book. The dunce thanked him with pathetic politeness; and the philanthropist went on swimmingly, till he came to a passage about which he was himself a little doubtful; about which, in point of fact, he was wrong. Whereupon the dunce, with every appearance of embarrassment and disturbance, pointed out a possible solution which happened to be right. The benevolent student was left staring, at a monster, at this mysterious lump of ignorance and intelligence; and strange whispers began to run around the schools . . . A regular biographer of Thomas Aquinas has said that by the end of this interview "his love of truth overcame his humility" . . . Albert broke silence with his famous cry and prophecy; "You call him Dumb Ox; I tell you this Dumb Ox shall bellow so loud that his bellowings will fill the world." (69-71)

Lesson 10: Medieval Ethics

Due This Lesson

Essay
Reading
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- define the major issues and concerns of moral reflection in the medieval church
- apply the resources of moral reflection in the medieval church to contemporary moral problems
- define the ways in which moral reflection in the medieval church informs Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection

Homework Assignments

Write a 2- or 3-page essay on the relationship between spiritual renewal and moral renewal, using some of the information in this lesson.

Read Resource 10-9. Be prepared to discuss what you have read. Come with questions and your own ideas.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this lesson.

Medieval Period

The medieval period spans roughly 800 years. This period of time can be characterized by two relatively distinct periods.

- First, a time of outward stagnation during which the West collected its scattered forces and painfully revived from the terrible destruction that had occurred with the fall of the Roman Empire.
- Second, a period of real renaissance—12th century—during which cultural, intellectual, and religious advance took place.

The central philosophical and theological problem of the medieval period was to find a place for “this worldly” ends in a scheme of life that is still “other worldly” in orientation. Thomism is an attempt to solve this dilemma.

Scholasticism is a way of doing theology that emerged during the Middle Ages. In fact, it was the educational tradition of the medieval schools. Scholasticism is an attempt to understand revealed truth rationally.

Universals/Particulars

The universals/particulars debate is very important for understanding the medieval period. The foundational problem can be stated in this manner—apart from revelation humans have but two modes of cognition: perception and reason. Perceptions know particulars and reason knows universal truths.

Several schools of thought contributed to this debate:

- **Extreme realism**—the universal is a thing that exists extra-mentally and prior to sense objects. The realists held that ideas are general concepts or universals that have an existence independent of all things or experiences.
- **Moderate realism**—the intellect is able to abstract from sensible particulars their common natures.
- **Conceptualism**—universals do exist as mere concepts.
- **Nominalism**—universals stand for names, therefore universals have no reality at all. Their reality is simply the sound of the voice.

Extreme realism was associated with Plato, and moderate realism was associated with Aristotle. Conceptualism was not held by any important philosopher or theologian. Nominalism was important because it brought with it a ready-made way to reformulate the universals and associate them with human subjectivity.

Christian humanism has a long tradition arising from the medieval period. This way of seeing the world attempts to maintain the delicate balance between theology and philosophy. This approach appealed to many in the medieval world for it allowed for both:

- maintaining of a philosophy of nature
- building up a theology of super-nature

Rule of Benedict

Rule of Benedict is one of the most important indications of the life that monasticism envisioned. The Benedictine order was one of the most influential monastic communities in the Middle Ages. This order was established by Benedict of Nursia at the very end of the patristic period.

The Rule of Benedict talks about the tools for good works:⁴

- love God with all your heart
- renounce yourself and follow Christ
- a different way of acting than the world
- do not return evil for evil
- avoid pride and too much wine
- place hope in God alone
- live in fear of Judgment Day

The Benedictine community placed a good deal of its moral advice on obedience. This included the acceptance of authority.

Several things can be easily noted regarding the Rule of Benedict.

- First, this rule is defined by the nature of God as it was observed in the life of Christ.
- Second, there is an unmistakable seriousness about this community.
- Third, there is a ready acceptance of authority and a linking of that authority to virtue.
- Fourth, there is an understanding that the moral life is linked to a community that actually empowers the person to be virtuous.
- Fifth, the morality that emerges out of the community is defined by an ability to be compassionate.

Bernard of Clairvaux

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) is an important representative of medieval thought. His moral convictions can be in part defined by the manner in which he talks about love. Bernard talks about four degrees of love:

- when man loves himself for his own sake
- when man loves God for his own good
- when man love God for God's sake
- when man loves himself for the sake of God

The importance of Bernard of Clairvaux can be located in the filling of love with a content that exceeds the emotional interpretations apparent in the modern world.

Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) is a towering figure in the history of the Christian faith. He may be the single most important theologian in the first 1300 years of the Church. Thomas sought to resolve the conflict between reason and revelation: Key problem in the medieval church was how to reconcile “this worldly” ends in light of “other worldly” concerns.

His *Summa Theologica* is a massive intellectual and spiritual achievement. For Thomas, reason is a gift of God and can only be understood in the context of the reality of God. While revelation brings higher truth, reason—as is all knowledge—is a gift of God.

Thomas defined ethics as actions performed by human agents.

Thomas’s method is scholastic in that it is a deliberate asking of questions, raising of objections, and clear answer.

Moral philosophy considers human operations insofar as they are ordered to one another and to the end.

- Being and goodness are not the exact same thing.
- Final or ultimate goodness is only found in God, but as we desire goodness we actually desire God.
- Creatures are left to desire if they are to be good and in this they participate in Being.

A moral act for Thomas is defined as an act willingly and knowingly performed or engaged.

Thomas Aquinas

According to Thomas a virtue makes the one having it good and renders his or her activities good. It ensures a steady love of the good. Thomas proposed that faith, hope, and love are the theological/Christian virtues.

All moral doctrine, if it is to address human agents as they actually are, must come under the guidance of Christian revelation.

He observed that people are naturally inclined to natural law. Thomas made a distinction between speculative reason—deals with necessary things/universal principles; and practical reason—deals with contingent matters.

It is important that anyone who earnestly desires to think and act as a Christian be acquainted with Thomas Aquinas.

- It is important to understand that because he was informed by Aristotle he developed philosophy from a teleological point of view.
- Because Thomas was a medieval theologian he was convinced that reason and revelation are two sides of the grace of God.
- Thomas defined virtue as an acquired human excellence, but did not see human agency as operating apart from the grace of God.

Julian of Norwich

Julian of Norwich (1342-1420) represents the mystical tradition in the late medieval period and how it is connected to moral reflection. She emphasized the creative intention of God and the implication that human beings are to be united with God in life. She defined this relationship in terms of marriage.

Julian's contemplation of the Trinity led her to talk about three properties:

- The fatherhood of God brings protection and bliss for human life.
- The property of motherhood is defined by the Christ who, in knowledge and perfection, connects our sensuality to salvation. Jesus, as the second member of the Trinity, is our mother, brother, and savior.
- The third property defined by the Holy Spirit, the gift and reward of grace, is brought to bear upon human life.

Importance of Medieval Ethics for Wesleyan-Holiness Ethics

Medieval moral reflection will underscore the importance of comprehending grace more broadly. Grace can become so specialized in its definition that it is restricted to justification. While grace is evident in justification, it is also evident in creation and the full purpose of God in the world.

Medieval moral reflection is important in the way it calls attention to the appropriate understanding of authority. Without authority there is no place to make moral decisions.

The medieval period is important because it recognizes the importance of keeping theology and ethics together. Faith becomes action in the medieval period.

Modern Ethics

The Scientific Revolution began when people like Copernicus and Galileo started questioning the legitimacy of a geocentric universe. As a result of their work the understanding of the entire universe changed from the idea that everything revolved around the earth to the conclusion that the earth revolved around the sun. This one fact changed the way people understood the authority of the Church and the Bible, in that both seem to teach a geocentric universe. It also changed the meaning of being created in the image of God. After all everything revolved around the sun, and if earth was the only place where life could be found, and if among all this life only humans were made in the image of God, then human life has an essential dignity. Such logic preserves the authority of the Church according to some. The divergent ideas that the Bible was the authority for the Church, and the world was the authority for the scientist, began to emerge. So people now had an option, science or the Church. This was, of course, a false option but is one that persists in some people's mind even to the present.

The Renaissance sought to reintroduce classical culture to the Western world. The marching cry of this movement is an echo from ancient Greece—Man is the measure of all things! Literally, humankind was understood to be "ruler" by which everything should be measured. Rene Descartes, French Rationalist, reasoned it would be possible to begin again by throwing out everything experience, common sense, and tradition had taught. The firm intuition that the self is alone undeniably true places all knowledge and all reality on the shoulders of the human subject. David Hume refused to count anything as knowledge that experience does not teach. Immanuel Kant praised the dismissal of all tutelage. Erasmus thought it was possible to abstract from the teaching of Jesus a "philosophy of Christ" that would be suitably free from spiritual concerns. The Renaissance changed the West in more ways than can be noted here, but the most interesting thing of all is that now there was a clear alternative to the authority of the Church. If it did not make sense to human intellect or human experience, it must not be true.

European Nationalism is another fact of the modern period. The Holy Roman Empire had collapsed. The German Catholics did not want the Italian Catholics to tell them what to do. The French Catholics did not want to accept the authority of the Italian pope. With the demise of the medieval guild system and the emergence of capitalism as an economic system, people began to think of themselves first as associated with a particular nation and then as Roman Catholic. King Henry VIII created the Church of England because he refused to accept the authority of the pope.

The Reformation is also a contributing factor in understanding the modern world. The Reformation is associated primarily with Martin Luther, but it actually extends to John Calvin, the Radical Reformation, and beyond. For the purposes of our lesson the Reformation can be located in three important ideas.
First, Scripture as primary is the singular authority for the Christian life.
Second, all people can pray directly to God.
Third, we are justified by faith and not works.

These three ideas united people in the desire to correct the excesses of the Roman Catholic Church and define a new way to be a Christian—Protestantism. Much of this was to be taken to heart by the Roman Catholic Church who in the Counter-Reformation accepted much, but not all of the criticism leveled at it by Luther. While most Reformers continued to accept the liturgical practices of the Roman Catholic Church, the radical Reformers questioned infant baptism and complicity with culture. The radical Reformers allowed for adult baptism only and they tended to be pacifists.

Modernity is an extremely important movement. It has had a profound effect upon the way everyone thinks. Stephen Toulmin in *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* talks about four basic shifts: oral to written, local to general, particular to general, and timely to timeless. These shifts go a long way toward defining modernity.

- Oral to written: before modernity philosophy was more often spoken in the sometimes messy categories of rhetoric. Modernists turned to writing where the reasoning could be more precise.
- Local to general: before modernity ethnography, geography, and history were very important for philosophy. Modernity tended toward geometric reason and abstract axioms.
- Particular to general: before modernity there was more interest in the particular of a situation. The details were always important for philosophical and moral reflection. After modernity there was more interest in general principles of pure reason.
- Timely to timeless: before modernity time allowed for local diversity, but with the advent of modernity timelessness characterizes thought. Modernity needed permanence, but premodernity could allow for the transitional.

Any characterization of modernity inevitably falls short of the rich diversity of the modern period. One thing changes, literally separating the patristic and medieval world from the modern world. This has already been noted, but it bears emphasis at this point. Before the advent of modernity it was the business of humankind to find a place in the mind of God. After the advent of modernity God had to find a place in the mind of humankind. This one fact ripples throughout modern Christian ethics.

Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses on the door of the chapel at the University of Wittenberg in order to debate the nature of salvation. The result was a reemphasis upon the authority of Scripture. Luther found in Scripture a reason to believe salvation comes by faith and through grace. He also concluded that anyone could pray to God directly without the aid of a priest. Regarding moral reflection Luther looked to Scripture. He had little interest in the opinions of tradition. All of this was framed by an intense propensity toward guilt. One of the major achievements of his life was to locate the difference between a desire for virtue and the peace of mind that comes by faith.

Luther's thought was informed by a clear understanding of human sinfulness, but this did not keep him from affirming that a Christian does not live unto himself or herself, but in Christ and his or her neighbor. Because the grace of God forgives a person, Luther came to understand how grace engenders the moral life. This grace frees a human being to be as a "justified" person to good works. These works do not make a person good, but a good person produces good works. Many in our time have tried to

separate grace and behavior. The idea that we sin every day in word, thought, and deed is just such an unhealthy detachment of justification and sanctification. The famous line by Luther—justified sinner—does not diminish the gravity of sin; it merely locates it in a robust understanding of grace.

For Luther being a Christian is not primarily a matter of specifically religious actions. In religious matters humanity is to be receptive rather than active, hearing the work of God, accepting this forgiveness. On the active side is the doing of all the ordinary things. Yet, the person of faith does all these things with a difference, in freedom from anxiety, without self-seeking, for the sake of the objective good, not for the sake of the agent. Every Christian is faced with the problem of living as a sinner and yet by grace. A person may be required to do some things for the public good—like going to war. But if in a sinful world and as a sinful person one acts in faith, one is justified as the seeker after personal virtue. The bottom line is that a good tree brings forth good fruit.

Luther proposes a paradox that in some sense defines theological ethics. First, a Christian is free to do as he or she pleases. Second, a Christian is called to be a servant. This very paradox expresses the tension within which a Christian is called to live. While there is no need of works, they should flow from the life of a justified person. It is not that faith frees us from works; rather it frees us from thinking of them as salvific.

John Calvin (1509-64) is an important figure in the history of Protestant Christianity. He is responsible in large measure for the shape of the Reformed tradition that exerts considerable influence upon the Christian faith. His emphasis upon the sovereignty of God casts a tall shadow upon the way many Christians think of God.

Calvin talks about the moral law as that which shows the righteousness of God. The moral law is meant to describe the nature of God and inform human beings regarding its parameters. In fact, the law functions like a mirror, that is, it points out our weaknesses. The moral law also functions to restrain humankind by the punishment it spells out. A third function of law serves the believer most directly. Since it is written in the heart of the believer by the Spirit, the law exhorts to greater righteousness. For Calvin there is no better way to think of the law than the complete love of God and the overflow of this into our regard/care for others. In fact, it is in the love of neighbor that the love of God comes into its clearest focus.

Jesus Christ is the one who calls believers to follow Him. This sense of vocation, as framed by Christ, is individual as it becomes a personal pathway to a morally ordered life.

Schleiermacher (1768-1834) firmly disavowed the reduction of religion to moral sanctions or its identification with good works. He frames his moral theology in the conception of God-consciousness. This comes first as feeling of the highest reality and it is expressed in Christian morality. Therefore, Christian ethics is the expression of Christian moral feeling. The character of Christian moral feeling is the consciousness of God. He completely denies any attempt to separate theology and ethics.

