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The Seat of Justice in the House of Love: Toward an Ecclesial Theory of Justice

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE SEAT OF JUSTICE IN THE HOUSE OF LOVE:
TOWARD AN ECCLESIAL THEORY OF JUSTICE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN THEOLOGY

BY

JAMES GRANT GHOLSON

CHICAGO, IL

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
PREFACE	1
CHAPTER ONE: FRAMEWORK FOR AN ECCLESIAL THEORY OF JUSTICE	3
Introduction.....	3
Prolegomena to a Postliberal, Ecclesial Ethics	7
Karl Barth.....	7
Ludwig Wittgenstein	13
Hans Frei.....	18
George Lindbeck.....	22
Summary.....	29
The “Standard Account” of Christian Ethics.....	31
Pre-Constantinian Era	32
Post-Constantinian Era.....	36
Religion in the Enlightenment	41
Christian Narrative Justice: Promise and Problems	45
Mary Doak.....	49
Glenn Stassen	52
CHAPTER TWO: THE COMMUNITY OF THE RESURRECTION VERSUS THE PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS OF THE WORLD.....	60
Introduction.....	60
A Post-Protestant Paul?: The New Perspective	64
The Faith of Jesus Christ	75
Paul’s Apocalyptic Gospel.....	81
God wages war against fallen creation	82
God’s victory through Christ liberates humanity	83
Christ reveals our sin.....	85
The Exousiology of the New Testament.....	93
Berkhof’s <i>Christ and the Powers</i>	93
The Powers in the Work of John Howard Yoder.....	106
The Role of the Community in Relation to the Powers	115
Conclusion	116
CHAPTER THREE: LOVE AND JUSTICE	120
Introduction.....	120
The Thomistic Option: Two Encyclicals of Benedict XVI	124
Critical Analysis	133
An Honest Realism: Reinhold Niebuhr.....	141
Critical Analysis	147
A Dialectical Approach: Paul Ricoeur.....	152
Critical Analysis	164

Conclusion	166
CHAPTER FOUR: TWO KINDS OF JUSTICE: AGAPIC AND INSTITUTIONAL.....	172
Introduction.....	172
Institutional Justice	174
Critique of Distribution Theories of Justice	176
The Situated Self.....	179
Group Identity.....	184
The Five Faces of Oppression	187
City Life.....	196
Young's Responsibility for Justice	197
Structural Processes as Powerful Practices	201
Self-Critique as Ecclesial Institutional Justice	211
The Church as a City	214
Summary.....	220
Agapic Justice	222
Justice Done By Love.....	224
Justice Undone By Love	227
Reading Matt. 20:1-16 and 2 Thess. 3:7-10 Together	229
Ecclesial Justice.....	233
CONCLUSION: THE CRISIS AT THE HOLY SEPULCHRE AS A TEST CASE FOR ECCLESIAL JUSTICE	237
Injustice at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre	237
A Brief History of the Holy Sepulchre.....	239
Ecclesial Justice at the Holy Sepulchre	248
BIBLIOGRAPHY	255
VITA.....	274

PREFACE

... a disturbance broke out between Greeks and Armenians but both sides had evidently been prepared beforehand for a conflict. Pilgrims were provided with stones and cudgels, which been previously concealed (it was believed by the Armenians) behind the columns and in dark corners...and a further supply of ammunition [was being] thrown down into the body of the church from a window in the circular gallery which communicated with the Greek convent. A dreadful conflict ensued. The Pasha left his seat in the nether gallery and ran down to direct his attendants, civil and military, in separating the combatants, and only succeeded in dividing them after he had himself received several severe blows on the head, and his secretary got a cut on the hand from a knife. The colonel in command of the troops and many of his soldiers got wounded and bruised. Some twenty-five Greeks and Armenians were severely wounded, and a great numbers received heavy blows.¹

On October 26, 2008, it happened again. For the third time in a year, the police arrived at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem to break up a fistfight between rival monks.² As was often the case, the dispute concerned who had the right to process within the church when; now, it was the Armenians who protested the presence of a Greek monk in the Edicule—the centuries-old shrine built over the traditional tomb of Jesus—during their celebration of the Feast of the Discovery of the Cross. By rights, the Armenians claimed, the shrine was theirs to use that day. But the Greeks pressed their counter-claim

1. James Finn, *Stirring Times, or Records from Jerusalem Consular Chronicles of 1853 to 1856* (London: C. Kegan Paul, 1878), 2: 458, quoted in Raymond Cohen, *Saving the Holy Sepulchre: How Rival Christians Came Together to Rescue Their Holiest Shrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 10.

2. “Monks Brawl at Jerusalem Shrine,” BBC News, 9 November 2008, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7718587.stm> (accessed 25 September 2016).

to a permanent presence in the shrine, and the enmity again boiled over into a scuffle that landed monks in jail and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the headlines.

The events of October 26th represent just a single episode in a bleak, centuries-long sectarian dispute between the six resident monastic communities who call Christianity's holiest site home. Where the world rightly expects to witness a shared lifestyle of diversity-in-unity typified by apostolic *κοινωνία*, it instead discovers a tragicomedy of partisan in-fighting and legalistic pedantry. The entry point in understanding why such troubles persist is to ask what recourse for justice exists to adjudicate the long-standing disputes between the communities. That there *is* no such satisfactory recourse reflects a much broader problem within Christian ethics generally, which is a lack of critical attention paid to developing an account of justice to serve the ecclesial community. Whereas the general theologizing of justice abounds, the question of how to theorize justice within, and how it might apply to, the agapic community of the resurrected Lord, remains largely ignored.

This dissertation is about ecclesial justice. It attempts to give an account of justice for the church, rooted in its ecumenical patrimony: the biblical narrative and attendant characteristic practices that mark (out) the Christian community as a political body in the world. It is my hope that what follows in these pages constitutes the beginning of a conversation about churchly justice, and the beginning of the end to disputes between the followers of Jesus.

As for those monks in the Holy Sepulchre, we will return to their particular problems in the Conclusion of this dissertation to see if what we have discovered about ecclesial justice in the intervening pages provides a way out of their situation.

CHAPTER ONE
FRAMEWORK FOR AN ECCLESIAL THEORY OF JUSTICE

Introduction

I have arrived at the rock bottom of my convictions. And one might almost say that these foundation-walls are carried by the whole house.¹

What considerations go into theorizing about justice? How, and in what ways, might the “usual” process of thinking about justice change if undertaken within an ecclesial ethical paradigm? What is ecclesial ethics anyway?

Over the last several decades, a number of Christian theologians and prominent ecumenical work groups have broken with conventional ways of doing ethics by establishing Christian ethical claims in the lifeworld of the church community.² This “ecclesial ethical” mode of inquiry seeks to recover within Christian theology the Aristotelian sense in which ethics refers broadly to the social intercourse (*politikos*) of a community (*polis*), rather than to, for example, logically-derived universalizable axioms or abstract moral principles to which anyone and everyone must rationally assent. The

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* #248, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, and trans. Dennis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 33.

2. The so-called “litany of costlies” published by the World Council of Churches under the title *Ecclesiology and Ethics: Ecumenical Ethical Engagement, Moral Formation, and the Nature of the Church* is one example of more recent ecumenical theology being shaped by predominantly postliberal concerns (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997). See also Arne Rasmusson, “Ecclesiology and Ethics: The Difficulties of Ecclesial Moral Reflection,” *Ecumenical Review* 52, v. 2 (April 2000), 180-194.

ecclesial ethicist looks first not to first principles of logic or the contours of human society itself for cues to interpret the signs of the times, but to the life made possible by Christ, the life of the political community created in the wake of the resurrection.³ Ecclesial ethicists are thus characteristically concerned with notions of virtue and character, those particular habits of excellence that make possible the political ends of the ecclesial community; they express their claims narratively, being derived from the story of God's interventions in the world, oftentimes underscoring the normativity of Jesus as presented in the Gospels; they develop contextual epistemological and hermeneutical approaches, in order to speak both to the concrete realities they seek to address, and to disrupt the hegemony of moral universalism, enabling them to find political consensus within common social dialogic spaces without watering down or distorting Christian ethical claims. Thus has ecclesial ethics often turned to the formulation *church-as-polis*, a heuristic means of superimposing the ecclesial body onto the formal political ethics of Aristotle. For Samuel Wells, ecclesial ethics, like "subversive ethics" (i.e., liberation theology and ethics), is concerned with the liberative power of Christianity, and hence repeats its subversive critique of purportedly "neutral" universalisms. But unlike subversive ethics, whose "anthropology...is still too much wedded to individual autonomy or self-expressions," ecclesial ethics considers that "liberation lies not

3. See the chapter "Ecclesial Ethics" in Samuel Wells, *Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 155. Of all of its exponents, Wells has probably been the most committed to explicitly using the term "ecclesial ethics."

specifically with the articulation and expression of experience but with the traditions and practices of the church and the character and acts of God.”⁴

Ecclesial ethics is part of a larger subset of modern theological inquiry known as *postliberalism*, which is itself a product of postmodern theological discourse.