Schleiermacher sought to link Christian ethics with Scripture. He critiques the theologian who uses Scripture for theological reflection, but rarely uses it for moral

reflection. Therefore, he links Scripture to moral reflection. He is not afraid of philosophical considerations, but morality reaches its final confirmation in Scripture.

The Christian life is finally about redemption. Christian moral reflection seeks to define the effect of this redemption upon human beings. Here Schleiermacher links "pleasing God" to the meaning of moral reflection. Therefore, the possibility of moral reflection rests upon the ability to understand how Jesus represents God in human life. It is the Christological principle that calls the Church to a higher level than can be expressed in any other way.

Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) is associated with the "social gospel." He sought in his work to "Christianize" the Church. His two great passions of life were ministry and social reform. He criticized the individualistic and pietistic conservatism of much of the church. He believed the kingdom of God was to come on earth in history. He called the church the social factor in salvation. He put the Kingdom of God before the doctrine of God, arguing that it is a necessary backdrop for understanding the doctrine.

He based his social ethics on the teaching of Jesus concerning love. As he spelled out social ethics he drew upon the progressive, mildly radical, socialistic thought of his time. Private gain must give way to public good. Competition must give way to cooperation. Special privilege must yield to the principle of equal rights. He was a critic of capitalism.

Rauschenbusch thought the Church had much at stake in social issues. He was adamant that the social redemption described in Scripture is not entirely for the future. The business of the Christian and the Church is to be a part of the work God seeks to accomplish in society. He felt the highest expression of this is found in the life and teachings of Jesus. While Rauschenbusch understood the limitations of human nature, he felt the structures of a Christian social order could be reconciled with Christian morality.

Rauschenbusch called into question the business life of most Christians. He was an early Christian critic of capitalism. He felt the social machinery, the lavish lifestyle, and the general excess of life were irreconcilable with Christian virtue.

The major integrating feature of Rauschenbusch's thought was expressed in the "social gospel." One way he talks about this is as a recognition of the importance and power of super-personal forces in the community. He understands that sin needs to be understood as a social phenomenon as well as a personal reality. Therefore, sin is not just a struggle with pornography but with the industry that produces it. If sin can be understood socially, then salvation must be understood in this way as well. Sin is social, but so is salvation. The same cross that atones for personal sin affects the structures of sin, evil, and death. It is not enough to have personal salvation because when salvation is understood it will embrace those structures of evil that engender sin.

The ethics of Rauschenbusch can be described as a linking of personal and social, private virtue and social virtue, and a general "Christianizing" of culture.

Karl Barth (1886-1968) is an important theologian in the 20th century. He almost single-handedly subverted Protestant liberalism by his work. He speaks to the centrality of creation. Faith is to be embodied in life. The God who creates is the God

who engenders the free grace embodied in faithful living. This means morality as Barth sees it is order by the Word of God. In this way the Word of God becomes a command. The hearing and obeying of this Word constitutes the sanctification of humankind.

Barth talks about special ethics where Scripture prescribes a command. Scripture defines a great deal with clarity. This clarity is a basic ethic that should characterize the Christian life. But Barth cautions that moral theology cannot be replaced by such casuistic ethics. While ethics is particular by its very nature this particularity cannot be allowed to overshadow the larger task of understanding the nature of God. The basic reason for this is that substituting offering the self to God is not the same as offering our self to God. Moral theology then is really about discipleship as an act of faith in God and not the task of fulfilling a duty. God's command is first a call to be shaped in love.

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) comprehends morality as one of the basic functions of the human spirit—the other two—culture and religion. It functions as a part of the human spirit because they point to the dynamic unity of body and mind, of vitality and rationality, of conscious and unconscious, of the emotional and the intellectual.

Morality is the constitution of the bearer of the spirit, the centered person; culture points to the creativity of the spirit and also the totality of its creators; and religion is the self-transcendence of the spirit toward what is ultimate and unconditioned in being and meaning.

The moral act establishes the human as person. The moral imperative is the command to become what one potentially is, a person within a community of persons.

The moral act is not an act in obedience to an external law, human or divine. It is the inner law of our true being, of our essential or created nature, which demands that we actualize what follows from it.

The religious dimension of the moral imperative is its unconditioned character. It is about the form of the decision and not the content.

Tillich talks about the transmoral conscience: A conscience may be called "transmoral" if it judges not in obedience to a moral law, but according to its participation in a reality that transcends the sphere of moral commands. Love alone can transform itself according to the concrete demands of every individual and social situation without losing its eternity and dignity and unconditional validity. Love, realizing itself from *kairos* to *kairos*, creates an ethic beyond the alternatives of absolute and relative ethics.

Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) was educated as a liberal at Yale Divinity School. He took his first pastorate in Detroit amid the problems of poverty along with the corporate evil of the automobile industry. He found his liberal theology completely inadequate in the face of social evil and human tragedy. This led him to rethink his theology, and he became one of the most important theologians of the 20th century. He eventually accepted a position at Union Theological Seminary in New York, where he wrote and lectured for decades. His brother, H. Richard Niebuhr, had a long career at Yale Divinity School and remained a theological liberal for his entire life.

Perhaps no theologian of the 20th century emphasized the depth of sin more fully than Reinhold Niebuhr. Yet, no one emphasized grace any more fully than Niebuhr. This dual emphasis does much to explain the nature of his theology. Niebuhr's moral theology is devoted to achieving a responsible society. Further he believed only an informed Church would be in a position to give adequate testimony to Christian morality. He felt the Cross shows the world the meaning of sacrificial love. Because the Christian message is shown in this public event—the Cross—it is political. Niebuhr sought to define the Christian message in order that society would be positively affected. Love is the source of justice in Niebuhr's theology. Love is the end, while justice is the means. Niebuhr also talks about the Church as the community of grace. He felt when the Church combines spiritual vigor and social intelligence it makes the gospel effective and thus it has the capacity to act justly.

One of Niebuhr's most interesting theses is that human beings are less likely to behave in a moral way when they are in a large group. The reason for this is that groups, institutions, and society hide our responsibility. When this happens decisions can be associated with the group and not a particular person. Niebuhr sees this played out in the arena of history. No doubt his experience in Detroit led him to conclude that people behave differently when they are heads of corporations as opposed to individuals. This represents one of his most important contributions to theology.

The problem of Niebuhr's theology is that it leads to unwarranted suspicion of all institutions. If groups can lead to great evil, they can also lead to great good. Paul's description of the Church is very organic and includes mutual empowerment.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-68) was an important civil rights leader. He always saw himself as a preacher of the gospel reaching to social justice. He was an educated man with a Ph.D. in theology from the School of Theology (Boston University). His central ideas were:

- Non-violence (satygrata) truth force. He felt love would ultimately win the battle.
- Social gospel—Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Gospel* taught him a sense of social responsibility.
- Existentialism—Tillich—helped him to see certain truths about humankind and humankind's condition.

An important idea for him was tough mind and tender heart: A tough mind is like a serpent, incisive thinking, realistic judgment, and astute. A tender heart is like a dove, avoid the passionless depth of hard heartedness, ability to love, real compassion, and avoid violence.

The important thing about King is the balance between the gospel and the language of natural rights in his writings. He is also important because he worked out his theology and ethics on a world stage.

John Howard Yoder (1927-97) is a very important theologian and ethicist who wrote primarily from the Anabaptist tradition. He is radical in his unrelenting attention to a Christological frame for moral discourse. Yoder notes throughout his work that Jesus could have used violence, but always refused this pathway. Yoder refuses to allow the

ethics of the New Testament to be primarily interpreted by the old aeon. He holds to the view that moral reflection in the New Testament is for the long haul.

Yoder also talks about the hermeneutics of peoplehood, by which he means personal faith and ethic is never lost in the community of faith. A community has agents of direction—prophets, agents of memory—scribes, agents of linguistic self-consciousness—teachers, and agents of due process—bishops. Each of these is important for the appropriate interpretation of faith and value. This allows for effective/faithful correction in the community. It also allows for a continuing, non-coercive discourse within the Church.

Yoder does not diminish either the particularity of Christ or the universal truth at stake in His life. The business of being the Church is the business of following Him in the present. Discipleship is always particular, but is always connected to the truth that was incarnate. This means the rule of God is the basic category for moral consideration.

The kingdom of God is a social ethic. It is simultaneously an expression of the rule of God and a call to Christian vocation. The Church is called to be defined by the reality of God and not the social pressures or expectations of society. The church does have an ethic; it is an ethic in the way it tells the stories of the faith and seeks to embody them.

One way to put this can be found in Yoder's work, "The church is called to be now what the world is called to be ultimately."

Max Stackhouse is currently a professor of theology and ethics at Princeton Theological Seminary. Before that he was a professor at Andover Newton Theological Seminary. It is his views of stewardship that will concern our lesson. These can be found in one of his books, titled: *Public Theology and Political Economy*. His basic concern in this book is to spell out the basics of a public theology.

He sets out 10 principles for such theology:

- **Creation:** This is a neglected field of theological inquiry. When creation is appropriately understood it will provide a theological warrant for human science to be conducted in the service of the truth.
- **Liberationism:** It is important for theology and ethics to focus on history and its patterns. God is biased in light of the oppressed.
- **Vocation:** This answers the question—Why am I? The chief end of life is to serve God through the actualization of the purposes for which we were created.
- **Covenant:** This theological idea points toward how humans are to form community. There is a need for different levels of accountability.
- **Moral law:** He affirms universally valid moral laws rooted in God.
- **Sin:** This is the most empirical doctrine of the Christian faith, disorder, brokenness, corruption, and failure. Stackhouse sees this at personal and social levels.
- **Freedom:** Affirms the God-given right to be free, that is, able to do otherwise. It also testifies to the intention of God for humanity.
- **Ecclesiology:** This affirms the importance of the Church and the demand for separation of church and state. Presumes that non-coercive communities of discourse are the core communities of civilization, for here the Word may be

freely redefined or elaborated and connected to familiar, political, and economic existence as well as personal existence.

- Trinity: This is the most original idea of the Church. It provides a way for plurality and unity to exist. It is a doctrinal example of multi-leveled meaning.
- Christology: Jesus Christ becomes the paradigm for a Christian sociology. Jesus is an option in the face of the evolutionary idea of "bloody-tooth-and-claw" where only the strong survive.

The principles are theologically informed and they reflect a bias for the social embodiment of the faith.

This brings Stackhouse to the importance of stewardship. He argues that we are to be stewards of Scripture. He sees that for this to have a lasting effect, theological education will need to be transformed. He argues that we need to be willing to wrestle with the abstract, to do the hard work of theology and moral reflection.

Stackhouse also believes the Christian faith must face pluralism with a better option than either lazy acceptance or complete rejection.

Gustavo Gutierrez is a living liberation theologian. He represents a number of people who seek to use the resources of the Christian faith to confront the injustice of the world. He argues that the prophets understood that relationship. He thinks the Early Church understood that issue as well. He believes salvation embraces all people and the whole person.

Gutierrez understands that Christ is the liberator of both personal and the social bondage that arises from sin. The levels of liberation are political, historical, and that which bars communion with God. Nothing is outside the pale of the action of Christ and the gift of the Spirit. The work of Christ is open to all the levels of sin. The business of theological and moral reflection is to embrace this task.

Stanley Hauerwas is currently a theologian and ethicist at Duke Divinity School. His influence is immense in the field of ethics. Several books of essays have been published where he addresses a number of different issues. He delivered the prestigious Gifford Lectures. Our lesson can only call attention to a few aspects of his thought.

Hauerwas questions the quandary orientation of much theological ethics. He feels this makes theological ethics too reactionary. He wants theology and ethics to be nearly synonymous. He wants to take the "and" from between theology and ethics. All theological propositions have ethical importance for him. Hauerwas relies upon a narrative approach to ethics. He believes freedom is only possible as it arises out of truthful narrative. He agrees with Alasdair MacIntyre that human beings are a story-formed people. We are the stories we have been told. He also agrees with John Howard Yoder that the church is a social ethic. Hauerwas summarizes his basic social ethic in *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

The degree to which moral reflections are influenced by Aristotle and Thomas is evident in *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975). He argues here and elsewhere that the

one thing we bring to a moral dilemma is a certain kind of character. Happiness, friendship, and virtue are all located in and help to sustain character. Since there is no way to avoid agency in moral considerations it is important to understand the importance of character. This means character endures in a way that does not. It is what we bring to the moral dilemma. Hauerwas comprehends all of this in light of sanctification, which is the embodiment in a particular character of the justification of our faith claims. Herein lies Hauerwas' theological ethics, and it shows clearly how theology and ethics are connected. Morality/character justifies theological convictions. Taken to its logical conclusion, then it is a theology of holiness that in the very embodiment of character locates moral reflection in its native home.

Lesson 11: Modern Ethics

Due This Lesson

Essay
Reading
Journaling

Learner Objectives

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- define the ways in which moral reflection in the modern church inform Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection

Homework Assignments

Select five themes of the modern period and reflect on their importance for moral reflection.

Read and respond to Resource 11-4.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this section.

Modern Theological Ethics

The positive points:

- Modern theological ethics illustrate the continuing importance of Scripture for moral reflection.
- Modern theological ethics illustrate the social vitality of moral reflection.
- Modern theological ethics still shows the importance of the Church for moral reflection.

The negative points:

- Modern theological ethics is not as even in its dependence on Scripture as the patristic and medieval period.
- Some modern theological ethicists are willing to revise significant theological convictions in order to be relevant.
- The move to a public theology runs the risk of being more public than Christian.

The Importance of Modern Ethics for Wesleyan-Holiness Ethics

Wesleyan-Holiness ethics needs to read modern theology and especially contemporary theology. Such a practice will reveal several issues of continuing importance.

- First, modern ethical reflection reveals a continuing interest in materially linking salvation and ethics. This is clear in the work of Luther, Calvin, and even Schleiermacher.
- Second, modern moral reflection places a good deal of importance on social constructions. This is evident in Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez.
- Third, modern theological ethics reveals a renewed interest in sanctification. This is most developed in the work of Hauerwas, but it can be noted in some of the themes of Rauschenbusch and Stackhouse.

Small Groups

Joseph Fletcher is a well-known Christian ethicist of the 20th century. *Situational Ethics*, his best-known work, makes a rather bold assertion. As he developed his ethical theory Fletcher was deeply influenced by

- American pragmatism—the truth is what works
- relativism—no absolutes except the call to love
- voluntarism—choice is essential

Fletcher proposes the only norm for moral action is love. This dismisses the law as not being of much help at all. Fletcher felt the situation (which posed the question) and love (which provided the criterion for action) determined Christian action. Fletcher posed many problems that revealed the inappropriateness of moral absolutes for moral decision-making.