Postliberalism, broadly defined, is theology epistemically committed to antifoundationalism (i.e., the denial of a universal basis of knowledge, which includes moral knowledge), communitarianism (i.e., the valuation of the experiences, values, and language of communities, over those of the sovereign individual), and historicism (i.e., the viewing of individual experience as ultimately shaped by, and arising from, particular traditions situated in history).⁵ If *postmodern* names the critical reaction to the imperialistic metanarratives of reason and progress of modernity, and the impulse to locate finally the mundane origins of all reality in human production, then *postliberalism*, as a subspecies of postmodern inquiry within theology, attempts to locate God working among and through the cultural production of the people who have heard and responded to God’s call.

While these insights have proved to be provocative within contemporary Christian ethical circles, as adjudged by the sheer amount of scholarly reaction to it, postliberalism remains a minority, albeit growing, position. Yet among its adherents there has been little interest in developing a critical Christian theory of social justice. This

4. Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 34.

5. This definition of postliberalism is William Placher’s; see his “Postliberal Theology” in *The Modern Theologians*, David F. Ford, ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 343.

dissertation is an effort to jumpstart that conversation. As such, I begin in this first chapter with an attempt to sketch out a moral epistemological and hermeneutical framework for an ecclesial justice from cultural-linguistic perspective, that is, from a perspective that views Christianity as a particular “form of life” or “way of being” in the world. In order to do so, I first provide a summary account of those foundational insights that animate this ecclesial ethical project (and postliberalism generally), which I identify as ultimately rooted in the work of the Swiss-German Reformed theologian Karl Barth and the philosopher of language, Ludwig Wittgenstein. The combined influence of these two thinkers on the co-patriarchs of postliberalism, the American theologians Hans Frei and George Lindbeck (the latter of whom coined the term *postliberal*) in the generation following, has been decisive. Next, I turn to a historical narration of the development of Western theological and philosophical ethics as an autonomous realm of moral discourse as a means to explicate the differences between the ecclesial ethical method and its dominant modern alternatives. I will then attempt to frame ecclesial ethics as a mode of narrative ethics that offers to theology both a more adequate frame of reference for understanding ourselves as story-formed moral agents as well as a more fruitful way of translating the normative account of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection present in the Gospels into a paradigm for contemporary discipleship. Afterwards, I will critique two attempts to construct a political theology of justice from a Christian narrativist’s perspective. It is my hope that these insights will provide the requisite conceptual foundation to explicate an ecclesial ethic of justice in the subsequent chapters.

Prolegomena to a Postliberal, Ecclesial Ethics

The turn to understanding religion as a cultural-linguistic system (to borrow Lindbeck's phraseology) in modern theology was precipitated by identifiable movements within theology and philosophy that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century, namely the dialectical theology of Karl Barth and the later linguistic philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. The work of both men constitute major turns in their own right from the thought of their contemporaries; Barth broke with the dominant natural theology to emphasize God's transcendence and radical otherness; Wittgenstein revolutionized Anglo-American analytical philosophy in correlating meaning with use rather than reference. In both cases the move is away from abstraction and universalization and toward contextualization and particularity. Because these marks remain characteristic of the postliberal theological project, as well as postmodernism generally, these figures bear, if indirectly, on this formulation of an ecclesial ethic of justice.

Karl Barth

"An entire world of theological exegesis, ethics, dogmatics, and preaching, which up to that point I had accepted as basically credible was thereby shaken to the foundations, and with it everything which flowed at the time from the pens of the German theologians."⁶ This was reaction of Karl Barth to the publication in 1914 of a public statement of support by ninety-three prominent German artists, scientists, and scholars for the belligerent German military action that precipitated the conflict of World War I. To Barth's horror,

6. Karl Barth, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher* in *Karl Barth: Theologian of Freedom*, in Green, 71.

the *Manifesto of the 93*⁷ as it came to be known, had included almost all of his own German teachers among the signatories.⁸ It was confronting this document that stirred Barth to undertake the search for a “wholly other” theological foundation to the regnant liberal theology of his day. Eventually Barth came to identify somewhat painfully the theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher, his first theological love, as the root of the problem, for he recognized that the inability of the prevailing modern theology to resist the now militarized *volksgeist* lay in its acceptance of underlying Schleiermacherian presumptions about the proper grounds and object of theological reflection, namely, the human person itself. Having eagerly adapted Kant’s anti-metaphysical premises into a theological idiom, Schleiermacher fundamentally reimagined theological inquiry as an investigation into the internal dynamics of the believing subject’s experience of faith, and redefined Christian doctrines as “accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech.”⁹ Theology after Schleiermacher ceased to be speech about God and became speech about the human person, such that, “the christianly pious person,” and not God as an acting Subject, became “the criterion and content” of theology. Barth sensed that the future of theology as an autonomous discourse capable of offering critical resistance to human presumption relied on it being anchored in the external and objective ground of the being of God, and it was to this massive task or reorganization that he set himself.

7. The full text is available as “To The Civilized World” *The North American Review* 210, n. 765 (Aug. 1919), 284-287.

8. Karl Barth, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 71.

9. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans H. R. Machintosh and J. S. Steward. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928), 76.

In an essay published shortly before he died, Barth offered an engrossing retrospective of his own intellectual history in relation to the work of Schleiermacher. The *Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher* (the name is an allusion to Kierkegaard's polemic against Hegel, and serves for Barth a similar polemical purpose) offers an adequate general description of Schleiermacher's own broad theological project as well as those central Schleiermacherian theses that animated the liberal theological tradition extending from this work.¹⁰ The theses can be summed up in the following:

(a) The theological enterprise is primarily, intrinsically, and authentically a *philosophy*, wrapped only accidentally, extrinsically, and inauthentically in Christian garments.

(b) Persons feel, think, and speak in and from a sovereign consciousness to which their own beings are essentially united.

(c) Human feeling, thinking, and speaking occur primarily in relation to a *general* reality whose nature and meaning are derived and established in advance, and that that which is specific and concrete can and must only be understood as a particular manifestation of this more fundamental reality (and thus occasion only secondary reflection).

(d) The spirit which animates a person's feeling, thinking, and speaking is a universally effective spiritual power that remains basically diffuse.

Barth's reaction to these theses over his long career form the core of his dialectical theology, which emphasized above all the radical otherness of God and, correspondingly,

10. Karl Barth, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 84-88.

the inability of rational discourse to resolve the fundamental paradox between human finitude and God's infinite being. While the theological axiom by which it is established that God does not belong to the order of objects that we may subjugate to the process of our viewing, conceiving, and expressing, has always carried broad assent, Barth painted the division between the human and divine in the starkest possible relief. For Barth, our own conceptualizations of God and the categories according to which they are arranged "continually break apart so that [what we mean when we say "God"] is not actually described, and therefore defined" by us.¹¹ In contradistinction to the *analogia entis*, the animating principle of natural theology according to which as creatures our being reflects, however darkly, that of the Creator, Barth argued that "we do not find in ourselves anything which resembles God," and we therefore, "cannot apprehend Him by ourselves."¹² In its place, Barth substituted the *analogia fidei*, the analogy of faith, by

11. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/I (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 187.

12. Ibid., 188. The question for Barth of what is at stake concerning natural theology, and the *analogia entis* on which it is grounded, was to reemerge powerfully two decades after the publication of the *Manifesto* and the release of his groundbreaking study *Der Römerbrief*, which utilized the theological methodology he developed in response to that crisis of thought. In the wake of Hitler's rise to power and the consolidation of the German Protestant churches into the *Reichskirche* under the oversight of *Reichsbischof* Müller in 1933, Barth published a forceful denunciation of the turn to natural theology of his friend and colleague Emil Brunner. In his famous essay, "Nein!," Barth forthrightly confronted the problematic relation between reconciliation (justification) and revelation, a problem that, as he saw it, natural theology had attempted to bypass by appeal to the analogy of being. In that essay, Barth defined natural theology as "every (positive or negative) *formulation of a system* which claims to be theological, i.e., to interpret divine revelation, whose *subject*, however, differs fundamentally from the revelation in Jesus Christ and whose *method* therefore differs equally from the exposition of Holy Scripture." (He would later formulate a more concise form of this definition: "Natural Theology is the doctrine of a union of humanity with God existing outside God's revelation in Jesus Christ." See *Church Dogmatics* II/1, 168. For Barth, on the other hand, natural theology is and only must be a form of explicating certain revealed doctrines. Hence, "it is merely a hermeneutical rule, forced upon the exegete by the creed (e.g., by the clause *natus ex virgine*) and by revelation," that appears within real theology "necessarily, but with the same dependence as that of shade upon light." In

which he established that it is through grace in faith that God's self-knowledge is communicated to us by God via a process by which our knowing is taken up into the activity of God's self-knowing. That which we know of God (that which God has revealed to us about God) by virtue of this process of imputation retains its objectivity to us even in its disclosure, and therefore reliably grounds and structures our theological discourse. Barth underscored the consequences of theological anthropocentrism in arguing that as the knowledge of God "remains the basis of the love of God which comes to us and the praise which is expected of us,"¹³ it constitutes the necessary condition for the proclamation of revelation, the life of the Church, the honoring of God by humanity, and ultimately, salvation itself.

Were it not for our faith that convinces us of the truth of revelation, we would be unable to finally ascribe objectivity to what is revealed, for the apparatus of our unaided cognition maps only to the nexus of causes and effects of history. Thus the status of revelation *as* revelation does not present itself to our reason ineluctably. And so it is only

other words, natural theology arises only in contemplation of the meaning of the subject of revelation, and is answerable rightly only within the context of faith (here for Barth, "in the fear of God") which takes as its object that revelation. See Barth's "No! Answer to Emil Brunner," in *Karl Barth: Theologian of Freedom*, ed. Clifford Green (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 151-167. The significance of Barth's stance is made evident in the text of the *Barmen Declaration*, which he authored only several months prior to his essay on Brunner. In the very first clause of the declaration, under the heading of two Johannine passages (John 14:6: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life..."; and John 10:1, 9: "...I am the door..."), Barth writes, "We reject the false doctrine that the church could and should recognize as a source of its proclamation, beyond and besides this one Word of God, yet other events, powers, historic figures, and truths as God's revelation." Clifford Green notes that these four allusions are to, respectively, "Hitler's seizure of power in 1933, the exalting of 'blood and soil', Hitler himself, and the ideology of the *Volk*." See *The Barmen Declaration*, reprinted in *Karl Barth*, ed. Green, 148-151. Green's commentary is found on p. 336.

13. *Ibid.*, 180.

in faith that we recognize those past historical events, revealed in the scriptures that record God's involvement in the story of Israel and God's presence in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, for being what they are, that is, as the disclosure of who God *really* is. Crucially for Barth, it is in the Word made flesh, the "original, and controlling sign of all signs"¹⁴ that that which God has chosen to reveal of God's self is most fully disclosed; the testimony of the apostles, the church, and believers today, are signs of this first sign, Christ. Since the objective truth of revelation is made known only in the context of faith, then it cannot be established apart from that context. For Barth, there is no way to talk about the divine *as such*, or religion *as such*, but only God as revealed in Jesus and the religious life of the community who gathers in response to the invitation to faith. Moreover, theology speaks rightly of humanity only insofar as it is addressed under the aspect of Christ.

Barth's emphasis on the objectivity and particularity of God constituted a decisive turn from liberal theology, and the generations of theologians who followed in his footsteps eschewed with him the prolegomenous philosophical, and above all, apologetic task in order to recenter theological inquiry on biblical and Christological grounds.

Another decisive voice for postliberal theology, and one that has been generally well received by Barthians, is that of Ludwig Wittgenstein, the philosopher of language. Whereas Barth's preoccupation with the veridicality of Christian revelation is meaningful to us as Christians aspiring to the truth of God, Wittgenstein's work helps us focus on the processes of how we become who we are in reference to the cultural and linguistic

14. Ibid., 199.

objectivities that comprise our social context. A theology seeking to integrate these figures would be attentive to the way in which the particular objectivities of Christianity form us to be characteristically Christian, and to see how formation may occur, we turn to Wittgenstein.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Ludwig Wittgenstein's early work in language philosophy was undertaken in conjunction with a number of other prominent analytical philosophers working to establish a formal language theory correlated to principals of logic. As a linguistic expression of rationality, such a language promised to serve as a means of establishing propositionally true statements. Yet it was Wittgenstein's genius to recognize that the articulation of formal logical principles in order to establish the meaning of words as symbols of reference failed to sufficiently account for the multiple senses that words can mean within a given language. Thus, in his later work, Wittgenstein substituted in place of a systematic theory of a *formal* language in which meaning is tied to external reference (that is, words point to discrete realities external to themselves), an anti-systematic theory of *ordinary* language in which the meaning of words reference their *use* in everyday speech. This decisive break is articulated by Wittgenstein thusly in the opening pages of his *Philosophical Investigations* (published posthumously): "for a *large* class of cases of the employment of the word 'meaning'...this word can be explained in this way: the meaning of a word is its use in the language."¹⁵

15. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* §43, ed. P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 25.

Wittgenstein's realization had startling implications for philosophy as traditionally conceived: whereas the philosophical task had involved articulation of first principles derived in abstraction, or the formulation of totalizing systems of explanation to solve apparent problems in thought, the new task became one of looking and describing, much in the manner of the historian or the anthropologist ("Don't think, but look!"¹⁶). Wittgenstein felt that this revelation of description was actually so decisive that philosophy as traditionally conceived was dead. It was not that this new method would solve all philosophical problems, but rather reveal the source of the problems to lie within philosophy itself. Under this new microscope, such problems would simply disappear.¹⁷

Yet its implications for epistemology are even more startling. According to Wittgenstein's observations, language has no direct correlation to some abstract realm of reason or form, but rather grounds and structures our reason itself. In other words, language is more basic than reason. We think in, and only in, the words that we know, and, as we use them to reason, we reproduce inherited patterns of speech according to which our words are customarily used. The social praxes that constitute our own idiomatic domain—those that constitute our familial, social, political, and religious institutions in which we learn to think and act—are bounded by and caught up in the characteristic ways in which we deploy words in everyday speech. As such, a central idea in Wittgenstein's thought is the concept of the "form of life,"¹⁸ or the social context in

16. Ibid., §66, 36.

17. Ibid., §133, 56. See also Peter Suber, "Is Philosophy Dead?" *The Earlamite* 112, n. 2 (Winter 1993), 12.

18. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §19, 11.

which we find ourselves, and in which we learn and deploy our shared language.

Constitutive of these forms of life are customary, or endemic, speaking activities that serve to structure behavior, such as giving and obeying orders, describing, summarizing, forming hypotheses, telling jokes and stories, counting, thanking, cursing, greeting, and praying.¹⁹ These forms of life are neither reducible to some general form nor easily interpreted or understood by those who do not inhabit the community and/or speak its language. As the Wittgensteinian philosopher Peter Winch has argued:

Criteria of logic are not a direct gift of God, but arise out of, and are only intelligible in the context of, ways of living or modes of social life. It follows that one cannot apply criteria of logic to modes of social life as such. For instance, science is only one such mode and religion is another, and each has criteria of intelligibility peculiar to itself. So within a science or religion actions can be logical or illogical...But we cannot sensibly say that either the practice or science itself or that of religion is either logical or illogical.²⁰

General theorizing thus becomes highly problematic, for as it turns out we possess no conceptual (and therefore linguistic) means to circumscribe the differences between forms of life that are foreign to one another. In fact, from a Wittgensteinian perspective, what general or foundational theory masks is the representation of a particular way of conceptualizing as *the* way to conceptualize, and/or the utilization of a particular way to reason as reason itself; yet such appeals to the generalizable and universal are really appeals to a parochial and particular writ large. Interpretation of distinct forms of life is not thereby impossible, but it does require participation in them—usually for an extended time—in order to grasp how the rules of a particular language, i.e., its grammar, function

19. Ibid, §23, 15.

20. Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), 100-01. The quote is reprinted in Placher, *Unapologetic Theology*, 60.

to structure the form of life itself.²¹ By paying attention to grammar, Wittgenstein says, we come to understand what people mean, because we have observed how they use their words. Wittgenstein compares the grammatical rules of a language to a “game,” since, like games, languages are inseparable from the rules that structure their operation. By emphasizing this concept of the game, Wittgenstein hoped to cure us of our universalist or foundationalist views of rationality; instead of relying on rationality itself as a means and standard of disputation or justification, he argued that we ought to pay attention to differences between incommensurate “language games.” When arguments reach a point in which no further disputation or justification is possible within the game, “the game is played”.²²

How do these two thinkers, Barth and Wittgenstein, come together to influence postliberal theology, and, in particular what I am calling “ecclesial ethics”?²³ Taking a Wittgensteinian perspective reveals religion as a “form of life” that simply must be accepted along with its own “language game,” a quasi-autonomous mode of rationality

21. Nancey Murphy, “Textual Relativism, Philosophy of Language, and the baptist Vision,” in *Theology Without Foundations: Religious Practice and the Future of Theological Truth*, eds., Stanley Hauerwas, Nancey Murphy, and Mark Nation (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 250.

22. *Ibid.*, §654, 175.

23. The two men were only obliquely aware of one another’s work, although Wittgenstein did take the time to parenthetically critique what he understood to be Karl Barth’s insistence on using *particular* words and phrases as helpful and banning others as unhelpful for clarifying speech about God. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour*, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. Linda McAlister and Margaret Schättle (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 58.

with its particular rules, and fully intelligible only to its seasoned players.²⁴ Doctrines (as constructions of speech) function like rules to limit the kinds of claims religions can make, as well as structure appropriate responses to those realities which doctrine purports to describe. The underlying commonality of Barth and Wittgenstein is epistemic non-foundationalism, and indeed that is precisely what makes these two thinkers attractive to postliberal theologians seeking to articulate a distinctively Christian philosophical theology and ethics. Whereas for Wittgenstein, there is no public that is not just another private, for Barth there is no way to make Christian claims in a language or in thought-forms not present in revelation or which do not point directly to the God of the Bible. Barth's famous dictum that unbelief cannot be overcome through argumentation, but simply must be preached to²⁵ was uttered from an epistemological position that Wittgenstein surely would have identified as close to his own.