A well-known example of how love is a better norm for Christian action, is posed by Fletcher. He tells a story of a woman who is in a World War II prison camp. She is attractive, so she catches the attention of the German guards. Her husband and children are free, and there is no way for her to get back to them, except to engage in sexual intercourse with one of the guards. If she becomes pregnant, they will let her go, and then she will be able to be with her family. Fletcher wants to know if the absolute prohibition of adultery can be sustained in this situation. He feels the norm of love would serve us better in that as the woman is guided by the love of her family she is willing to become pregnant in order to see them again. Law would keep her in the camp away from her family. Love would allow the good end of being with her family again to be realized.

Given what has been learned to this point, analyze Fletcher's argument.

What dangers are represented by allowing the situation to be so important in moral reflection?

How does Fletcher define love?

Can a person sustain morality in the manner Fletcher proposes?

Case Study—Ending a Church Relationship

Roger Nupastor returned home from Ethics class somewhat perplexed. He wasn't feeling certain that today's discussion went the "ethical way." It was a good question that was raised. "I'm quitting! So whom do I inform?"

That was the essence of the conversation around Rev. Bill Bailey's decision to bring his ministry at Jonesberg to an end, and his perplexity over the procedure to be followed. One of the fellows said, "Just turn in your keys and don't go back." That didn't sound right to Roger. But, do you write a letter? Do you explain your reasons? To whom do you resign? He also thought, "To whom do you whine?"

What would you do? Why would you do it?

- Inform the District Superintendent?
- Put your resignation in written form?
- Tell your reasons for making the decision?
- Address your letter to the Board of the local church? The District Superintendent?
- Would you try to explain the issues and problems that brought you to this frustrating conclusion of your ministry?
- Do you alert the officials of an ending date of your employment? A definite time of leaving?
- When must you vacate the parsonage?
- If you're not leaving the area, and since you have friends in the congregation should you and your family continue to attend worship and other activities of the church? You really love "some" of the folks in the congregation.
- What is the expected ethical protocol?

On a somewhat related topic:

- What are the ethical procedures for dismissing a "paid employee?" Let's say your congregation has a paid youth minister, Joe, but you and he are not enjoying each other's approach. You think he did something stupid with the youth group. Joe took them to an inappropriate movie and paid for the group's attendance with church funds. It's not the first time he has decided to entertain that way. You and he have had talks about former episodes. He is defiant, and thinks it is his decision and not yours. You want him out. But what are the proper legal, church, and ethical procedures?

Roger needs your professional advice!

Unit 4: Wesleyan-Holiness Ethics

Lesson 12: Renewal of the Image of God as the Goal of Humanity

Due This Lesson

Essay
Response to Resource 11-4
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- explain the theological importance of the renewal of the image of God
- define the ethical implications of the renewal of the image of God

Homework Assignments

Write a 2- to 3-page essay that outlines a basic holiness ethic that honors appropriately a material holiness.

Read and respond to Resource 12-11.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this lesson.

Article X: Entire Sanctification

13. We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect.

It is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service.

Entire sanctification is provided by the blood of Jesus, is wrought instantaneously by faith, preceded by entire consecration; and to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.

This experience is also known by various terms representing its different phases, such as "Christian perfection," "perfect love," "heart purity," "the baptism with the Holy Spirit," "the fullness of the blessing," and "Christian holiness."

14. We believe that there is a marked distinction between a pure heart and a mature character. The former is obtained in an instant, the result of entire sanctification; the latter is the result of growth in grace.

We believe that the grace of entire sanctification includes the impulse to grow in grace. However, this impulse must be consciously nurtured, and careful attention given to the requisites and processes of spiritual development and improvement in Christlikeness of character and personality. Without such purposeful endeavor, one's witness may be impaired and the grace itself frustrated and ultimately lost.

John Wesley

Some important events in his life were:

- 1720 Elected scholar of Christ Church College, Oxford
- 1725 Ordained deacon and preaches his first sermon
- 1726 Elected Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford
- 1729 Takes on leadership of the Holy Club
- 1735 Samuel Wesley (father) dies
- 1736 Arrives in Savannah, Georgia (USA) and meets the Moravian pastor Augustus Spangenberg
- 1737 Sophy Hopkey affair (December sails for England)
- 1738 Spiritual crisis. Meets Peter Bohler, the Moravian pastor (February). Joins the Fetter Lane Religious Society. He is converted May 24 on Aldersgate Street.
- 1739 Preaches his first open-air sermon
- 1740 Separates from the Moravians, leaving the Fetter Lane Society. He sets up a school for Kingswood in Bristol. Accepts in principle, the idea of lay preaching.
- 1741 Begins his itinerancy
- 1746 Finds a dispensary
- 1747 Falls ill at Newcastle where he is tended by Grace Murray
- 1751 Marriage to Mrs. Vezeille
- 1755 Serious breach between John Wesley and his wife
- 1778 Opening of the City Road Chapel in London
- 1781 Death of his wife
- 1784 John Wesley's ordination of Coke and others for work in America leads to an official break with the Anglican Church.
- 1788 Charles dies
- 1791 February he preaches his last sermon and he dies March 2

Wesley's Theology

Wesley's theology is catholic Christianity in the best sense of the word. Three particular doctrines provide the parameters of his theology: original sin, justification by faith alone, and holiness of heart and life.

Wesleyanism is through and through a theological point of view grounded in the saving grace of God.

The gift of Wesley to the church is a theology that intends to engender a redeemed humanity; the meaning of Wesleyanism is wrapped up in the Christian hope for life that it will mature by the grace of God through an appreciation of our mutual relationships in the church, including the graces of the church characterized by happiness.

Salvation by Faith

Wesley's theology is a rich resource for reflection on the convergence of theology and ethics.

- Wesley is thoroughly Protestant in his understanding that salvation is a gift of God that comes by faith.
- Links this conception of salvation to behavior/morality.
- Forensic is the theological term for justification by faith.

The importance of this conception for moral reflection is important to consider.

- First, Wesley believed human beings were originally created to obey the perfect law. Because of the Fall this is not possible, but this did not change the reason for which we were created. God called us good at creation, and He has not changed His mind about us. Yet, we are inclined to evil and that continually because of the sin. The gift of salvation is the process by which God begins to restore us.
- Second, since salvation is a gift it tells us that God desires to renew us and it calls us to renewal. Thinking of our new life as a gift changes the usual logic of command and duty. The character of life that will arise out of the gift of God is not slavish obligation, but joyous doxology.

Therapeutic Salvation

Therapeutic salvation represents another dimension of Wesley's theology with moral implication; many in the early to mid 20th century believed the genius of Wesley's theology was its marriage of the Roman Catholic understanding of perfection with the Protestant understanding of faith.

Understanding Wesley's theology is not possible apart from making room for his understanding of salvation as therapeutic. This puts his emphasis and appreciation for Eastern theology front and center. In fact, this way of looking at things casts holiness as the renewing of humankind into the glory of God.

Theosis, divinization, and sanctification are basically synonymous terms. Each term suggests that while grace pardons it also extends to a deeper work in the heart of the believer.

Therapeutic salvation is the freedom from the power of sin. Such an understanding of sin is more than acquittal; it is the engendering of an entirely new way of living.

Wesley Sermons

Christian Perfection

Wesley is careful to say that perfection does not imply freedom from ignorance. Christian perfection does not preach freedom from mistakes or infirmities either. Wesley does not believe perfection testifies to a freedom from temptation.

For Wesley, believers could have a perfect will, that is to say, their lives could be set on fire by the expelling love of God. In other words, the love of God could become so pervasive that it expels all other lesser loves.

The Scripture Way of Salvation

Here Wesley reflects on the free mercy of God that extends from the first dawning of grace to its consummation in glory. He makes the distinction between relative (justification salvation) and real (sanctification salvation), in this sermon. He links both of these and clearly indicates that real salvation embodies the promises of grace made in relative salvation.

Wesley defines Christian Perfection in the following way:

- Loving God completely
- No wrong temper—nothing contrary to God
- All thoughts, words, and *actions* governed by pure love

Grace

A theology of pardon can only suggest behavior, it cannot provide for it. Put another way, forensic salvation frees us from the penalty of sin, but it does not heal us of the disease of sin. Therapeutic sin is not a something, rather it is an unhealthy relationship to everything. When sin is understood as a sickness, then grace can be easily understood as the process of gracious healing. Since it is grace, it is gift and as gift it is instantaneous. The life that is "being healed" endures by gift and is embodied in a holy character.

Co-operant Salvation

One might go so far as to say that the case of Wesleyan-Holiness theology stands or falls on co-operant salvation.

Three analogies

- Mother cat holding her kitten—all responsibility is with the mother
- Baby spider monkey holding the tail of its mother—all responsibility is with the baby
- Baby kangaroo in the pouch of the mother—both participate in the safety of the baby

Co-operant salvation affirms that God calls us and empowers us to accept grace in faith, but He does not compel us to believe.

The scriptural image of covenant comes to mind. God offers the covenantal relationship, but the benefits of the covenant are contingent upon abiding in the relationship.

The Wesleyan-Holiness understanding of co-operant salvation exhibits clear moral implications.

- First, it makes the point that salvation is manifest in graciously empowered action. Salvation is not primarily intellectual assent. Rather salvation is a response in time to an always-present offer of grace.
- Second, salvation implies that it be embodied in acts of righteousness. These acts do not save a person, but they arise from a saved person. Profession of faith leads to visible expression of the faith.

The Logic of Spiritual Renewal and Holiness Ethics

Spiritual renewal works itself out into a life of holiness. Pure love or expelling love shapes the will and begins a process of restructuring our historical dispositions—culturally conditioned habits—in light of God’s grace. The renewal of the image of God in us is spiritual renewal and as such it bears the fruit of righteousness.

A Preliminary Sketch of the Intellectual Space of Wesleyan-Holiness Theology

- The central themes of Wesleyan theology: optimism of grace, soteriology, and a creative combining of Protestant/Catholic/Orthodox theology.
- A Wesleyan-Holiness theology connects the inner and the outer expressions of holiness.
- A triune metaphysic pervades Wesleyan-Holiness theology.
- Knowing as transformation is crucial for a Wesleyan-Holiness theology.
- Practical rationality characterizes Wesleyan-Holiness theology.

Case Study—Ethics Issues Related to Death and Dying

Time has elapsed. The family life of Roger and Melissa has taken on some changes. They have a new son, Jonathan Wesley.

The ministry continues to grow and Roger has found certain professional enjoyment from calling in the local hospital. He is getting acquainted with the medical staff and finding opportunity to minister both to his own parishioners and others. The nursing staff has contacted him and encouraged him to visit patients, meeting spiritual needs related to their health needs; some need positive encouragement while others just need a friendly visit and anyone will do. Roger is glad to be available and is enjoying the experience.

Out of his new hospital visitation approach, Roger had to make a decision quickly. Now he wonders if he did the correct thing. But more about that shortly. Here is the story as he related it to Pastor Oldtimer, late one evening in a telephone conversation:

It seems the young Roberts couple, Ann age 19 and a Lutheran, and Ben age 20 and a Roman Catholic, had their first baby in Majorcity Memorial Hospital. That's where Roger met them, as he was making pastoral calls. A nurse steered him to the stressed young family. Their newborn had to remain in the hospital a few days, but it seemed all was going well. Roger called on the new parents both in the home and in the hospital, where they kept a day-and-night vigil.

Ann refused to leave the baby, even though the medical staff encouraged her to go home and rest. She returned to their small apartment only for a bath and fresh clothes.

As was his custom, Roger had prayer with them and generally encouraged them to have faith and trust the Lord for the health of their newborn. After a few days, Ben and Ann Roberts took Julie Ann home. They had named the baby Julie after Ben's mother and Ann after her mother. Relationships with the extended family were on the mend.

Then Dan Reems from Reems Funeral Home called. Baby Julie Ann had died unexpectedly at home. The local officials declared it a case of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). The couple is not suspect of any parental misconduct. But there was an official investigation. Ben and Ann are badly shaken up from the experience, but felt the coroner and police investigators were kind and fair.

Having made a few calls to their small apartment, Roger could visualize the setting. He remembered one conversation when Ben and Ann revealed why they were new to the community. Their parents lived in a neighboring state and Ben and Ann, in their youthfulness, had run away, got married and only recently made contact with their families, letting them know where they were living. Both sets of parents expressed "hurt" but also were open to keeping the relationship with the children.

Reems informed Nupastor that Ben and Ann wanted him to officiate at the gravesite burial of the newborn. He readily agreed to do so and the small casket was taken to the gravesite on a windy, snowy, below-freezing winter morning.

Following the short service, mother and father became distraught. Their early religious training came to their minds. It was as though they suddenly became alarmed as they responded to the spiritual teachings of their youth.

Although the reasons weren't clear, their parents had been unable to attend the funeral service. But each set of grandparents had asked if the child had been baptized. Julie Ann had not been baptized. Roger blamed himself for the oversight. Why hadn't he offered to baptize the baby in the hospital? Why hadn't he explained baptism/dedication issues to Ben and Ann when he had them lay hands on the child during one of his hospital prayers?

At the close of the funeral service for little Julie Ann, Ben and Ann were both distraught. Crying, holding each other, fearful of what all was associated with the fact their child was never baptized!

The pain Roger sensed at that grave scene was so intense. He reasoned about what he could do to be helpful in reducing the trauma. That's when he thought of baptizing the little body there in the casket. He'd melt snow in his hands, offer words of prayer, and touch the cold, lifeless little body with the water. He reassured Baby Ann's parents of what he would do for them, if they so wanted.

He was confused about his own feelings of appropriateness. Thoughts about theological correctness were later to make for several sleepless nights. The very ethics or lack of them and the spontaneity of his actions baffled him.

Yet he was aware that the couple had responded favorably and were calmed by the event. Reems also acknowledged that they had gained composure and it became safe to drive them from the cemetery and back to their home.

Two weeks later, in the morning paper, Roger read Michael McManus's syndicated column about the "Anatomy of an ethical lapse" in which McManus tells in retrospect of his own ethical lapse. Sensitized by both the article and his own feelings, Roger raised his perplexing questions to Brian Oldtimer at the afternoon class meeting.

Where had he erred theologically?
Did he do the ethical thing?
Had he sinned?
Had he been helpful?
Had he made things worse?
To whom should he "confess"?
What could he have done differently?
If it should happen again, how would he interact with such a hurting couple?
Had he compromised the teachings of the Church?