Despite this, these men, taken together, offer to theology the ability not to succumb to relativism. If above all postliberalism is the attempt to move beyond liberal theology, which is primordially haunted by the problem of founding adequately Christian theological claims in a general epistemic rationality justifiable to all rational individuals, by reestablishing theology on grounds where justifiability is a test of resonance within the Christian community, then this theology can and will regard as true the essential features of the Christian tradition—stories, doctrines, and characteristic practices constitutive of

24. K.C. Pandey, *Perspectives on Wittgenstein's Unsayable* (New Delhi: Readworthy, 2008), 151.

25. This quote is cited in Stephen Toulmin, Ronald Hepburn and Alasdair MacIntyre, *Metaphysical Beliefs* (London: SMC Press, 1970), 201.

the community's "forms of life"—while at the same time recognizing that its claims cannot be "proven" in a grammar not its own. This general thrust was of this logic was first fully developed by Hans Frei and George Lindbeck, to whom we now turn.

Hans Frei

The figure standing at the head of the tradition identifiable as postliberalism, Hans Frei, does so also with one foot each in the Wittgensteinian and Barthian traditions. Frei is best known for his work in biblical hermeneutics, and his 1976 classic *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative* represents a shift within the biblical hermeneutical field away from a purely historical-critical analysis of biblical texts towards attending to the narrative, history-like character of the scriptures. The ascendancy of modern critical scholarship in biblical studies in the nineteenth century precipitated a move from the classic literalist forms of scriptural interpretation of the Reformation; for both Luther and Calvin, the world described in scripture was the same as their own, a world whose history pointed ultimately toward fulfillment in Christ. With this in mind, readers of the bible made sense of their lives according to the facts and patterns of the biblical narratives, resorting to figural readings only where the obvious referent was the allegorical or nonreal, or where tensions placed excessive strain on the narrative's cohesion. When this reading was "eclipsed," Frei argued, by historical skepticism that took shape in biblical studies as a preoccupation with grammar, and the correlative attempt to make sense of biblical history (particularly the miracle stories) in light of reality as it was understood according to the parameters of modern scientific inquiry, the reader's task reversed. The reality of

the biblical world became a typification of history, with the latter judging the former.²⁶ Frei's overall project can be characterized as an attempt to reverse this direction of biblical interpretation.²⁷

Against these prevailing exegetical descriptive and explicative practices, practices that demand interpretation from the perspective of the contemporary reader detached from the world of the Bible (who "knows" what we "now know" about the real world), Frei maintained from a Wittgensteinian perspective that the hermeneutical task of reading scripture involves the interplay of the texts and the context of the church community already highly determined by the texts themselves. Rightly understanding the scriptures, Frei argued, involves attending to the social-practical context in which they are read; to read these texts truthfully *as* scripture requires a basic orientation or grounding in the doctrines and the social practices of the church community that regards them as true, while at the same time recognizing that the community is governed by the texts themselves and that the reading of scripture is itself one of its identifying practices.²⁸ It is in this sense that Frei, borrowing a phrase from the anthropologist Clifford Geertz,

26. Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 4.

27. For this characterization of Frei's project, see Richard R. Topping, *Revelation, Scripture, and Church: Theological Hermeneutic Thought of James Barr, Paul Ricoeur, and Hans Frei* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 130.

28. Jason A. Springs, "Between Barth and Wittgenstein: On the Availability of Hans Frei's Later Theology," *Modern Theology* 23:3 (July 2007), 406-7.

characterized the activity of the church as an “acted document”.²⁹ Unlike general hermeneutical theory, in which “meaning” and “understanding” are universalizable categories, scriptural hermeneutics for Frei comprise a set of embodied skills deployed within the ecclesial context.³⁰ Reading scripture involves learning to see our world as it is depicted in scripture, and in turn we learn the ability to describe our world, and understand ourselves, according to that world and the thought-patterns of the biblical authors, with whom we are caught up in a common linguistic web.³¹ What forms is a tight hermeneutical circle in which the text and the community “read” one another. According to Frei:

29. Hans Frei, The ‘Literal Reading’ of the Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition: Does It Stretch or Will It Break?” in *Theology and Narrative*, eds. George Hunsinger and William C. Placer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 146.

30. Ibid., 407. On Frei’s sociological redescriptions of ecclesial hermeneutical practices, see Mike Higton, “Frei’s Christology and Lindbeck’s Cultural-Linguistic Theory,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 50, n. 1 (1997), 92-95. In “The ‘Literal Reading,’” Frei describes the [communal] reading context as a “determinate code in which beliefs, ritual, and behavior patterns, ethos as well as narrative, come together as a common semiotic system.” See Frei, *Theology and Narrative*, 146.

31. Hans Frei, “Theology and the Interpretation of Narrative” in *Theology and Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 113. Nicholas Wolterstorff nuances Frei’s point here in, I believe, a desirable way. For Wolterstorff, a unidirectional interpretation of the concept of “inhabiting the biblical world” elides the struggle with elements of the Biblical worldview that we ought not wish to make our own, particularly for him, social patriarchy and its understanding of cosmology and natural history. Thus, making the Bible’s view our own requires a *discriminating*, rather than an uncritical or wholesale, appropriation of its outlook. Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that Barth may be helpful here; for Barth the “Christian world of discourse,” which is the conversation of the church about the data of scripture, norms the biblical reading and thus “supersedes it”. This prevents the Bible from becoming an object of idolatry. Wolterstorff, is cited by Jason Springs in his *Toward a Generous Orthodoxy: Prospects for Hans Frei’s Postliberal Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 71-73. Critiquing patriarchy on Christological, rather than exclusively biblical, grounds might be one practical application of this idea.

Believers are embodied agents, who understand what we do, suffer, and are in the contexts in which we are placed as the world is shaped upon and by us. In that way the gospel story and we ourselves inhabit the same kind of world.

Reading Barth had convinced Frei that general hermeneutical theory and historical-critical tools provided helpful though ultimately inadequate means of uncovering the real meaning of the texts as determined by the person and work of Jesus Christ, the object to whom the text concretely points.³² Christology becomes for Frei (as for Barth) the paradigmatic hermeneutical perspective, first of the Gospels and then of the rest of the New Testament.³³ Barth's key "historicist" insights (i.e., his refusal to simply make history the *meaning* of realistic biblical texts) helped Frei reconnect the discipline of theology to the life of the church, a problem Frei identified as the result of the overly-intellectualized "methodological scaffolding" at use by theologians and biblical scholars that rendered professional theology inaccessible to laypeople. In this same pursuit, moreover, reading Wittgenstein enabled Frei to see "how we actually use language in ordinary conversation," weaning him from "high flown ontological speculation" and "a specialized vocabulary and thought form both for philosophy and theology."³⁴ In clearing away the philosophical dross, so often involving the ascription of the characteristically Christian to

32. Hans W. Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 101. See also, *Eclipse*, vii-viii.

33. Hans W. Frei, "Remarks in Connection with a Theological Proposal" in *Theology and Narrative*, 32.

34. See John Woolverton, "Hans Frei in Context: A Theological and Historical Memoir," *Anglican Theological Review* 79, n. 3 (Summer 1997), 385. The quote is reprinted in Jason Springs, "Between Barth and Wittgenstein," 399.

the general typological, Frei refigured hermeneutics as an exercise situated in the midst of the community, rather than “outside” or “above” it.

George Lindbeck

Frei’s colleague at Yale, George Lindbeck, was instrumental in shaping Frei’s interest in describing how and in what social context the Gospels function within the Christian community.³⁵ In his groundbreaking 1984 book *The Nature of Doctrine*, Lindbeck incorporated both Wittgensteinian language theory as well as the sociological and anthropological insights (chiefly those of Clifford Geertz and Peter Berger) in developing a new perspective on religious doctrine via cultural-linguistic description.³⁶

According to Lindbeck, the dominant, classical epistemological model until the Enlightenment (traditionally ascribed to Augustine) relies on a conception of language as a representation of that which is “true” or “real.” According to this “cognitive-propositionalist view” of speech (as Lindbeck calls it), our knowledge of the truth or reality of the external world comes to us by way of the words we use to name things (and sentences are combinations of these names). Cognitive-propositionalist theories of religious doctrine picture religions like philosophies or sciences: they are, above all, sets of objectively true propositions that correspond to external reality. Trinitarian language, for

35. On Lindbeck’s influence on Frei, see George Hunsinger, “Afterword” in *Time & Narrative*, 259.

36. See the first two chapters of George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984). Lindbeck characterizes his project as an attempt to provide a “nontheological account of the relations of religion and experience.” *Ibid.*, 30.

example, describes or “maps onto” in some adequate fashion the reality of God’s existence in Trinitarian form.

When, however, the metaphysical and epistemological foundations for the idea of language as mediation between concrete objects and our own cognition were later demolished by Kant, who replaced at the center of philosophical investigation the known object with the knowing subject, the direct connection between the knower and her world was severed. When Kant’s insights were carried over into theology by Schleiermacher, the older notion of doctrinal claims as realistic expressions of the objectively true or real was superseded by a non-realist epistemology according to which doctrines signify the symbolic (essentially aesthetic) representations of subjectivity. Accordingly, for Schleiermacher, the essence of religion was not to be found in the knowable object “God,” but rather the “feeling of absolute dependence”³⁷ of the believer, who interprets his or her existential condition of dependence *sub specie aeternitatis*. Lindbeck identifies this second epistemological tradition and those theologians working in it as “experiential-expressivist,” and in *The Nature of Doctrine* it becomes his primary target. For the experiential-expressivist tradition, Lindbeck argues, the final importance of religion lies in its ability to interpret the prereflective experiential depths of the self. The public or outer features of religion stand as “expressive and evocative objectifications (i.e., nondiscursive symbols) of internal experience”;³⁸ Bernard Lonergan’s likening of

37. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1298), 16-18.