How would you help Roger find his way through his ethical forest?

Lesson 13: Holiness as Holy Conduct

Due This Lesson

Essay
Response to Resource 12-11
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- define the connection between Wesleyan-Holiness theology and ethical behavior
- delineate the difference between Wesleyan-Holiness deontology and Wesleyan Holiness teleology
- understand the logic of the General Rules and the Covenant of Christian Conduct of the Church of the Nazarene

Homework Assignments

Write a 2- or 3-page essay on the Covenant of Christian Character contained in the *Manual*, paragraph 27. Reflect on the significance of the connection between faith and ethics, and the moral maxims of doing good and avoiding evil.

Read and respond to Resource 13-8.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this lesson.

Holy Faith and Holy Living

The relationship between holy faith and holy living is an historical reality. Before Aldersgate, Wesley had tried desperately to behave himself into spiritual peace. After Aldersgate, Wesley found spiritual peace and from that point onward the fruit of righteousness flowed from his life.

A Methodist is one who understands that salvation means holiness of heart and life. The mark of a Methodist is a consuming love of God expressed in joy. This in turn leads to another mark—happiness. This in turn leads to hope, prayer, and a pure heart.

Everything a Methodist does seeks to embody the will of the Master. Holy conduct is at the very heart of ethics, but in reality it exceeds morality by seeking to glorify God.

Walking worthy of the vocation to which we have been called is a spiritual journey manifest in holy conduct.

Wesley affirms that the sole source for holy conduct is God and the love that flows from His life.

Holy Conduct

The sermon titled "On Visiting the Sick" presents another perspective; holiness is embodied for Wesley in holy conduct. This is more than what is to be avoided, it is also what ought to be done.

Abstain from doing evil

- No buying nor selling on the Lord's Day
- No spirituous liquor
- Be honest
- No back talking
- Use no needless self-indulgence

Maintain good works

- Give alms
- Reprove all sin in your sight
- Be frugal
- Take up the cross daily

Constantly attend to all the ordinances of God

- Be at church
- Be at the Lord's table
- Attend to the ministry of the word
- Use private prayer
- Read the scripture
- Fast

Wesleyan-Holiness Ethic

- First, such an ethic is nourished by an understanding of the love of God that reaches toward humankind.
- Second, the love of God calls human beings toward a religious vocation manifested in holy behavior.
- Third, a Wesleyan-Holiness ethic reveals God, concern for how money is used, integrity, and even what comes out of the mouth.
- Fourth, a moral life arises in the context of attention to the means of grace.

Wesleyan-Holiness Tradition

Wesleyan-Holiness Deontology is evident in the work of H. Orton Wiley who says, "As theology is the science of God and the mutual relations of God and man, so ethics as the science of duty has to do with the end, the principles, and motives of obligatory conduct." He seems to think of Christian ethics as revealed in the sense that it is centered in divine revelation.

Charles Carter

- Importance for principles in Judeo-Christian ethics
- Application of absolute principles to particular situations in an attempt to define the meaning of an ethical situation
- Scripture as the grace of God in Christ that saves, supports, and directs the believer in the way of right conduct toward God and one's fellow human beings

Richard Taylor

- Expects the conduct of holiness people to be blameless.
- Thinks it is the duty of the Church to set ethical standards and raise ethical issues as the teaching office before the world.
- The life of holiness as living out of the duty inherent within the Christian faith.

Wesleyan-Holiness Tradition

Wesleyan-Holiness Teleology

Dunning offers a brief section on Christian ethics in *Grace, Faith, and Holiness* where he talks about three approaches to ethics within the Holiness Movement.

- He talks first about those who seek to conceptualize ethics as rules for conduct in the Bible and then apply them to contemporary life.
- Second, he talks about ethical reflection in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition that seeks to define its center in law, obligation, and duty.
- Third, he talks about the teleological vision within Wesleyan-Holiness theology, which focuses on goals, ends, and happiness.

According to Dunning it is important to define an ethical principle for moral reflection. Such a principle is necessary so the difference between right and wrong will be clarified. He also suggests that the principle should be transcendent, so our ethic will not be shaped by the standards of contemporary culture.

- Dunning prefers the term “obedience” to “duty”—here Dunning is talking about a principle of discrimination.
- A principle of separation, which acknowledges God as absolute sovereign and loving Father, informs Dunning’s ethical scheme.

Summary—Conduct according to Wesleyan-Holiness deontology is about duty, absolute principles, and high moral standards. Wesleyan-Holiness teleology is about character, continual attention to holiness, and love.

“Rings and Things” Holiness

The association with legalism had the general effect of taking the joy out of holiness. It also misplaced the point of holiness to a purely outer understanding. The entire point of holiness is the joining of a heart that has been cleansed to the life that is obedient. In other words, when our conduct expresses our deepest faith, then holiness is authentic.

General Rules

The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene sets forth The Covenant of Christian Character that connect the Articles of Faith and rules of conduct. These rules affirm the connection between a commitment to God and the holy life.

- The first rule can be simply stated as, “obey Scripture.”
- The second rule can be simply stated as, “avoid all evil of every kind.”
- The third rule is simply to abide in hearty fellowship.

Covenant of Christian Conduct

- Christian Life
- Marriage and Divorce
- Abortion
- Human Sexuality
- Christian Stewardship
- Church Officers
- Rules of Order

The logic underlying the General Rules and the Covenant of Christian Conduct is similar to the general direction of this module. The simplest way to understand this logic is—faith embodies a particular ethic. The fact that the General Rules follow the Articles of Faith is important. What the Church thinks about God determines the shape of its ethics.

Case Study—Helping Youth Make Sense of What They Are Reading

Rev. Roger Nupastor is faced with a new issue regarding the youth of the church and the community.

It seems several of the church youth and their high school friends have been challenged by one of their schoolteachers to read *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown, which is all the literary rage in their school, and is being covered extensively in the local paper. (To locate articles on the Internet, go to www.google.com and enter search information—"author's name" + "key words from title". For an article specific to this situation it would be "Marta Falcone" + "Da Vinci Code").

It seems there is a film in the making from Hollywood. The release indicates the movie will follow closely the text of the novel.

The Catholic Church has been running several specials refuting the novel and its handling of historical facts; they say the book distorts history.

- What are the ethical, pastoral, and personal issues that might arise from this youthful involvement?
- How might their knowledge be compromised?
- What are the steps Rev. Nupastor might take?
- How might those steps differ from the steps taken by Rev. Oldtimer?
- How might they be similar?

Lesson 14: Holiness as Social Holiness

Due This Lesson

Essay
Response to Resource 13-8
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- define the social aspects of Wesley's theology
 - articulate how the social theology of Wesley is also a moral theology
 - apply the social holiness themes of Wesley to specific moral concerns

Homework Assignments

Write an essay on the various social structures of life that affect the way life is lived. Especially, reflect in this essay on how these social structures are in turn affected potentially or actually by the gospel.

Make a journal entry that reflects an engagement with the material of this lesson.

Motivator

Wesley says in a sermon titled "On the Church":⁵

In the meantime, let all those who are real members of the Church see that they walk holy and unblamable in all things. "Ye are the light of the world!" Ye are "a city set upon a hill," and "cannot be hid." O "Let your light shine before men!" Show them your faith by your works. Let them see, by the whole tenor of your conversations that your hope is all laid up above! Let all your words and actions evidence the spirit whereby you are animated! Above all things, let your love abound. Let it extend to every child of man: Let it overflow to every child of God. By this let all men know whose disciples ye are, because you "love one another."

Biblical Models

Scripture presents several images that suggest the social construction of faith and value.

The **Old Testament** depicts a people called to live out a common faith.

- The tribes of Israel are held together by faith in God and a common mission in the world.
- The common life of the people engenders a capacity to act morally.
- The identity of the people as God's people brings with it the importance of responsible living.

The **New Testament** carries with it several images that link the social construction of faith with morality.

- Jesus calls disciples together in order to accomplish a mission to the world.
- Paul calls on the church at Colossae to specific moral practices.
- Paul takes up an offering for the church at Jerusalem.
- The church saw itself as a whole in doctrine and in ethics.

Trinitarian Theology

The doctrine of the Trinity and Trinitarian theology is an attempt to tell the entire Christian narrative. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit define what is real for the Christian faith.

Implications of Trinity

- The most basic implication is that God is being-in-communion. He is one in everlasting fellowship.
- Human beings are called to be as they fellowship in God. This very way of being leads human beings to comprehend existence as communion first with God and as such to the world, others, and finally the self.
- We are called in holiness of heart and life to embrace the world either in adoration of God or in invitation.
- By the very nature of God the Christian faith conceives of everything as grounded in communion with God, including moral action.

Ecclesiology

The doctrine of the Church is also important to the identity of Christianity and to social action. At the most basic level this means that God calls us to be together.

Paul urges the Church to think and to act as a whole. Love is expected of all.

Learning to think of the Church as a place for moral discourse and action is a central Christian teaching. When the Church is true to its own calling as a structure of grace, it confronts the structures of evil.

The Church is the community of the incarnation and as such it acts as "a body" to the world.

"Faith working by love" is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection.

The Church as Social Ethic

1. According to Stanley Hauerwas,⁶ the gospel has social significance chiefly in the narrative structure of Christian convictions. For Hauerwas the fact that God has formed a people by the call of the Spirit around the story of Israel and the story of Jesus links convictions and sociality.
2. The very theological and moral identity of the Church depends upon being knit together in the narrative structure of the gospel. Since the Church is formed by the narratives of faith, it is apparent that its ethics are so formed.
3. The ability to account for human existence is crucial to justifying the truthfulness of a social ethic. The agent of any moral action in the Christian faith is shaped in some sense by the question, "What would Jesus do?" But in fact the question ought to be, "What did Jesus do?"
4. Since the Church is formed by a truthful narrative, the call to provide the skills that will ensure moral action is essential.
5. Since the Church is a gift of God, constituted by the response in time by human beings, its very existence is sufficient. The Church does not need nor should it seek the blessings of prevailing culture. All the Church needs to do is be itself in the world as a testimony to faith and value.
6. The Church does not seek to control history, but to live out of control. The Cross stands at the center of Christian reality.
7. The Church depends upon leaders who recognize the gifts of the Spirit. God equips the Church with such gifts in order that it will be capable of being both universal and particular.
8. The Church does not so much have a social ethic as it is in its very life a social ethic.

These eight points argue for:

- the narrative structure of ethics
- an adequate account of human existence is essential
- the Church must provide skills for moral action
- the Church is simply called to be itself
- the Church lives out of control because it trusts God

The Permeable Self

The idea of the permeable self arises in the wake of the emergence of the Church. Hauerwas⁷ repeats the understanding that for many the Methodist Church was to be an order within the Church catholic. This understands that the “Methodist family” was from the start committed to a wide-open understanding of itself.

Because the Church is one, persons in the Church are united in faith. The permeable self suggests that all action is social for the Christian.

The Wesleyan-Holiness tradition comprehends the moral life in the life of the Church.

Eschatology

Eschatology is the branch of philosophy that deals with “last things.” From the very start the Church looked to the second coming of Christ.

Wesleyan-Holiness is about a hope that in the end all of history will be taken up into the glorious kingdom of God where even the presence of sin will be no more. But the companion hope is that heaven has already come down in the reality of the Church in history.

Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the material of this lesson:

- The Christian faith is social.
- The sociality of the faith is engendered in the Church.
- God calls us to the Church so that we might be whole.
- Wholeness in the Christian sense is expressed in holy conduct.
- Holy conduct reaches fullness in social action.
- Social action weaves all history in the reality of God's kingdom both in the present and at the consummation.
- Morality considered within this trajectory is Wesleyan-Holiness theology appropriately understood.

Small Groups

Samuel Powell, who teaches theology at Point Loma Nazarene University, seeks to establish two things with his contribution to a recent volume on holiness.⁸ First, he wants to make a clear connection between holiness and ethics without confusing either. Second, he wants to reflect more fully on the meaning of the Church for holiness theology. This is an important contribution, and it is consistent with the main themes of this lesson.

Considering the two points suggested by Powell, reflect on some practical implications for Wesleyan-Holiness ethics.

Connection between holiness and ethics

Meaning of the Church for holiness theology

Case Study—The Ethics of Referral

Referral to the Religion of One's Youth and Devotion

In his continuing preparation for ordination, Roger started another study. He began work on *Investigating Christian Theology 1* written by Dr. Rodrick Leupp, part of the Modular Course of Study. Some of the new study has caused him to rethink some of his ideas. He also found an ethical quandary, a problem that seemed to “pop-up” over a few days. He decided it would be best to voice his thoughts to his mentor, Pastor Oldtimer. He was a little fearful of what the replies might be.

Here is the situation: Donna had sought him out at the diner—that's been his early morning haunt and habit—a cup of coffee, a doughnut, and a few moments of quiet with a good book. But as on other days, folks stopped by and interrupted his contemplation with their own issues. Roger didn't think he should count it as official counseling, but nonetheless, folks were seeking his advice. Such was the case with Donna.

Donna had been living with Don for almost four years. She thought they would eventually be married. The note on the cupboard, a few days ago, saying she should move out or he would, seemed to shatter thoughts of marriage.

You'll not be burdened here with all of the difficulties that transacted, such as the financial difficulties that come to an unmarried couple, or the meanness displayed by smashing Donna's pictures and her television, but the gist of the emotional happenings will be mentioned.

Donna was traumatized by the rejection. Couldn't eat, sleep, or make sense of the whole scenario. She and Don had been fighting for more than three weeks. It all seemed so hopeless. So this morning she decided to talk with the “reverend” at the coffee shop. She wondered if she should call him “Father.” He seemed nice, almost “holy,” but Donna didn't know much about Protestants or those Nazarene people.

This morning was to be the first of several morning conversations with Rev. Roger Nupastor, pastor in the Church of the Nazarene.

Donna responded to Roger's counsel, conversation, and ministry. At least, he thought so. Carefully, he referred her to the Bible, good psychology, and invited her to attend worship. She did, but not as he had hoped. She returned to St. Mary's Catholic Church, a very prominent congregation in Majorcity where Father “Bud” Wilkins is a respected and admired priest. She revealed to Roger that she had returned to the church she attended as a youth. In fact Father Wilkins gave her first communion and that's where she learned her catechism.

Roger complimented Donna on taking the step. While he had seen growth in Donna's demeanor, he was worried about her spiritual life. He had hoped she would join the young adults of his congregation.