38. Lindbeck, 21.

conversion to being in love and Tillich's notion of "ultimate concern" are familiar examples of this.

This conceptualization of religion as the interpretation of unmediated experience of a deeper reality is persuasive in an age cognizant of its own historicity and particularism, and its staying power is abetted by a long and venerable theological and philosophical tradition that stretches back to Kant.³⁹ What it masks, however, are the very real differences between religious experiences that Lindbeck's proposed alternative epistemological model, cultural-linguism, exposes. For Lindbeck, the source of religious experience is not the inner depths of the subject, but rather the external, objective cultural and linguistic matrix in which the subject is embedded and in which they are developed. The nondiscursive experience of God by the subject is not, therefore, a pre-categorical experience that the subject consequently seeks to name *as* God, but it is, rather, a categorical experience that takes place within an already-present framework for understanding what—or who—God is. On these terms, the notion of an unmediated experience of God is incoherent, for, fundamentally (and I take this to be the foundational statement of Lindbeck's project), it is "necessary to have the means of expressing an experience in order to have it."⁴⁰ Religious experience is thus mediated by the linguistic and symbolic systems which are absorbed over time by the subject, with the

39. See *Ibid.*, 21-2, for Lindbeck's extended (and intriguing) analysis of what makes the experiential-expressivist position so attractive. He has also called attention to the fecundity of experiential-expressivism as a method for introspective theology and spirituality.

40. Lindbeck, 37.

process of their appropriation being hidden though no less determinative of the subject's religious outlook.⁴¹

Echoing Lindbeck, Frei describes religions as “multi-level communicative network[s],” that form the “indispensabl[e] enabling context” in which persons “enact both themselves and their mutual relations.”⁴² Lindbeck states it like this, and it is worth quoting here at length:

A religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought...it is similar to an idiom that makes possible the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings, and sentiments. Like a culture or language, it is a communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of individuals rather than being primarily a manifestation of those subjectivities. It comprises a vocabulary of discursive and nondiscursive symbols together with a distinctive logic or grammar in terms of which this vocabulary can be meaningfully deployed...Just as a language (or “language game” to use Wittgenstein’s phrase) is correlated with a form of life, and just as a culture has both cognitive and behavioral dimensions, so it is also in the case of a religious tradition. Its doctrines, cosmic stories or myths, and ethical directives are integrally related to the rituals it practices, the sentiments or experiences it evokes, the actions it recommends, and the institutional forms it develops. All this is involved to comparing a religion to a cultural linguistic system.⁴³

41. This process of “objectification” is described by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman as the two-step process by which human beings (a) produce their own reality as the result of their interaction with the world, and subsequently (b) come to understand that reality (in the form of ideas, customs, values, etc.) as having an objectivity of its own, one that stands over against the subjectivity of the agent, and whose true origin in human production remains obscured by the passing of time. Social constructs always bear with them the evidence of localized production, since they are ineluctably shaped by the contingent circumstances of their formation. See *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise of in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), especially chs. 1-3.

42. Hans Frei, “The ‘Literal Reading’ of Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition: Does It Stretch or Will It Break” in *Time & Narrative*, 146.

43. Lindbeck, 33.

By reframing the experiential-expressivist concern for the nondiscursive or unreflective dimensions of religious experience within the proscriptive⁴⁴ context of religious language and cultural forms of expression, while at the same time stressing the sense in which doctrines function (like language for Wittgenstein) to regulate speech and practice within the community, Lindbeck transcends the old battle lines drawn up between the cognitivists and the experientialists. What becomes possible by stressing the code, rather than the encoded, as Lindbeck says, is the incorporation of the experientialist critique of propositionalism that religions, as comprehensive schemes that structure and interpret all aspects of existence, are not primarily sets of propositions requiring assent but are rather mediums within which one moves, or sets of skills one employs in living one's life.⁴⁵ At the same time, this model avoids having to make the undue experientialist presumption that all religions fundamentally express the same thing in different ways, a position that does violence to the inimitability of the various dimensions of experience that different religions enable (Lindbeck's argument here reflects his Barthian rejection of the idea of "religion" as a universally human initiative serving as a mode of human self-understanding.)⁴⁶

44. Lindbeck, 35. For Lindbeck, the conceptual vocabulary a religion deploys, and its syntax or inner logic, limit the kinds of truth claims a religion can make.

45. Lindbeck, 35. The potential exists in Christianity to default to a propositionalist understanding of the faith perhaps more so than in other religions because of the stress it has placed historically on belief rather than praxis. Christianity emerges from Judaism as a confessional movement;

46. Lindbeck, 22. See also Geoffrey Wainwright, "Ecumenical Dimensions of Lindbeck's 'Nature of Doctrine,'" *Modern Theology* 4, v. 2 (1988), 122.

Lindbeck's proposal offers a compelling picture of how we ought to understand the way doctrines function to structure religious experience, as well as provide an adequate basis for critiquing theologies that advance truth claims in general human, rather than particular, Christian terms. But how do we make use of it—as a descriptive project—for a constructive ecclesial ethical one?⁴⁷ It would seem that a cultural-linguistic understanding of religion commits one to the very error of experiential-expressivism, namely that of epistemological non-realism. Is it not true that viewing Christian theology as a mode of discourse arising from a particular historical community oriented around a particular set of narratives commits us to epistemological relativism (what Frei calls “Wittgensteinian Feidism”⁴⁸)? Yet from Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic perspective, as Bruce Ashford points out, Christian doctrine may function like grammar in a Wittgensteinian sense—that is, as a shaper of a particularly Christian form of praxes—but that does not *prima facie* rule out the possibility of propositional reference. Lindbeck calls this “modified correspondence.”⁴⁹ It is only that propositional reference is neither the primary way to understand what a religion is about or how its adherents experience it, nor that propositional statements make sense outside of their enacted context. This means both that the sense in which Christian propositions about divine reality *do* correspond to

47. See Robert Cathey's account of the confused reception of *The Nature of Doctrine* in his *God in Postliberal Perspective: Between Realism and Non-Realism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 11.

48. Hans W. Frei, “Five Types of Theology,” in *Types of Christian Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 46-55.

49. Bruce R. Ashford, “Wittgenstein's Theologians? A Survey of Ludwig Wittgenstein's Impact on Theology,” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 50, v. 2 (2007), 369. See also, Cathey, 57-8, and Lindbeck, 66-7.

divine reality do so only insofar as they are performed in such a way as to enact their correspondence, and that such propositions only make sense intrasystemically, that is, in the larger context of the totality of the system in itself.⁵⁰

To show this, Lindbeck examines the standard of unity of the Christian religion and its first historical proclamation: “Jesus is Lord.” To assert this statement as *ontologically* true seems to require two things: a personal, subjective commitment to perform such a statement through the actions of obeisance to God that it requires according to the pattern established by Jesus—which gives concrete substance to the word “Lord”; and a linguistic context in which both the words “Jesus” and “Lord” mean in reference to a host of other words, concepts, symbols, actions, and practices that collectively serve as the backdrop that makes these words intelligible. A non-Christian or catechumen might infer from such talk that Jesus is like a powerful medieval lord (if only perhaps more powerful) maintaining order by wielding exclusive top-down authority, and offering physical protection in exchange for fealty, since this is foremost among the senses in which the word “lord” means. But such a meaning bears little ontological correspondence with the one whose lordship is expressed through servanthood and suffering. Moreover, to assert this statement as true requires her to *perform* its truth—that is, to reify its meaning through her own adequate acts of obeisance; to assert the truth that Jesus is Lord, and then ignore the claim that Jesus’s lordship makes on one’s form of life, is in fact not to assert the truth of the claim at all. Christian statements about the divine correspond ontologically to God insofar as they are enacted in the community where the

50. Lindbeck, 66-8.

ontological truth of the statement is made possible—where examples of Jesus’ particular kind of servant lordship are performed, and thus made knowable. Geoffrey Wainwright, reading Lindbeck, formulates Lindbeck’s insight this way: any Christian epistemology, if it is to be the basis of Christian proclamation, must retain propositional correspondence because proclamation has its origins in divine activity, and as such, “no account of Christianity can be satisfactory which does not recognize that Christianity’s own claims are objectively intended.”⁵¹ But while fundamental claims about God, derived from the Christian scriptural narratives, are ontologically true, these statements become ontologically true *for us* only as they are enacted against the cultural and linguistic backdrop of the Christian community. What this points to is the indispensability of the ecclesial context of Christian proclamation about God, for one must inhabit that context—to learn its characteristic speech patterns and way of life—in order to understand the meaning what one says. This also rules out any kind of Christian individualism, because there is no way to intuit from the words themselves what they really mean.