At the close of today's “coffee conversation” Roger made three suggestions. One, that she continue attending services at St. Mary's under the guidance of Father Wilkins. Two, that she should return to another of her child/youth religious behaviors, that of

praying. Donna said she still had her rosary. Roger said that would be fine. Three, that she plan to attend "confessional" within the next week and meet with Father "Bud" in the confessional booth and there tell her story, make confession, and seek pastoral counsel from her priest.

After Donna had gone on her way, saying she would thoughtfully consider the suggestions, he began to wonder about his behavior. And questions arose.

Had he done the ethical thing?

He wasn't a Catholic, didn't believe Mary should be the object of worship. He had never "said" the rosary, although he had watched it on the Catholic television channel.

But, he said of himself, I was dealing with Dr. Leupp's lesson where he talked about "respect" for other religions. Earlier in Roger's life he too had thought of Catholicism as being something other than Christian. But his interest in the study of theology had brought a new respect and insight to the meaning of the Apostles' Creed, and respect for the early writers Augustine, Francis of Assisi, and Thomas Aquinas.

He mused, isn't Donna one of the "sheep" from that "other" flock Dr. Leupp wrote about? He was engrossed in studying a verse of scripture, John 10:16.

Did he do the right thing? How would this help Donna spiritually?

How about you? How would you help Roger?

Do you see any unethical or religious improprieties in his behavior and advice?

What do you think?

Lesson 15: Grace, Justice, and Reconciliation

Due This Lesson

Essay
Response to Resource 14-9
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- articulate the moral significance of grace, justice, and reconciliation within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition
 - define some of the resources within Wesleyan-Holiness theology for moral reflection for confronting issues of social justice

Homework Assignments

Write a 2- to 3-page essay on a social issue of significance to the Church. Be sure to employ Wesleyan-Holiness themes.

Read and respond to Resource 15-6.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this lesson.

Social Justice

Stewardship

- Wesley's sermon "The Good Steward" on Luke 16:2 begins with the idea that human beings are entrusted by God with temporal things. The emphasis brought by Wesley makes the point that Christians are called to use what God gives in order to accomplish His will.
- "The Danger of Riches" is another sermon preached by Wesley that suggested that riches place a special responsibility upon a person. The desire for riches blinds one to the need of others. Such a life represents poor stewardship.

Economic Considerations

- Wesley's most primitive statement on economics is "Gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can."

Facing the Poor

- Poverty existed because of misplaced governmental policies and greedy merchants. He talked about inflation and taxes as contributing to poverty.
- Literacy and self-determination were important for Wesley because they led to the empowerment of the poor.
- Knowing those caught in poverty is one path toward dealing with the problem.

Injustice and Oppression

- Wesley spoke against all forms of exploitation—merchants who preyed on the poor, those who produced and sold intoxicating beverages, doctors who refused to serve those who needed them the most, lawyers with no concern for the poor.

Human Rights

- Natural rights moral reflection locates these rights—human rights—as universal claims across cultures and time.
- The doctrine of creation where God creates humankind as unique creatures argues against slavery.
- Wesley saw women at work in the ministry and he saw God bless their efforts.

Environmental Concerns

- For Wesley stewardship included the care of the environment. Since God created the world to enjoy, and since He gave humankind a special status in creation, it becomes a responsibility.
- Wesley saw all of nature as participating in God's salvation.

A Theology of Compassion

- The great need of our time is for the church to think again about the other as an occasion to embody compassion.
- Our early identity was shaped from the “looked-down-upon” segment of society, a place where the gospel met human need in holy evangelism.

The Triune God

All theological reflection begins and ends in the worship of a triune God. Therefore, a theology of compassion is first of all the worship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christian ethics is the confession of faith in concrete circumstances.

Compassion is first a doxological reflection of the God who exists in relation while reaching toward humankind.

Compassion, in order to be genuine, arises from our need for God to sustain our life together. Compassion does not exist as some disembodied duty or holy *teleos* for the Christian. It is a practiced hope.

Truthfulness

Even as compassion arises from a sense of the triune God, it finds its initial embodiment in a commitment to truthfulness.

Long before we learn our first word, much less begin to speak sentences, our character is being formed. Character gives a person a "sense" for the truth. It requires courage and patience. The instituted sacramental life of the church helps form truthfulness and character; baptism teaches us who we are and the Eucharist reminds us of our past as it envisions the future.

The emergence of the Church in history constitutes the reality of new and unique community extending the "body of Christ" in time. Of course, the narrative is an outgrowth of the story of a triune God sustained in the church and the practice of truth.

Sanctification

The Holiness Movement has continued to believe the grace of God is sufficient to cleanse the heart, nourish our relationship with God, and empower us to service.

When we continue to think of sanctification as a personal victory over a mountain of sin, inherited and actual, we lose sight of what is really important about holiness. All too often it seems “holiness folk” tend to get locked into holiness ethics and lose sight of a holy God. We tend to seek security in lifestyle and miss our mutual dependence on God. We begin to seek an experience instead of a God who is being-in-communion.

A more adequate understanding of compassion will require a full accounting of holiness.

- First, it reminds us that as the people of God we are pilgrims on the way to God’s future. We are not seeking to establish a kingdom on earth.
- Second, it reminds us of our eschatologically framed journey. An eschatologically informed faith understands that the hope of the gospel does not deny the present as much as it frames it in an optimism of grace.
- Third, it reminds us that worship is not merely a segmented span of time when we sing, pray, and listen/preach. Rather worship is a description of the character of life when it is lived in community.

Compassion is an expression of the worship of a triune God. It begins to find embodiment in truthfulness, and is finally justified in holiness.

Compassion does not hang in empty space, and it is not a rationally defined and justified virtue. It is not about securing self-worth or individual rights, neither is it about how we feel. Compassion is envisioned by the Spirit as human selfhood is reoriented to a new life, one that reaches outward.

Compassion is about introducing a person to a new way of being in the world engendered by Scripture and the Spirit as it is nourished by truthfulness, patience, and sacramental life.

Specific Resources for a Wesleyan-Holiness Social Ethic

Several important resources exist for a Wesleyan-Holiness social ethic.

- First, optimism of grace defines much of Wesley's theology. This means hope always exists for personal and social transformation. It is not enough to feed the poor for Wesley. He sought to provide resources for a better life, i.e., medical care and a primitive credit union.
- Second, Wesleyan-Holiness brings an interest in the concrete needs to its social ethics. Embodiment makes sense within the parameters of holiness because faith becomes incarnate in a real life.
- Third, Wesleyan-Holiness is communally mediated. From the start Wesley sought to hold people accountable as well as to provide resources for a whole life.

Case Study—The Environmentalists and the Hunters

Roger Nupastor has a very diverse and growing church body. He rather takes pride in the multicultural complexity of his congregation. The congregation represents several cultures and former religious associations. But he thinks he instigated a problem the other day. He forgot to take into consideration two opposing segments of the community; it all took place at the adult class party.

He introduced two new families to the group: David and Patsy Williams, and Jeremy and Nancy Hyde. They are both farm families from south of the city. They raise grain crops, feed cattle, and raise pheasants and quail for game birding. They are avid hunters.

Tension arose when Burt Wolfe acknowledged he knew the couples. Burt is an active environmentalist—he had been part of a group that had picketed the release of gaming birds on government ground last spring. In fact, he and David had a confrontation of some type, although it wasn't clear to Roger what that might have been. None-the-less, tensions rose for a few minutes as the two factions met in the church for the first time. Their differences weren't resolved, but it seemed that all parties chose to be civil with each other, at least for the time being.

Roger wonders if the "new folks" will return? Or, will his "old folks" not stay, if the "new folks" do come back. Ethics authorities, help him out.

- What is Roger to do?
- Whose side is he on?
- What if his personal values differ from one or both of the factions—does he stay quiet and impartial as pastor?
- How do Christians ethically address each other and continue to work within the same congregation when having deep opposing opinions on emotional matters?

Unit 5: Ethical Decision-making and Contemporary Issues

Lesson 16: Facing the Issue of Sexuality

Due This Lesson

Essay
Response to Resource 15-6
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- define the moral resources within the Christian tradition for dealing with the challenge of human sexuality
 - apply a basic understanding of ethical theories to teach and nurture ethical behavior in the Christian community
 - discern and make theologically based ethical decisions in the midst of a complex and/or paradoxical context
 - teach and model sexual purity
 - apply Christian ethics to the issues of integrity of the minister and the congregation for authentic Christian faithfulness and public witness

Homework Assignments

Develop a basic "Code of Sexual Behavior" for pastoral ministry.

Read and respond to Resource 16-11.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this lesson.

Addressing a Moral Issue

- First, it is important to know the precise issue at stake.
- Second, it is important to define the resources that can be brought to bear upon the issue.
- Third, it is important to define the narratives and practices that shape the character of the human agent.
- Fourth, the particular resources of practical wisdom should be brought to the problem.

A moral problem does not drive ethical reflection. Rather the life freed by the truth is capable of living a moral life.

Application of Moral Theories

Applying deontology to sexual ethics is a matter of determining what is right and then in good faith fulfilling that duty. Thus, we are to avoid premarital sex because it is our duty. Likewise it is our duty to be faithful to the one we have married. Finally, homosexuality is wrong because it cannot be universalized.

Teleological theories may argue that attending to consequences is the correct trajectory for moral reflection on sexual issues. Therefore, the consequences of premarital sexual activity, adultery, and homosexuality argue that they are immoral. Looking at utilitarianism one could argue that the greater good is served by avoiding premarital sex, adultery, and homosexuality.

The Sexual Revolution

The sexual revolution refers to that period in American life, which led to a more open and informed discussion of human sexuality. Attitudes toward premarital intercourse, the open marriage, and homosexuality were liberalized considerably during this period, 1960-71. There was also the sense that human sexuality, at least by some, was put in touch with its Hebraic/Christian roots. This tension between exploitation and the appropriate expression of sexuality makes any sweeping generalizations about the sexual revolution unwise.

1960-1967

Characterized by the Civil Rights Movement, situation ethics, and radical theology. During this period humanity celebrated its new found identity; it was a time of hope and possibility.

1967-1971

By contrast hysteria, panic, chaos, and disintegration characterized the second period.

The Bible boldly affirms that human sexuality is a gift from God. This God-given capacity when used properly can be an act of worship. The task is to affirm the biblical appreciation of sexuality, without getting caught up in a lifestyle that distorts God-given parameters.

A healthy person is capable of sexual relationships within the boundaries of a Christian ethic. A proper understanding of human sexuality will require that we look beyond the pessimistic images that often have dominated the Christian tradition.

Three Interlocking Narratives

The **first narrative** is self-respect, and it arises from an understanding of creation.

- Human beings are called to their humanity by the Word of God in the power of the Spirit.
- Questions:
 - Ask about consequences. What will this do to other people? Does my action bring a brighter future or the reverse?
 - Ask what controls us. When action is determined by appetite alone, it translates into human misery.

The **second narrative** is responsible freedom.

Appropriately understood human sexual expression ordered by God frees a person for a full life.

The **third narrative** comprehends human sexuality as a call to relationship.

The mystery of human sexuality is connected to God-inspired and God-empowered relationship.

Locating Sexuality in the Church

God created humankind as male and female and intended that together they would find fulfillment. The Church is a polity—polity is a way of talking about the social aspects of life—which creates healthy human beings. In other words, the Church, when it is faithful, engenders healthy sexuality. Actually, the Church equips its members to be sexual by locating life in truthful narrative and calling each other to accountability.

Sexuality outside the Church

- Feminist sexuality and chauvinistic sexuality reduce all such relations to power.
- Virtual or generic sexual expression. This way of being sexual is to become lost in fantasy and generality.
- Being self-absorbed. This is the love of oneself in another.

The model of human sexuality is co-humanity.

Premarital Sex

Premarital sex refers to sexual activity prior to marriage. The most obvious form of this behavior is sexual intercourse between two people who are not married. The scriptural term for premarital sex is “fornication,” from which we get the word “pornography.” Oral sex between unmarried people is also premarital sex. Petting would also be included under the rubric of premarital sex. The reason premarital sex is more than intercourse relates to the level of intimacy.

Those who argue for the morality of premarital sex point to the early onset of puberty and the increasingly later age of marriage.

Those who want to argue for premarital sex point to the fact that the primary barrier to it arises from the Judeo-Christian heritage. Since the prohibition is religious, it is not necessary for all to accept it as immoral.

Regarding premarital sex, the issues become clear.

- First, sexual intercourse requires a deep commitment to the other that is lacking in any relationship other than marriage.
- Second, the resources of the Christian tradition, especially prior to the modern period, present a nearly uniform message—premarital sex is immoral and dangerous.
- Third, the narratives of the faith make it plain that even when prevailing culture condones sexual license the resources of faith need to be heeded. The God who created human life and designed it to operate in particular ways provides direction.

Adultery

Arguments for the morality of adultery

- not reasonable to think two people could remain interested in one another for a lifetime
- occasional extramarital relationship can enhance the relationship one has within marriage

Arguments against adultery

- Christian tradition
- importance of maintaining a healthy marriage is the ability to make and to honor commitments
- sensual pleasure is only a part of what makes marriage important

Restricting adultery to either sexual intercourse or oral sex denies the reality of emotional adultery. Marriage is more than the sanctity of physical sex; it is the building of a "house" where two people live together in emotional intimacy.

The basic issue with adultery concerns the appropriate boundaries of sexual relationships. The issue regarding adultery is about boundaries, whether we are talking about physical or emotional relationships. The resources within the Christian tradition are exceptionally clear that God intends marriage to be the way in which human beings experience sexual wholeness/intimacy.

Homosexuality

Homosexuality is addressed in specific ways in the Bible.

Leviticus 20:13

Romans 1:26-27

No one can seriously doubt the Christian tradition has universally condemned the practice of homosexuality. While some argue that what Scripture reveals excludes loving and committed homosexual acts, the arguments lack persuasive power. Whatever else can be said, Paul appears to link homosexual activity with the refusal to acknowledge God.

Brief look at homosexuality.

- First, the major issues associated with a moral reflection on homosexuality begins with the clear condemnation in the Bible. Is homosexuality a choice? Is it realistic to expect homosexuals to become heterosexual?
- Second, what are the resources that can be brought to bear upon the problem. This will include a serious exegetical analysis of the relevant scripture passages. It will extend to theological trajectories and normative interpretations. It might also include any careful scientific and psychological research in the area.
- Third, treatment of the narratives that inform this problem in the Christian tradition will become important.

Personal Commitment

I will endeavor in my ministry to:

- Be committed to a faithful marriage
- Be honest with myself when temptation comes
- Be alert to the things I allow myself to think about, talk about, or look at
- Talk to my spouse about any advance made by a person in or out of the Church
- Never allow emotional attachments to form with anyone other than my spouse

Small Groups

In your group read and discuss the following:

Homosexuality is an emerging issue in our time. John J. McNeill addresses the issue in an article published in *The Christian Century*. McNeill wrote a book titled *The Church and the Homosexual* in order to move the Church toward the embrace of homosexual behavior. In fact, McNeill struggled with his own homosexuality until he came to accept it. He argues that this same struggle is replayed in the lives of other gay people.

McNeill seeks to make several arguments that support homosexuality. He argues that God does not intend all people to be heterosexual. He also argues that homosexuals represent part of God's creative plan by providing special gifts. Finally, McNeill argues that love between gays is healthy. All of this leads McNeill to wonder why there is so little debate regarding homosexuality in the Church.

McNeill reflects on what makes a sexual act fully human and what the Bible says about homosexual acts. He concludes that since sexuality is primarily about relationship, proper logic would lead to accepting homosexual acts as normative. McNeill also concludes that the Scripture nowhere condemns loving committed homosexual acts.

McNeill is just one of many voices in the world today challenging the traditional stance against homosexuality. The challenge of this issue hits at the core of Wesleyan-Holiness theology. Does the sanctifying grace of God have the capacity to re-narrate the lifestyle of homosexuality?

Reflect on homosexuality in light the resources of Christian holiness.

Case Study—Moments of Ethical Self-evaluation

Roger Nupastor picked up the March 8, 2005, edition of the *Chicago Tribune*. The headlines seemed to “scream” at him, “Boeing chief forced out—Ethics guardian ousted over affair.” He read further . . . (You can read the full article on the Internet using Google, the information that you need—“Michael Oneal” + “Boeing chief forced out”)

In a move that shocked a company already reeling from two years of scandal, Boeing Co.’s board forced chief Executive Harry Stonecipher to resign Monday after an internal investigation confirmed that he had a brief affair with a female executive.

The ouster came 15 months after Stonecipher’s predecessor, Philip Condit, resigned amid damaging charges that the aircraft-maker had repeatedly violated contracting laws.

“The affair reflected poorly on Harry’s judgment and would impair his ability to lead the company going forward,” said Lewis Platt, Boeing’s non-executive board chairman. “It was a judgment call about a violation of the code of conduct.”

Roger’s thoughts drifted from Boeing’s problems to wonderment about his own strength of character and how he might behave under certain circumstances . . . Yet the BIG thing on his mind, at the moment, was preparing for tonight’s 7 pm youth meeting. He began thinking about how to incorporate this latest public happening into the youth meeting. He needed a program, and time was running out. But more about that later.

What was troubling Roger was a set of happenings, and his remembrance of a comment from columnist Christina Robb—“How honest are you?” He revisited the thought. Concerned about his own deportment, Roger needed to do some personal confronting of his feelings and the directions they may be leading.

He began to think.

WHAT SHOULD I ASK MYSELF WHEN FACED WITH AN ETHICAL DECISION?

- What are the facts; what are my alternatives?
- What persons or groups will be affected?
- What do I owe each of these persons?
- What would produce the greatest benefits for all persons involved?
- What rights does each person have, and how can these rights best be respected?
- Am I treating all persons fairly and justly?
- What is the most ethical alternative for me to make?
- Why have I chosen it and how do I implement it?

ROGER'S INTERPRETATION OF WEBSTER'S DEFINITIONS

- Ethics—"the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral authority and obligation; the principles of conduct governing an individual or a (professional) group."
- Moral—"that which refers to principles of right or wrong in behavior."
- Moral—implies conformity to established sanctioned codes or accepted notions of right and wrong.
- Ethical—may suggest the involvement of more difficult or subtle questions of rightness, fairness, or equity. And "legal" is something different altogether, it is founded on law, has a formal status from that law and it is made effective by a court of law.

An emotional challenge was bothering Rev. Roger Nupastor, something he didn't want to share with the "Living Ethical Lives" group. And that very fact bothered him too. "What am I doing that would cause me to behave secretly? What's happening to me?" Those were the questions the anxious, up-and-coming Nupastor was asking himself.

The story of the Boeing executive bothered him, on a personal level. He was fretting about that word "affair."

He had been counseling one of the middle-aged ladies of the church. Ilene and her husband, Bill, were having some difficulties. She said it wasn't serious but important enough that she wanted the pastor's advice on how best to approach Bill.

In retrospect, nothing inappropriate had taken place in the two completed counseling sessions, but he was very much aware of his "feelings." His feeling told him . . .

- He was attracted to her.
- He liked talking to her.
- He liked the perfume she was wearing.
- He liked the way she smiled.
- Did she remind him of his mother? No, those were not the feelings he was experiencing.
- He had to admit, he was attracted to her, infatuated.
- And he thought she might be somewhat attracted to him.
- He prayed, "O Lord, help me! Give me guidance?"
- Should he tell someone of his feeling? Who? His wife? His mentor?
- Had he sinned?

How would you help Roger Nupastor deal with his ethical, professional dilemma?

What elements from his "outline" could be used to guide his actions?

Is he in dangerous territory?

Has he sinned?

Has he been unethical?

What would you write in your personal code of ethics to help in times like these?

What really is the problem? How would you identify the "real problem" and how would you "define" it?

Lesson 17: Integrity and Confidentiality within the Church

Due This Lesson

Code of Sexual Behavior
Response to Resource 16-11
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- define the moral significance of integrity
- articulate the parameters and importance of confidentiality
- understand and teach ethical theories and nurture ethical behavior in the Church
- discern and make theologically-based, ethical decisions in the midst of a complex and/or paradoxical context
- apply Christian ethics to the issues of integrity of the minister and the congregation for authentic Christian faithfulness and public witness

Homework Assignments

Write a 2- or 3-page covenant of integrity for pastoral ministry.

Read and respond to Resource 17-10.

Make a journal entry reflecting upon the content of this lesson.

Integrity Defined

The simple definition for integrity is wholeness. The entire movement of Scripture and the Christian tradition is to argue for the importance of integrity.

Some components of integrity

- broken spirit and a contrite heart
- does not include perfection, but it does require honesty
- cannot be merely a reflection of circumstances

Integrity means to be real, authentic, and whole.

Socrates and Plato argue that justice is about a rightly ordered soul, one where the reason rules both spirit and desire. Therefore, it is possible to live with justice and integrity. The Christian faith argues along a similar path as that of Plato and Socrates; the only difference is that integrity begins in faith, not in reason.

Integrity the Problem

All talk about integrity must confront the human tendency to locate too much worth in appearance.

Integrity comes with wisdom because such a life is capable of finding the eternal in the midst of the particular. The basic problem with integrity is that much of life is concerned with appearances. When life is lived this way, then the search for meaning is reduced to grasping at shadows.

Morality is about linking thought with action and embodiment; intention can become the pathway to a life that lacks integrity. When will and action are separated too far, then it can become highly problematic.

Another dimension of the problem with integrity relates to perfectionism.

Perfectionism leads either to extreme frustration in life or to false claims about oneself.

Integrity and Scripture

Qualifications for being a bishop according to Paul in his letters to Timothy

- Above reproach
- Married only once
- Temperate
- Sensible
- Respectable
- Hospitable
- Apt teacher
- Not a drunkard
- Not violent, but gentle
- Not quarrelsome
- Not a lover of money
- Must manage household well
- Must keep children submissive
- Not a recent convert
- Must be well thought of by outsiders

Such is the life to which those who desire to preach must aspire.

Qualifications for being a deacon

- Must be serious
- Not double-tongued
- Not indulging in much wine
- Not greedy for money
- Hold fast to the mystery of faith with a clear conscience
- Let them be tested
- Married only once
- Manage children and household well

While ministry is a profession with rules and responsibilities to go along with it, the meaning goes much deeper to a vocation. A profession claims status, but a vocation seeks to answer a call responsibly. A profession is about a career, and vocation concerns ministry.

Integrity and Morality

Deontological moral theories emphasize duty or goodwill and as such integrity means living without being conditioned by circumstances.

Teleological moral theories are interested in the end toward which action reaches. It requires that life become actively engaged.

Morality is about formation of character. The moral agent or person makes choices, but most importantly the moral agent brings character.

Integrity and Holiness Theology

Theologically speaking, integrity is spelled holiness. The teaching of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition holds up the whole life or the life of integrity as a possibility by the co-operant grace of God.

The manifestation of integrity in the life of holiness is conviction. Persistence is the major component of a life defined by conviction.

Integrity is who we are when no one is looking.

Convictions fall into three general categories: moral, doctrinal, and philosophical.

- Moral convictions concern how life is lived.
- Doctrinal convictions reflect one's theological understanding.
- Philosophical convictions define worldview.

Moral, Doctrinal, and Philosophical Convictions

Moral Convictions

- The moral life arises out of the gospel.
- The moral life is sustained in a community of noncoercive discourse.
- There ought to be a qualitative difference in the Christian life.
- Life is foundationally sacred.
- It is important to define the levels of covenantal responsibility.
- Understanding the meaning of stewardship and living in light of that reality is foundational to living out the Christian life.
- Moral convictions engender human freedom.

Doctrinal Convictions

- God continually and graciously seeks to make Himself known—Father, Son, and Spirit—as He enjoys His creation and is enjoyed by His creation.
- Humankind, while existing in a condition of co-determination, is finally defined by grace-empowered freedom.
- Human character is formed in worship.
- Jesus the Christ has entered history without privilege and has subverted the power of evil.
- The Spirit calls the community of faith into being through the preaching of Scripture.
- The Church exists to be the community of incarnation and a community of noncoercive discourse, which provides a structure of grace.
- The gracious offer of a transformed life, both as gift and grace-empowered response.
- The presence of the Rule of God is both reality and promise.

Philosophical Convictions

- All things are related—relational ontology.
- The community with which we identify shapes us.
- We exist as a prayer in the presence of God.
- Most of life is in between.

Practical Convictions

- I will always endeavor to be honest in my communication.
- I will honor my family as a matter of first importance.
- I will consider the way in which I use money as a way of testifying to my faith.
- I will never allow myself to be in a situation of sexual temptation.
- I will endeavor to grow in understanding by reading and formal education.
- I will never handle money as a pastor in my church.

Pastoral Confidentiality

The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene states:

It shall be the duty of every minister of the Church of the Nazarene to hold in trust and confidence any communication of a confidential nature given to him or her by a counselee of the congregation while he or she is acting in his or her professional character as a licensed or ordained minister of the Church of the Nazarene. The public dissemination of such communication without the express written consent of the declarant is expressly condemned. Any Nazarene minister who violates the above regulation subjects himself or herself to [disciplinary sanctions].⁹

Pastoral Confidentiality originated in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council [Canon XXI]:

Let the priest be discreet and cautious, so that he may pour wine and oil into the wounds of the injured person like a skilled physician, diligently inquiring into the circumstances both of the sinner and of the sin, so that he may wisely understand what advice he should give and what remedy he should apply, trying different tests to heal the patient.

Let him guard with greatest care against exposing the sinner even slightly by word or sign or in any other way. But if he should need wiser advice, let him ask for it cautiously, without any mention of the person, for if anyone dares reveal a sin uncovered to him in the place of confession, we decree that he not only be deposed from the office of priest but also be dispatched to a monastery of strict discipline to do penance for the rest of his life.¹⁰

Pastoral care would have little meaning apart from the trust guaranteed by the integrity of the pastor. From a deontological point of view confidentiality becomes an unconditional duty. Teleological consideration teaches that the consequence of pastoral confidentiality is dependent upon character and its consequence is character.

Practical and Ethical Problems of Confidentiality

First, it can be ambiguous ethically.

Second, sometimes confidence only pretends to protect the counselee when in fact it protects the counselor.

Third, too often confidentiality lacks accountability.

Fourth, confidentiality tends to expand beyond appropriate borders, perhaps to the point where any positive result is impossible.

Fifth, confidentiality can hide the real issue, which can be about power.

Integrity of Confidentiality

If confidentiality is to have true integrity, the following should characterize it:

- Confidentiality should be explicitly requested and granted.
- Before one grants a confidence it should cause one to ponder why such intimacy is required and what purpose confidence will serve in this context.
- One should consider very carefully the long-term effect of a confidence and determine whose need it serves.
- One should consider the way the offer of confidence changes the relationship.
- One should limit the range of the offer of confidence with increasing discipline.

Counseling with integrity requires that the pastor do more than hold secrets. It requires that the pastor establish a covenant with the counselee in order to offer perspective and direction in Christian integrity.

Case Study—Confidentiality and the Ethics of Pastoral Counseling

Pastor Oldtimer presented the class with several thoughts relating to ethical, professional counseling. Although the materials he used drew upon the nonchurch counseling profession, he asked the class to relate the following thoughts to “pastoral counseling” behaviors. Here is the list provided the class:

1. **Therapist Competence:** the therapist/clinician/psychologist/counselor (pastor) is expected to be fully educated on the issue for which he or she is giving advice. *That being true, what issues is the Nazarene pastor competent to address without ethical distress?*
2. **Therapist Duty:** It is the duty of the “pastor” to be able to look objectively at situations knowingly, and be aware of when to terminate the relationship. *What are the ethical steps to be taken by a pastor in referring his or her parishioner into the care of another professional?*
3. **Confidentiality:** Information shared by the client (parishioner) is privileged information. The counselor (pastor) does not have the right to share this information, but with few exceptions. Exceptions might include: seeking professional opinion from a colleague; or testimony before a court of law. *Do you find other exceptions?*

What would you add to the discussion about ethical confidentiality?

Can you locate a time where a minister of the Church of the Nazarene might offend this ethic? What steps would you offer to correct the behavior?

What would you add to the class conversation?

How did you arrive at your personal conclusions for your ministerial code of ethical behavior?

Lesson 18: Setting an Example for Believers in Family Life

Due This Lesson

Covenant of integrity
Response to Resource 17-10
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- articulate the importance of the family for the moral life
- understand the ethical theories and how they teach and nurture ethical behavior in the Christian community
- discern and make theologically informed decisions in the midst of a complex and/or paradoxical context
- understand and apply the unique ethical dimensions of spiritual leadership in the Church
- practice faithful stewardship of personal relations, including marriage and family

Homework Assignments

Write a 2- or 3-page essay on the important lessons in morality learned at home.