Summary

What relevance do the preceding, quite technical, epistemological considerations have to questions of justice? What I have attempted to do so far is to give a preparative account of the epistemology required to carry off something like an ecclesial form of ethics. In my view, any account of justice founded on these grounds will have at least the following features: (a) it will be “foundationalist” only to the extent that it will base its claims in

51. Wainwright, 125. See also Lindbeck’s comments on Paul and Luther, 66.

language whose reference is made intelligible through the social context of the ecclesial community; (b) it will first look for clues as to what justice entails in the Scriptures and its traditions, trusting in the classic Christian testimony about God and the Gospels to reliably disclose God's will for humanity; (c) it will seek external correspondence with philosophical theories of justice as the second step of its deliberation, and primarily as a means of determining whether it has left something important out, and/or whether it has perhaps been unfaithful to its own witness. Resulting conversations with non-Christian about how justice might be realized substantively within wider society will proceed from this thick description of justice, with the aim of making common purpose with those who seek to advance similar causes.

There has been, however, relatively little interest in developing an account of justice on these grounds. Primarily this is because our customary political ways of thinking about justice—in universalist terms—and our political context—that of liberal democracy, according to the tenets of which each of us is responsible for the common weal because we, as citizens, *are* the government—make theorizing about justice from within Christian, cultural-linguistic frame of reference problematic. Moreover, we are fully cognizant as citizens of the Western world of the inapplicability of religious language to public political discourse; as a means of carrying out our political responsibility, the standard strategy of the Christian ethicist has been to seek to show that Christian social ethical convictions are merely particular instantiations of what is universally morally true and therefore universally applicable to all people. If what is stated in the language of the Gospel can be expressed in the language of the liberal rationalist and according to the presuppositions of liberalism generally—and therefore be useful in our political context—

then the Bible, the tradition, and the community cease to be indispensable to the Christian ethical task. So, while we may cherish its own narratives and traditions for their affective or motivational utility (so Kant), they are in the end not finally determinative, since what the right thing to do is knowable or actionable apart from any particular philosophy or theology, or concrete community.

This is the predominant view of the ethical task today and it has a history.

The “Standard Account” of Christian Ethics

The pre-modern view of ethics was quite different from our own. Before the Enlightenment, to which we trace the modern conception of the term, “ethics” named a mode of discourse about the nature of the good and its requirements.⁵² The content of one’s actions depended largely on one’s identity as a member of a given community (*polis*), within which the arrangement of social, political, and religious institutional practices were meant to facilitate the accomplishment of the community’s view of the good life.⁵³ To talk of “ethics,” then, was to talk of these practices. The first Christians, many of whom were converts from Hellenistic paganism, naturally appropriated this system as their own; indeed the New Testament authors borrowed liberally from the moral vocabulary of their host culture.⁵⁴ In its talk of character, virtue, and the Good, they

52. Stanley Hauerwas, “On Doctrine and Ethics” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed., Colin Gunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 21-2.

53. Thus, for Hauerwas, “ethics always requires a qualifier” (e.g., Hindu, Buddhist, Marxist, Christian). Our current way of life requires the opposite. See Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 2.

54. For Abraham Malherbe, “There can no longer be any doubt that Paul was thoroughly familiar with the teaching, methods of operation, and style of argumentation of the philosophers

found ready means of enacting the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and in a language suitable for evangelical fieldwork. This paradigm—the fusion of the Hellenistic form of ethics with the moral substance of Christianity—perdured for over 1,500 years, until it was radically reconfigured during the Enlightenment. Our own era’s characteristic modes of moral thought have their origin in this later period. Because an ecclesial theory of justice, which as part of the attempt to recenter Christian theology and ethics on Christian cultural and linguistic grounds is a modern expression of that older paradigm, it must give an account of the relationship to which it stands to the “standard account” of modern thought. In order to do that, I seek here to briefly trace its development, which took place in several overlapping, though identifiable, stages:

Pre-Constantinian Era

Traditional (Western) forms of ethical reasoning are teleological, that is, they take as their starting point the end (*telos*), not the beginning or origin, of action. Ethics is thus the science of evaluating how certain actions, and the dispositions to engage in those actions, help us to accomplish our ends, which are themselves collectively oriented toward our final end, that of living a good life. From a teleological standpoint, the language of ethical valuation—*good, bad, right, wrong*, etc.—expresses the sense in which proposed action either enables or frustrates the accomplishment of our final end. For Aristotle, we must pursue our ends corporately if we wish to accomplish them, since as individuals we lack all that is necessary to achieve them. Thus ethics is a political science, taking place within the corporate relationships that comprise the community, or *polis*, and humans are

of the period, all of which he adopted and adapted to his own purposes.” See Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 68.

“political beings”.⁵⁵ As each *polis* operates according to its own view of the good,⁵⁶ its politics correspondingly takes shape as a deliberation about the common social practices (complex, coordinated sets of actions directed at a desirable end) that enable communal flourishing. To become proficient in these practices requires an extended and disciplined training in them. In this context, “doing” ethics (or, to use a modern anachronism, “being moral”) means nothing else than achieving excellence (Gk. *arête*, virtue) in the important practices of one’s community in order to approach the fulfillment of the particular ends regarded by the community as constituting the good life. This is the classical form of ethics in a nutshell.

55. Aristotle, *Politics* Bk. 1, trans. Benjamin Jowett, in *Aristotle: On Man in the Universe*, ed. Louise Ropes Loomis, (Roslyn, NY: Walter J. Black, Inc, 1943), 247-270. For Aristotle, “every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good” (I.I). The city-state, or *polis*, is the highest of all communities and thus aims at the highest good. Smaller forms of community—the family and the village—are unable to provide the individual with all that is required for full human flourishing. Larger forms of community—such as nations or empires—are excessively pluralistic, and as a result of too many incommensurate views of the good, lack the necessary ethical coherence to enable flourishing.

56. This claim relies on an antifoundationalist reading of Aristotle’s ethics. Charles Garofalo and Dean Gueras have expressed reservations about the claim that Aristotle was an antifoundationalist because of his view on the intelligibility of reality that stems from its orientation towards a final *telos*; Charles Garofalo and Dean Gueras, *Ethics in the Public Service: The Moral Mind at Work* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1999), 50. Debate about this is ongoing; see Terrance Irwin, “Ethics as an Inexact Science: Aristotle’s Ambitions for Moral Theory” in *Moral Particularism*, eds. B.W. Hooker and M. Little (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). In any event, MacIntyre’s overcoming of the modern objections to Aristotle’s metaphysical biology in the form of narrative ethics (ch. 15 in *After Virtue*) has allowed neo-Aristotelians to work in an antifoundationalist idiom. On the role of reason in Aristotle’s ethics, see also Louis Groark’s book review of Anna Lännström’s *Loving the Fine: Virtue and Happiness in Aristotle’s Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), in which Groark argues that Aristotle’s “subtle” antifoundationalism is neither strictly cognitive nor non-cognitive; *The Heythrop Journal* 53, n. 4 (July 2012), 701-704.

In his analysis of these traditional moral systems, Alasdair MacIntyre reveals the common underlying presupposition of the human person as a *functional* being, that is, one purposed to a certain end. Ethics, as the means to achieve our proper end, names a process by which we transition from an immature, untutored state, “man-as-he-happens-to-be,” to a mature one, the “man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature.”⁵⁷ Training in the communal practices and virtues (and secondarily, in learning to act in accordance with the social rules or norms that express “tried and true” means of abetting virtue) is how one transitions to moral maturity. The early Christian community naturally identified this original “untutored” state with the primeval condition of fallen humanity, which stands in need of redemptive grace, and the mature one with the righteousness of those of the “new creation” which “walks by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16). The paradigmatic Christian expression for the transition from the one state to the other is *discipleship*, which names the process by which one conforms oneself to the moral ideal as revealed in the life of Jesus. Moreover, the concept of the *polis* as the fitting social space in which the human end could be accomplished was easily translated into the concept of the *ekklesia*, assembly, or church.⁵⁸ In contradistinction to the Hellenistic conception of *polis* as

57. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press), 52. Here, I read “essential nature” as the actualization of human possibility.

58. Samuel Wells, *Improvisation*, 23-4. MacIntyre explores in-depth the indispensability of the *polis* as the enabling context of practical rationality, since practical rationality just is the dialectical process of determining the means to achieve the good in the concrete situation. His critique of rationalism thus mirrors the cultural-linguistic critique of experiential-expressivism, and the communitarian critique of classical liberalism (the last of which he has also been a chief exponent). Following Aristotle, MacIntyre argues that the individual must reason from some initial idea of what is “good for him, being the type of person he is, general circumstances as he is, to the best supported view which he can discover of what is good as such for human beings as such; and then he will have to reason from that account of what is good and best as such to a

defined by geography, ethnicity, and culture, the church understood itself as people called out of wider society, who possessed no homeland, common language, or shared cultural expression apart from that which they were developing as a faithful response to the action of God in Jesus Christ. This community is a pilgrim community, in, but not of, the world.⁵⁹ In the Pre-Constantinian *ekklesia*, “Christian ethics” (really an anachronism) is simply discipleship, understood under the aspect of the community’s *telos*—that of enacting an alternative form of sociality than that found in the wider culture after the model defined by Jesus. While I will defend this conception of the community’s *telos* at

conclusion about what it is best for him to achieve here and now in his particular situation...” For the individual to choose a specific good to accomplish in his particular situation will only be rational if at least five abilities are exercised: “First, that individual must have been able to characterize the particular situation in which he finds himself, so that the features of that situation relevant to immediate action have become salient. Second, he must be able to reason, by the use of *epagōgē* [inductive reasoning] and other dialectical modes of reasoning, from knowledge of what are goods for him to a more or less adequate concept of the good as such. Third, in order so to reason he must also be able to understand his goods *qua* participant in a variety of types of activity appropriate to someone of his age, at his stage of education development, engaged in his particular occupation, and so on... Fourth, he must have been able to reason from his understanding of the good in general, the unqualifiedly good, to a conclusion about which out of the specific goods which it is immediately possible for him to achieve he should in fact set himself to achieve as what is immediately best for him... [Fifth] is the ability to deploy the four others in conjunction, which will also have to be systematically trained.” Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice, Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 125-26.