Read and respond to Resource 18-7.

Make a journal entry that engages the material of this lesson.

Bring your journal to the next class session. The journal will be checked for your faithfulness to completing this assignment. All the individual entries will not be read but the seriousness of thought will be evaluated.

The Bible

The Bible begins with a story about a family; the relationship between a man and a woman is the place where much of life takes place.

- First, God creates humankind in His image; that is, He creates human beings for communion.
- Second, Adam and Eve—male and female—are human together.
- Third, God created male and female as something different. God didn't create a perfect copy of the first human so they would be alike in every way. Rather God created something very different and very good.
- Fourth, the story of creation links sexual expression to the male-female relationship. After the creation of Eve we read, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28).

In fact, the history of the Bible is in some measure the history of families.

Paul and the Family

The family is so constituted that it needs to be shaped by the general rule Paul sets forth regarding mutual subjection. Ephesians 5:21 sets the ontology so to speak for the family, "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." The way the family lives is the way life is to be lived, in mutual subjection.

The issue Paul unfolds here is less about who is in charge than it is about how the husband and the wife are constituted into a living reality, capable of fruitfulness and co-dominion.

- First, **everyone** is to be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.
- Second, this includes wives being subject to husbands.
- Third, this also includes husbands loving their wives as Christ loved the Church, and as their own body.
- Fourth, because God created us to live in families, it is fitting that when the time comes the man and the woman become a separate family.

The family is a place where each is subject to the other and each is loved to his or her own fulfillment. It is a place that shows the world what God is doing. But the argument is even better than that because Paul seems to be saying the family is the place where He begins the process of regenerating humanity.

Authority of the Family

This new way of understanding authority is not demand but love. Translated into family life, authority is understood in terms of mutuality and love. Authority is no longer coercive, rather it is persuasive. What the law could not demand, a husband and a wife will freely give. The family is not a place of obligation. The family is a place where love opens up lives in an atmosphere of mutual self-fulfillment.

The family is also where children are formed in order that they might contribute to society and the Church; children need structure, and parents are responsible to provide it. Without structure and recognition of authority, a child will be lost in the ambiguity of moral decision-making; children are first taught to obey so later they will be capable of exercising freedom.

The family is a place where each member becomes a steward of the resources entrusted to it. In other words the family is a place where people learn to pull together, sacrifice for one another, and accomplish more together than they could alone.

Family and Moral Reflection

If morality is fostered in association, then the health of one's family is one predictor of virtue. A child is shown how to live by the example set by parents and even older siblings. If Aristotle is right, then virtue is born in the active engagement of family life. Perhaps the primary place for moral reflection is the family.

Deontological theories suggest there is an ought-ness about family responsibility. The categorical imperative sets forth the universal necessity of attending to the family not because of its results, but because it is the right thing to do.

Ethics is a disciplined reflection on the formation of a healthy character and its relationship to virtuous action. Character is formed in a family and virtuous action is first learned in the family.

The Pastor and the Family

A pastor needs to stand ready to serve, but the family should not be allowed to become a routine second on the agenda. Work cannot be allowed to become more important than family.

There is no excuse for routinely not spending time with the greatest gift a pastor can receive, a family. The pastor's commitment to family should be public. This will show others in the congregation how to maintain family.

A healthy family will not be an exclusive clan, rather it will be open for receiving friends and neighbors. A healthy family does not cling to its members. The true test of a healthy family is the ability to let go and bless the children as they start families of their own.

Good families are a result of discipline, commitment, and Church. Paul describes the Church as a body, an organic whole that while including differences is finally one.

Lessons Best Learned at Home

- It is not always going to go my way.
- I am important, but I am not the only one.
- It is important to share.
- I can trust those who are older than me.
- There is a place to run when things get tough.
- Sometimes I need to say, "Forgive me."
- Sometimes rules mean freedom.
- I matter to someone.
- Life goes on.
- Integrity matters.
- Sexuality has a place.

Case Study—How Honest Am I?

Roger Nupastor is troubled emotionally and spiritually today. You'll remember he read the March 8, 2005, edition of the *Chicago Tribune*. The article told about the ousting of a prominent ethics guardian. It was connected to "an affair" of some type. He really wished he knew all the facts. Someone said it very well, "It was a judgment call about a violation of the code of conduct."

Roger's thoughts drifted from Boeing's problems, and his own troubled spirit, to wonderment about how strength of character is developed and how he might behave under certain circumstances. Really, he is troubled over some ethical questions. Yet the BIG thing on his mind, at the moment, was preparing for tonight's 7 pm youth meeting. He began thinking about how to incorporate this latest public happening into an evening discussion/talk. He needed a program, and time was running out.

He contemplated, what would be some "talking points" that would fit into the lives of 12 to 15 year-olds? How could he deal with honesty and not include the idea of an "affair"? Perhaps, he should take a different track. He'd develop the project by using the idea of "Honesty as a Personal Policy?"

You'll also remember that he had started another district minister's class, Dr. Rodrick T. Leupp's lessons on *Investigating Christian Theology 1*. From the class he remembered reading something about lying. Something of Wesley's thoughts about lying. Or was it Kant? Oh well, he'd look it up.

Kant believed the maintenance of morality was essential to prevent the social and intellectual fabric from unraveling.

For Kant it was never right to tell a lie, not even to save the life of an innocent prisoner who has fled from terrorizing guards and now seeks refuge in your house. If you are asked if you are harboring a fugitive, even a righteous fugitive, you must answer, "yes." While you are answering in the affirmative, Kant reasons, the one being sought may be able to escape out the back door. If you lie, saying he is not here, and he is later captured, his blood is on your hands. Incidentally, John Wesley agreed with Kant that one should never lie. Wesley, possibly exaggerating for the sake of emphasis, claimed he would not tell a lie even to save the souls of the entire human race.

Lesson Sixteen (16-5), Faculty Guide, *Investigating Christian Theology 1*

Roger also remembered a comment from columnist Christina Robb—for the life of him, he couldn't remember where he read it—but he remembered how her question struck him when he read, "**How honest are you?**" He revisited the thought. "How honest am I?" Perhaps he could also use that comment in the youth meeting. But perhaps he needed to do some personal confronting about "honesty." An honest confronting about some of his personal feelings and the directions they may be going. Out of that inquiry came the outline and questions he would use.

He began to plan:

1. Make a list of simple questions that address the thought, "How honest am I?" Refer to the ethical approaches being studied with Pastor Oldtimer and the *Living Ethical Lives* class.

2. Revisit some old notes from a business ethics class taken at the junior college. Try to find the original sources of those thoughts. Who wrote them? Where did the comment appear in print? Who deserved credit for the ideas?
3. Develop helpful questions one could ask of oneself when facing an ethical decision.

He hoped the class discussion wouldn't "get too heavy." Here is his outline.

OUTLINE—How Honest Am I?

QUESTION: If you could get into a movie theater without paying, and be certain that no one would ever see you or that you'd ever get caught, would you do it?

Reid Psychological Systems and London House of Park Ridge, IL

WHAT I ASK MYSELF WHEN FACED WITH AN ETHICAL DECISION

- What are the facts; what are my alternatives?
- What persons or groups will be affected?
- What do I owe each of these persons?
- What would produce the greatest benefits for all persons involved?
- What rights does each person have, and how can these rights best be respected?
- Am I treating all persons fairly and justly?
- What is the most ethical alternative for me to make?
- Why have I chosen it and how do I implement it?

ROGER'S INTERPRETATION OF WEBSTER'S DEFINITIONS

- Ethics—"the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral authority and obligation; the principles of conduct governing an individual or a (professional) group."
- Moral—"that which refers to principles of right or wrong in behavior."
- Moral—implies conformity to established sanctioned codes or accepted notions of right and wrong.
- Ethical—may suggest the involvement of more difficult or subtle questions of rightness, fairness, or equity. And "legal" is something different altogether; it is founded on law, has a formal status from that law, and it is made effective by a court of law.

Well, he used his outline and ideas with the youth group. He later wished he hadn't. It didn't go well. Perhaps he tried too hard or tried to use too many words that he found hard to define for adolescents. Perhaps they were thoughts he had not been able to satisfy personally. Only part of the idea worked well with the youth. He felt bad that he hadn't gotten an important message successfully presented. It was similar to the feeling he periodically felt on a Sunday night, right after a less than stellar sermon.

At the next ethics class meeting, he told his story. He asked the class for help in redeveloping his thoughts. This time for two different audiences: A discussion for adolescents and a discussion approach for adults.

As a member of that class,

- How would you restructure Roger's outline?
- What would you add?
- What would you remove?
- How would you go about it differently?

- What makes the difference in ethical perception between adolescents and adults? Is there such a distinguishing understanding of "right and wrong"?
- What was obviously left out of his preparation?
- What are the ethical implications in his study of "How Honest Am I?"

Unit 6: Character Development and Spiritual Formation

Lesson 19: Christian Discipleship and the Virtues

Due This Lesson

Essay
Response to Resource 18-7
Journaling
Journals

Learner Objectives

- By the end of this lesson, participants will
- define the relationship between character development, spiritual development, and morality
 - apply basic understanding of ethical theories to teach and nurture ethical behavior in the Christian community
 - apply the unique ethical dimensions of spiritual leadership in the Church

Homework Assignments

Write a 2- to 3-page essay on a particular spiritual discipline and illustrate how it enhances moral reflection.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this lesson.

Theology Assumptions of Discipleship

Spiritual formation and discipleship suggest several important theological assumptions.

First, the holiness of God calls those who have been awakened by the Spirit to respond in obedience to the gospel.

Second, the offer of God's grace must be the occasion for a response for growth and virtue.

Third, evangelism and discipleship are but two sides of the same reality.

Fourth, all action arising from the Christian life is gracious.

Virtue is inspired by God, informed by the narratives of faith, determined by the logic of the incarnation, and embodied in the concrete practices of the Church.

Defining the Resources for Discipleship

The practice of **communal and personal worship** is essential for discipleship. More than anything else worship presents an orientation for life. The foundational point here concerns living in the conscious presence of God. Human beings were made to worship God; apart from worship there is no possibility for virtue.

Another resource for discipleship and virtue is serious **study of the Bible**. The careful reading and study of Scripture will allow life to be shaped by the narratives of the faith; the Bible can be a resource for discipleship and virtue because learning to listen to it is a discipline of growth.

Prayer constitutes another resource for discipleship and virtue. Human life in the best sense of the word is prayerful, it becomes a conversation with God.

Self-denial is another practice associated with discipleship and virtue—silence, fasting.

Another powerful resource for discipleship and virtue is **reading Christian literature**. The reading, study, and meditation upon Christian wisdom can be a source of growth and wisdom.

Christian **journaling** can also be an important practice. Sometimes writing down our thoughts and prayers can contribute to discipleship and virtue.

Praying the Lord's Prayer

There is no better way to think about the resource for prayer than the Lord's Prayer.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." The importance of orienting life toward God is essential. God is called Father . . . the idea of relationship.

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The merging of heaven and earth constitutes the horizon for Christian virtue.

"Give us this day our daily bread." Living a prayerful life joins the basic needs of life with the horizon of history.

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Because we have been forgiven (spiritual) and called to forgive (virtue), the extent of the link between discipleship and virtue seems complete in this stanza. Failure to forgive allows one to be victimized over and over again. Forgiveness allows a person to bring the hurt to God in light of the willingness to extend grace to others.

"And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one." Spiritual growth takes place in the presence of disappointment and evil.

If life is a conversation initiated by God, then prayer is the life of virtue. One cannot be spiritual—in the Christian sense—without being virtuous. Likewise the virtues cannot be sustained apart from the spiritual formation.

Inspiration

Inspiration comes from the Holy Spirit for spiritual growth and the attainment of virtue.

The most important reference to the Spirit is the outgoing activity of God. Spirit is how God is and to speak of God reverently is to speak of Him as Spirit. The power of God is manifest as Spirit. In other words, God is as He acts as Spirit.

Thirst is satisfied in Jesus through the Spirit. Yet, the purpose of being satisfied finds its fulfillment in an outward flow. Thus, spiritual formation becomes virtue in the life of the Christian.

Holy Spirit

Several specific passages indicate the role of the Spirit and its importance for understanding the Christian faith.

Acts 10:45, "The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles."

Rom 5:5, "And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

Gal 4:6, "And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father!'"

John 16:7, "I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."

John 20:22, "He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

Acts 2:33, "Exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear."

Matthew 12:18, "Here is my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles."

John records the fact that Jesus gave to His disciples formal teaching about the sending of the Holy Spirit. John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26; 16:7-14.

Holy Spirit

The Christian religion owes its existence to the intensity of the conviction of the apostolic church that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit had taken place. Church membership was a participation in the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14; Phil 2:1).

It is the only hope of unity (Acts 4:32; Eph 4:3; 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 2:18).

The Holy Spirit bestows certain gifts upon the Church (1 Cor 12:12-31).

The Spirit guides, leads, and directs (Acts 8:29; 10:19; 11:12; 13:2; 20:23, 28).

The Spirit, in fact, is the Spirit of liberty, releasing people from bondage to the law (Gal 5:13-18; Rom 8:2; 2 Cor 3:6, 17; John 8:31-33).

The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of life (Jn 6:63; 1 Cor 15:45) breathes life into the new creation, the Church. After their baptism in the Holy Spirit, Christians walk in newness of life, the life of the new creation, the life of the Age to Come (Rom 7:6).

Holy Spirit

According to Mildred Bangs Wynkoop:¹¹

- the Holy Spirit is free
- the Holy Spirit always hides himself and spotlights Christ
- the Holy Spirit maintains the unity of the Godhead
- the Holy Spirit always produces clear thinking, rational judgment, sharp awareness, the ability to discriminate and the power to make contrary choices
- the Holy Spirit seeks to decompartmentalize the divided heart and heal broken fellowships
- the Holy Spirit reasons, communicates, convinces, satisfies the moral judgment
- the Holy Spirit stimulates a strong desire to learn, to use the mind, to push ignorance back where error lurks
- the Holy Spirit leads to truth
- the Holy Spirit sheds the love of God in the heart
- the Holy Spirit leads to straight thinking
- the Holy Spirit pushes us onward

The Holy Spirit inspires unity and clarity in the Christian life. A scriptural understanding of the Holy Spirit provides a better way to talk about virtue and spiritual growth than mere subjectivity. The Holy Spirit represents a call to an unambiguous life. The Holy Spirit is the divine dimension of life as it is exhibited in the delicate tissues of life. It is the divine presence, which is the drive toward a virtue.

Discipline

Discipline is the other side of inspiration in the attainment of virtue and spiritual formation. While inspiration arises in response to the call of the Spirit, it is as discipline that the reason begins to order life around the gospel. Discipline is about the will and its capacity consciously to reach to a specific end.

Discipline, then, is practical rationality.

Wesleyan Spiritual Formation

The Wesleyan vision for spiritual formation goes something like this:

Prayer: Wesley prayed privately. He worked with the prayers of others. This included the devotional classics.

Scripture: Sometimes Wesley is called the man of one book, but he was well aware of the traditions that inform the understanding of Scripture.

Lord's Supper: Wesley thought the primary means of grace could be located in the practice of the Eucharist.

Fasting: The self-denial of food for a time for the purpose of prayer contributes to spiritual formation.

Christian Conference: This aspect of spiritual formation recognizes the social aspect of the Christian faith.

Prudential Means of Grace: This is expressed as doing good, doing no harm, and attending to the means of grace.

It is through careful attention to these practices that the life of a Christian is formed and the virtues are attained.

Small Groups

Read and discuss the following:

Part of the meaning of discipleship and spiritual formation involves the practice of honest self-examination. In order actually to accomplish this, one must be capable of living between the overly sensitive guilt consciousness of a person who is constantly "down on himself or herself" and the person who has no "self-awareness" at all. Introspection and self-examination are essential, but they can become ends in themselves. When this happens, a person can become so self-absorbed that spiritual formation becomes a journey into self rather than a journey into God.

Marjorie Thompson¹² indicates that all Christian self-examination depends upon two basic insights. The first insight is that God truly loves us. The second insight is as human beings we come to God in our weakness and brokenness. From these two insights a person can be prepared to think about the implications of self-examination. She goes on to point toward specific practices that can engender self-examination. One of these practices is "examination of conscience," which helps bring us to the place where we can comprehend our failings, even our trespasses. Another practice Thompson points to is "examination of consciousness," which enhances our ability to see both the positive and negative dimensions. This means such things as attitude and specific behaviors are understood in a much broader trajectory of life.

Consider the importance of self-examination.

Reflect upon specific ways in which "examination of conscience" and "examination of consciousness" can contribute to spiritual formation and discipleship, and thus character.

Case Study—Illegal Immigrants and Church Membership

Roger has an associate or assistant minister helping him now. (He wondered which of those terms—associate or assistant—to use in describing Pastor Dan.) Oh, it isn't that the church has grown so much, but he asked a minister friend of his to join him. He also wondered if he should consult with anyone else before making the decision. But he didn't. (What's your take on this arrangement?)

Well, Pastor Dan has been busy working in the Hispanic and Mexican community. Folks have been converted and have sought membership in the church. Long time members of the church are glad to have them and have warmly welcomed them—a welcome that is sincere and appropriate. They are pleased to have Pablo Mendez and Alberto Rodriguez and their families as part of the church.

The new converts are attending regularly but they are having some uncertainty about Pastor Roger. They don't know if he is a regular priest or a bishop. And they are wondering how "Mary" is to be addressed during worship.

They have come forward during a public service. They have prayed, asked for the Lord's forgiveness, and have testified that they are forgiven of their sins, and have been "born again" and desire membership in the Church of the Nazarene.

Roger and the board think the converts should take a membership class and that would help them resolve some of the differences between this new Church of the Nazarene and the church of their youth.

But something else is bothering Pastor Dan. Dan is privy to some additional information that has not been shared with Pastor Roger, or the board, or anyone else, for that matter.

Here are the facts known only to Pastor Dan: Three or four of the new converts do not have papers for being in the United States. Dan became aware of this information during a prayer time and conversation at the altar.

In his own thoughts, he has used the term "illegal aliens" to describe their status. He may be unclear about that, for he struggles with the terms emigrant, immigrant, migrant, and alien. Two families have children born here in the U.S.

- Are there ethical problems here? What about legal problems? What are they?
- What should Pastor Dan do?
- What should Roger Nupastor do?
- What should Pastor Dan share?
- What is he obligated to share?
- What is he not obligated to share?
- Are there any pieces of information he is restricted from sharing? What might they be and how does the restriction work?

Lesson 20: Understanding the Church as a Resource for Moral Decision-Making

Due This Lesson

Essay
Response to Resource 19-11
Journaling

Learner Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will

- articulate an understanding of the Church as a resource for moral decision-making
- apply basic understanding of ethical theories to teach and nurture ethical behavior in the Christian community
- apply the unique dimensions of spiritual leadership in the Church
- practice faithful stewardship of personal relations including gender relationships, marriage and the family, personal finance, and professional conduct
- place ministry context in light of the large schemes of world and national history

Homework Assignments

Covenant with God to live a life worthy of the name Christian.

The Church

The Church is not a concept. It is real people with real problems and possibilities who are given a new name and a better way to be in the world.

The consistent manner in which Paul links the Christian faith with virtue is unmistakable. It is equally clear that it is the Church that Paul addresses. He does so because it is within the ministry and accountability provided therein that virtue should be engendered.

Church as it seeks to comprehend its moral discourse can take the form of either deontology or teleology. The sense in which the church seeks to teach and live out Christian virtues very easily takes the form of duty and goodwill.

The Church: A Theological Account

One way to understand the Church is as a community of inheritance; the Church is a new people who are defined by God. The Church is a new thing called into being in the Spirit through the preaching of the Word.

The earliest self-understanding of the Church is as a spiritual society, which replaces Israel as the people of God in the world; the Church gathers the faithful throughout the world together, in order to enable them to grow in faith and holiness.

Models of the Church

One of the celebrated typologies for understanding the Church is set forth by Avery Dulles.

Institution

- This understanding of the Church sees the Church as a perfect society.
- The Church's tasks are understood as teaching, sanctifying, and governing.

Mystical communion

- Very organic because the emphasis is placed upon "body of Christ" and "people of God."
- Emphasis is placed on the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Sacrament

- The sacraments mediate God's grace.
- Emphasis upon the church's incarnation into society.

Herald

- The central moment in the life of the Church is the preaching of the gospel.
- Emphasis is placed upon being a witness before the world.

Servant

- The Church operates between the tensions of secular and sacred.
- Significant stress is placed upon justice, peace, and social issues in this view.

Article XI—The Church

The Church of the Nazarene for much of its history had an implicit understanding of the Church, but in 1989 it adopted an explicit statement.

Each paragraph addresses a different aspect of the Church: nature, marks, mission, and historical reality.

The foundational affirmations of Article XI are:

- The Church is a community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, the covenant people of God made new in Christ, and the Body of Christ.
- The Church is called together by the Holy Spirit through the Word.
- The Church is called to unity and fellowship in the Spirit—worship through preaching of the Word, observance of the sacraments, ministry in his name, obedience to Christ, and mutual accountability.
- The mission of the Church is to continue the redemptive work of Christ—in the power of the Spirit—holy living, evangelism, discipleship, and service.
- Historical reality: organizes itself in culturally conditioned forms, exists as local and universal, sets apart persons for ministry, and lives now under God’s rule as it anticipates the coming of the Lord.

Leadership and the Church

The particular interrelationship between power and influence and what it suggests for leadership has moral significance. Leadership is both a responsibility and a gift, it is a burden and it is a trust. Simply put— influence is more important than position, character over strategy, patience, ability to make difficult decisions, willingness to confront, and finally understanding.

First, we must distinguish between power/position and influence.

- Influence is about persuasion.
- Power/position is about coercion.

Second, leadership is not really about a life strategy—it is about character.

- Strategy reduces things to a level of shallowness that rarely serves us well.
- Character is about a texture of life that embraces the complexity of life in its attempt to be influential.

Third, leadership is about patience—the kind that has a grasp of the truth.

- Patience is about knowing and acting upon the truth.
- Patience is about the truth and our capacity to envision it.

Fourth, leadership is about the ability to make the difficult decisions.

Fifth, leadership is about the capacity to confront.

- The courage to be a person of conviction when it really counts.
- Confrontation is about the expression of our true conviction regarding what really counts.

Finally, leadership is about understanding.

- Leadership and influence must be informed by the moral and doctrinal convictions of a mature understanding.
- Leadership arises most clearly through an informed mind.

Toward an Understanding of the Church as a Resource for Moral Decision-Making

The Church exists as the new relationality of those who have been discovered in the call of God through Christ and the Spirit. This new relationality arises in the Spirit through the preaching of the gospel to include a new way of being in the world. The Church is a community where the virtues touch the world as a witness to the redeeming grace of God.

The Church exists to embody the continuing presence of God through the power of the Spirit and as such to be the community of the Incarnation.

The Church is manifest to the world in worship, sacramental faithfulness, spiritual unity, transmission of the faith, discipline, and healing presence through the gifts of the Spirit:

- kerygma, the report of the gospel
- leitourgia, the celebration of the story
- diakonia, service
- koinonia, fellowship

These essential practices illustrate the link between theology and ethics.

At all times the Church must struggle to speak to culture without accommodating to culture. Virtues must always be an outgrowth of the faith once delivered to the saints, but they must be continually acted out.

The Church is that community bound by the grace of God and who intends to be a place where that love becomes incarnate in freedom, mutuality, respect, justice, and expectation.

The Church as a Community of Moral Discourse

The responsibility to be the leaven of the world becomes a conversation first within the community, but always extending to the world. Therefore, it is essential that the Church speak to the issues that confront the world as a matter of witness.

The pastor bears a special responsibility in this moral discourse. The minister is set apart for the purpose of preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, and offering guidance to the life of the Church; this means the minister is charged with the task of reminding the laity of the vast resources for moral reflection.

Moral Discourse and Specific Issues

The moral discourse of the Church is shaped by theological tradition, but it is also about specific concerns.

- First, the Church seeks to be a resource for gender relations.
- Second, the Church can be a place where family and ministry is nourished by the gospel.
- Third, the Church can teach the narratives and principles from which personal finance can be a reflection of Christian virtue.

Glossary

This glossary is provided for quick reference to many of the terms used in the module.

Absolute rights: the kind of rights that cannot be overridden under any circumstances.

Act utilitarianism: determining morality by direct appeal to the principle of utility.

Association: according to Aristotle associations are necessary in order to achieve certain virtues. He talks about the household, the village, and the state as examples of associations. Friendship is another example of association.

Bad morality: the inappropriate attempt to establish a vice as a virtue.

Cardinal virtues: wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance.

Caritas: according to Augustine the ordered love of the heavenly polity, charity.

Categorical imperative: envisioning moral action with no reference to an end by use of pure reason. Morals expressed in terms of universals.

Cupidity: according to Augustine the disordered love of the earthly polity.

Deontological ethics: the attempt to determine morality on the basis of duty, categorical imperative, and goodwill. This way of reflecting on morality is associated with Immanuel Kant and others.

Determinism: the idea that all human action is affected by outside forces. Hard determinism suggests all human action is absolutely determined, therefore there is no freedom. Soft determinism means while human beings are free to act as they please, they still are affected by outside sources in some fashion.

Egoism: a challenge to moral reflection that conceives of all action as purely self-interest. When action is understood in this manner selfishness can preclude moral reflection.

Epistemology: the branch of philosophy that attempts to ask the question, "How do I know?" It is the study of knowledge.

Ethics: a disciplined reflection on the formation of a healthy character and its relationship to virtuous action.

Eudaemonistic utilitarianism: the form of utilitarianism that emphasizes happiness.

General utilitarianism: the attempt to define action by asking what would happen if everyone were to do the same in a particular situation.

Goodwill: according to Kant this is the only principle that is good without qualification.

Greatest happiness principle: the attempt to define everything in terms of utility, which defines morality as that which produces the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people.

Hedonistic utilitarianism: the form of utilitarianism that emphasizes pleasure.

Hypothetical imperative: the kind of imperative that envisions an end as a practical concern. Morality expressed practically.

Ideal utilitarianism: the form of utilitarian ideals for producing the greatest happiness.

Mean (the): Aristotle's understanding that virtue exists between the vice of excess and the vice of deficit.

Metaphysics: the branch of philosophy sometimes called first philosophy that seeks to answer the question, "What is real?"

Moral imagination: the capacity to empathize with others and discern the opportunity for moral action in light of the whole.

Natural rights: the attempt to determine morality on the basis of universal rights.

Negative rights: the rights that place obligation on the rights holder.

Ontology: literally the study of being. It is also another term for metaphysics.

Patristic: a period of Christian thought (AD 100-600), which set forth some of the basic themes of the Christian faith.

Pluralism: there are multiple centers of value that can contradict one another and still all be true.

Positive rights: the rights that obligate the rights holder to behave in certain ways.

Prima facie rights: those rights that on the face of it appear to be the case.

Relativism: there is no distinguishing mark for values; no universals exist.

Rule utilitarianism: emphasizes the centrality of rules in morality, the rules that promote the greatest general good for everyone.

Sympathy: the attempt to make moral decisions solely or primarily on the basis of emotion. When moral reflection is only associated with sympathy, it rarely embodies virtue.

Teleological ethics: the attempt to determine morality on the basis of consequences and ends. Character is important for this pattern of moral reflection.

Theological virtues: faith, hope, and love.

Utilitarianism: a way of doing philosophical ethics that attempts to resolve moral dilemmas by appealing to the greatest happiness principle.

Virtues: acquired human excellence.

Endnotes

¹ Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom? How the Church Is to Behave If Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 68.

² Frank Matera, *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996), 248-255.

³ This is defined in Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, (2nd ed., Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 187.

⁴ This translation of the Rule of Benedict is found in J. Phillip Wogaman and Douglas M. Strong, eds., *Readings in Christian Ethics: A Historical Sourcebook* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 67.

⁵ Wesley's *Works*, vol. VI, 400-401.

⁶ The particular work where Hauerwas develops the idea of the church as social ethic is *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 9-12.

⁷ Stanley Hauerwas makes an argument for the permeable self in "The Sanctified Body: Why Perfection Does Not Require a 'Self,'" in *Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998): 77-91.

⁸ Samuel M. Powell, "A Contribution to a Wesleyan Understanding of Holiness and Community," in *Embodied Holiness: Toward a Corporate Theology of Spiritual Growth*, eds. Samuel M. Powell and Michael E. Lodahl (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1999).

⁹ Church of the Nazarene, *Manual 2005-2009* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2005), paragraph 433.14.

¹⁰ John H. Leith, ed., *Creeeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc/Anchor Books, 1963): 56-59.

¹¹ This comes from a handout Mildred Bangs Wynkoop gave in class at Trevecca Nazarene University in the early 1970s.

¹² Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995), 84.