59. John 17:11-19. Cf. Rom. 13 and II Cor. 6-9 as paradigmatic examples of Paul’s practical application of this idea. See also the second-century *Epistle to Diognetus* 5:1-9, an early Christian, likely Johannine, apologetic on this theme: “For Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind either in locality or in speech or in customs. For they dwell not somewhere in cities of their own, neither do they use some different language, nor practice an extraordinary kind of life... But while they dwell in cities of Greeks and barbarians as the lot of each is cast, and follow the native customs in dress and food and the other arrangements of life, yet the constitution of their own citizenship, which they set forth, is marvelous, and confessedly contradicts expectation. They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners; they bear their share in all things as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign... Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven.” (Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 2004), 490-500.

length in chapter two, and explore at length its ramifications for developing an account of justice in chapter four, it will suffice at this point to say that on these terms, growth into discipleship means to become a critical resistor to the politics of realism, namely power acquisition, violence, and top-down domination, in imitation of the way that Jesus himself cultivated resistance in offering to humanity a witness to a new form of community based on enemy-love and servanthood. Early Christian practices were carried out in hopes of accomplishing these ideals. The virtues required to sustain these pilgrim people were those that could be derived from a correct understanding and enactment of such practices.⁶⁰ This community and this praxis would constitute a new, “eschatological sociality,”⁶¹ one structured as a means to witness to the non-Christian world the in-breaking of a new cosmological given shape and meaning by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Post-Constantinian Era

Yet already with the imperial adoption of Christianity, the seeds of our modern understanding of religion and ethics as separable are sown. At the time of Constantine’s accession, less than ten percent of Roman citizens were Christians.⁶² Periodic bouts of imperial persecution in the decades before Constantine had meant that membership in the community had entailed a potentially costly price. After Constantine, however the

60. Wells, 24.

61. This term is Stephen Barton’s; see his “The Epistles and Christian Ethics” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, 2nd ed., Robin Gill, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 57.

62. Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 6.

church comes to refer to everyone; from the sociological, intellectual, and political shift in the meaning of the identifier “Christian,” now applying to all baptized persons regardless of the status of their personal conviction, a new understanding of the church was made possible: the *ecclesia invisibilis*.⁶³ This definition of the faith no longer pointed to a concrete political community; rather, the idea that *true* Christians are indistinguishable from apostates—apart from perhaps a few obviously recognizable outward signs—funded the development of the conceptualization of religion as essentially a personal, inward affair, conceivable apart from any outward display or particular practice. In this way, the conception of the church as embodying an alternative sociality in the world was lost, or, rather, radically reconceived: the alternative social vision was now transposed on imperial society at large; Roman Imperialism was replaced by its alternative, Christian Imperialism.

Yoder refers to this marriage of church and state as Constantinianism, which includes for him the following characteristics: the comingling of the ecclesiastical and imperial administrative bodies and duties, the emperor as the *de facto* head of the church, the identification of God’s purpose in history with the purpose of the empire, and thus the identification of the state not only as the proper object of social ethical analysis, but

63. John Howard Yoder, “The Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics” *Missionalia* 4/3 (November 1976), 98-108. Augustine, who was instrumental in developing this doctrine, thought that among the masses perhaps as few as five percent were true Christians who would be saved, although there is no way to tell among the mixed corpus of the church who they were. See Augustine, *Corpus Christi Merum*, and *Corpus Christi Mixtum* in *De Doctrina Christiana*, III. 32; *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, IV. 5; and John Howard Yoder, “The Meaning of the Constantinian Shift” in *Christian Attitudes Toward War, Peace, and Revolution*, ed. Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 62.

also as the primary instrument of God's providential rule of the earth.⁶⁴ Late Medieval political developments to this arrangement—what Yoder calls “neo-Constantinianism”—mark a shift from empire to the breaking up of political power into separate states.⁶⁵ The Constantinian character of Christianity endured in the new arrangement nevertheless, only now its political referent had shrunk (exactly) to the size of its host's sovereign

64. See Yoder, “The Constantinian Sources”; and Yoder, *The Original Revolution* (Scotsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971), 150ff. For a striking example of a “Romanly” reading of scripture, see Ambrose's *De Tobia*, in which the bishop identifies the Roman Empire with the Hebrew people and non-Romans as agents opposing God's providential design: “Who then was the stranger, except Amalech, except the Amorite, except the enemy?... Consider the very words of the Law: ‘From your brother,’ it says, ‘you will not exact interest, but from the foreign-born, you will exact it.’ From he who you had desired to harm justly, who is lawfully attacked with arms, you may legitimately exact interest. From him exact interest who it is not a crime to kill. ...[W]hen ever war is just, there also it is just to exact interest. However, your brother is everyone of the faith, first, and then the people under Roman law.” Ambrose, *De Tobia*, 15.51 (P.L. 14, 816-7). Palanque argues that “La patriotisme d’Ambroise, on va le voir, est plus comprehensive et plus précis...l’Empire romain qui est l’objet de son ardente affection, au point qu’il en vient a identifier la fidelite chretienne et la fidelite romain.” Palanque, Jean-Remy, *Saint Ambroise et L’Empire Romain* (Paris, 1933), 329. See also Louis Swift, *The Early Fathers on War and Military Service* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1983), esp. 98-100.

65. William Cavanaugh has demonstrated as false the common liberal presumption that the rise of the modern state was the result of the devolution of centralized power in Europe caused by religion. He cites as an example of this erroneous view Judith Shklar: “Liberalism...was born out of the cruelties of the religious civil wars, which forever rendered the claims of Christian charity a rebuke to all religious institutions and parties.” In reality, the groundwork for this breakup had been laid already in the fifteenth century beginning with the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges (1438) of Charles VII by which France forced the papacy to accept the relative autonomy of the Gallican church. Over the next two centuries, French, Spanish, and Imperial ambitions were realized through a series of moves that reduced papal oversight of national churches. In Catholic countries, official suppression of the Reformation was carried out only to the extent to which political independence from the Papal See had already been gained. Conversely, the Reformation was promoted by princes who saw in Luther's theological innovations a means relieve themselves of the heavy tax burden laid on them by the papacy. See William T. Cavanaugh, “‘A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House’: The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State,” *Modern Theology* 11:4 (Oct. 1995), 397-420.

domain.⁶⁶ In Reformation lands, Martin Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms furthered Augustine's conceptualization of the two cities by the handing over of coercive power entirely to the secular authority, which left to the church only the power to persuade by the preaching of the Word of God.⁶⁷ Luther's underlying concern had been to provide a rationale for the tolerance of theological dissent from Rome (chiefly, his own), as well as to cleanse religious practice of the meanness and pedantry of governing. But effectively religious expression retreated from the outward (i.e., political) to the inward spiritual life of the individual believer. With the adoption of *cuius regio, eius religio* at the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, Christianity's political domestication is a *fait accompli*.

What transpired in this crisis of disciplining authority was not merely a political victory won by secular governance, but also a reconceptualization of religion as set of privately held beliefs rather than as a particular way of being in the world, of an inextricable matrix of belief and action in which each confers meaning on the other. So long as the body and its actions belonged to the state alone, secular rulers were content to leave to the church the care of souls. Theological disputes were, then, important only insofar as they affected the maintenance of state power,⁶⁸ and the *de facto* imputation of

66. Cavanaugh, 400. See also Richard S. Dunn, *The Age of Religious Wars 1559-1689* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1970), 6.

67. Cavanaugh, 399. Luther's delegitimization of the system of ecclesiastical courts and canon law further diminished the church's political authority. For Luther's argument, see *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, 3rd ed.; eds. Timothy F. Lull and William R. Russell (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), ch. 37.

68. Cavanaugh cites an anti-Catholic tract of the Earl of Clarendon from 1685: "[Catholic] opinions of *Purgatory* and *Transubstantiation* would never cause their *Allegiance* to be suspected, more than any other error in Sense, Grammar or Philosophy, if those opinions were not instances of their dependence upon another Jurisdiction foreign, and inconsistent with their

authority to the state alone became the basis of the nascent liberal theory of governance.⁶⁹ Locke's definition of religion as a universal impulse, consisting "in the inward and full persuasion of the mind" which the state is powerless to coerce, leaves no room for any social aspect to the church: thus the concept of religion as separable from the church is invented.⁷⁰ As Hauerwas points out, this divorce, which would have been inconceivable in a medieval context where the church mediated the interpretation of the natural law, becomes plausible after the Reformation when the loss of rites like that of penance dislodged individual Christians from their fealty to one another *as* Christians. When the underlying social context of Christian belief was shattered, it became increasingly less clear, especially among Protestants, what was exactly the relationship between religion and politics, and thus theologians increasingly turned to the resources of philosophy in

duty to the *King*, and destructive to the *peace* of the *Kingdom*: and in that sence and Relation to Politick Government of the Kingdom takes notice of those opinions, which yet are not enquired into or punished for themselves." Earl of Clarendon, *Animadversions upon a Book, Intituled, Fanaticism Fanatically Imputed to the Catholick Church, by Dr. Stillingfleet, And the Imputation Refuted and Retorted by S.C.* (London: Rich. Royston, 1685), 11, cited in Cavanaugh, 407-8.

69. This is precisely the picture of church and state relations in Hobbes' *Leviathan*; because of our inherently violent nature, the survival of our commonwealth requires the sovereign to be invested with unlimited disciplining authority, which naturally extends to the ecclesial bodies that are part of the state apparatus. Here the Kingdom of God is not at all metaphorical—the commonwealth is presided over by a sovereign at once both "ecclesiastical and civil." Hobbes thus denies the international character of the church, since it is the sovereign who decides on all matters civil and religious, including true doctrine and praxis. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York, Collier Books, 1962), 94. Cited in Cavanaugh, 406.

70. Cavanaugh, 408.

order to “do” ethics (and correspondingly work out the “problem” of how “ethics” relates to “theology”).⁷¹

Religion in the Enlightenment

The philosophical ethics of the Enlightenment were in many ways a response to the collapse of the Christian world into holy wars and violence. Seeking to establish firmer foundations for knowledge amid the chaos of the breakdown of the old order, philosophers turned from religion to reason itself, and to a new method that began by submitting all belief to doubt.⁷² In embracing the emerging science, they rejected out of hand the old Aristotelian metaphysical biology and with it the older teleological framework in which it was housed. “Reason” in the new paradigm *is* the paradigm, one in which—and this was to be of foremost significance to the emerging moral philosophy—no fundamental human purposes or orientations is discernible. For MacIntyre, reason under this new prism

is calculative; it can assess truths of fact and mathematical relations but nothing more. In the realm of practice therefore it can speak only of means. About ends it must be silent... [A] central achievement of reason... is to recognize that our beliefs are ultimately founded on nature, custom, and habit.⁷³

The fathers of the Enlightenment viewed themselves as liberators from the parochialism and the errant traditionalism of the past, represented above all by the

71. Stanley Hauerwas, “On Doctrine and Ethics” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin Gunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 21-40, 29.

72. William C. Placher, *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 25.

73. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 54.

churches. But in retrospect, their story must appear to us as just one more story told among the others. As evidence of this, MacIntyre has shown that the Enlightenment project to establish moral philosophy on rational terms ought to have resulted in a new kind of morality; yet in reading thinkers as different as Diderot and Hume and Kant and Kierkegaard we again and again find them defending the substantive moral convictions (e.g., never lie, always keep your promises) of their own Christian upbringing.⁷⁴ Take, for example, Immanuel Kant's and John Stuart Mill's characterization of Gospel morality in the context of this new moral epistemology. Kant understood the Gospels to represent the perfect narrative account of his own deontological ethics⁷⁵: "In the Gospel everything is complete, and there we find the greatest purity and the greatest happiness. The principles of morality are presented in all their holiness..."⁷⁶ Yet in *Utilitarianism*, we encounter Mill's justification of the Gospel, only now it is by means of the concept of utility:

In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as one would be done by, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality.⁷⁷

Anyone familiar with the work of the men who uttered these quotes will note that *at least* one of them must be wrong. Kant's deontological ethics are an attempt to

74. Ibid. MacIntyre argues that it was not until Nietzsche that philosophy was confronted with the proposition that to demolish Christian moral epistemology meant necessarily to demolish Christian morality as well. See *After Virtue*, 113-120.

75. See Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans., Mary Gregor, in the *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy* series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3.

76. Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, 27:252.

77. John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 1.

overcome the weaknesses of classical teleology by means of reason alone.⁷⁸ Mill used Kant's ethics explicitly as a foil in *Utilitarianism* (itself a form of teleology).⁷⁹ What occurs to us almost naturally from a postmodern perspective—that our understanding of what rationality means is at least partly influenced by narratives foundational to Western culture, like those of the Bible—could not have occurred to them (or at least did not). And this is significant, because to recognize this fact is to recognize their work as a part of the story of modernity.

The grave irony of the moral justification projects of the Enlightenment lies in the attempt to derive from human nature the tenets of basically Christian morality that were originally intended to correct, improve, and tutor human nature. Indeed, because the injunctions of such a morality are bound to be ones that human nature has strong inclinations to disobey, the attempt to establish them on human nature (in either or both its physiological or rational aspects) was destined to fail.⁸⁰ Yet the salient point for my

78. For Kant, teleology fails because of our inability to fashion a concretized moral ideal that is not already compromised by human shortsightedness. Only a prevenient, critical, *anti-eudaimonistic* principle that lurks behind, as it were, the moral ideal, and which necessarily enjoins all reasoning beings, can provide an adequate foundation for morality. See Allen Wood, "Kant's History of Ethics," *Studies in the History of Ethics* (June 2005), available at <http://www.historyofethics.org/062005/062005Wood.shtml>; accessed May 23, 2013.

79. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 1. Of Kant, Mill declared, "This remarkable man, whose system of thought will long remain one of the landmarks in the history of philosophical speculation, does...lay down a universal first principle as the origin and ground of moral obligation...But when he begins to deduce from this precept any of the actual duties of morality, he fails, almost grotesquely, to show that there would be any contradiction, any logical (not to say physical) impossibility, in the adoption by all rational beings of the most outrageously immoral rules of conduct. All he shows is that the consequences of their universal adoption would be such as no one would choose to incur."

80. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 55.

thesis is not that the Enlightenment fathers failed to justify essentially Christian morality (I leave that to MacIntyre). It is rather that in attempting to do so it shaped a new conception of the ethical—that of a sphere of abstract rational inquiry in which no reference to religion, or culture, or concrete human practices of any kind may, or in fact need to, come into in play. It is above all typified by a *confidence* in reason as a universal epistemological foundation, and the moral authority of the solitary individual, navigating the internal pathways of reason toward sure moral conclusions. It is this patrimony, albeit with various emendations, that currently funds our moral and political discourse in the West, and the discipline of Christian ethics has followed this formulation in important ways.

A thesis that this dissertation takes up, that the Gospel calls the Christian community to a manifestly alternative way of life, cannot appear as a potential reading of New Testament ethics under the presumption of universalism—in fact, it is this presumption, implicit in Constantinian Christianity and overt in Enlightenment thought, that has obscured it from coming into view. But even apart from this consideration, there are inherent problems with approaching ethics this way. When we view ethics as a discrete subset of philosophical discourse aimed at dealing with moral problems, we lose sight of the self as an embodied, story-formed moral agent with a particular history, as well as the relation in which the self and the community stand to perceived social goods.⁸¹

81. Stanley Hauerwas, “How Christian Ethics Came to Be,” in *The Hauerwas Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 37-50. See also his “The Christian Difference: Or, Surviving Postmodernism” in *A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2000), 35-46; and, Stanley Hauerwas and David Burrell, “From System to Story: An Alternative Pattern for Rationality in Ethics” in *The Roots of Ethics: Science, Religion, and Values* (New York: Springer, 1981), 75-116. See also Bertha

The very practices that constitute communal politics appear only as incidentals, as merely contingent habits or customs; the narrative from which those characteristically Christian practices are derived becomes an object of only secondary reflection. But from the view that Christianity represents an inimitable “comprehensive interpretive scheme” or “enabling context,” or a particular “form of life,” or a characteristic “way of being in the world”—or any other related conceptualization derived from a cultural-linguistic understanding of religion—the narrative is the foundation from which ethics derives, and “ethics” are just those self-same practices derived thereof. As such, any Christian account of justice will accordingly have to be correlated to these narratively-constituted practices.

Christian Narrative Justice: Promise and Problems

In his article “Narrative Justice as Reiteration,” the Christian ethicist Glen Stassen calls for a “justice without foundations.” Such a non-foundationalist conception of justice, Stassen argues, would have to be incorporated around the resources of the particular moral traditions to which people belong.⁸² As such, Stassen turns to narrative ethics. As a moral epistemology, narrative serves anti- or post-foundationalist philosophers and theologians as a way to tread a middle path between classical rationalist and non-rational existentialist, or subjective/relativist, ethics. Narrative ethicists embrace the critical postmodern impulse to deconstruct moral universalisms that rely on brute rationality as the means and the standard of moral deliberation. Yet they are likewise deeply skeptical

Minerva Ahumada Torres, *The Story Behind Moral Philosophy: An Epistemological Approach* (unpub. Diss; Loyola University Chicago, 2008), 200-201.

82. Glen Stassen, “Justice as Reiteration” in *Theology Without Foundations: Religious Practice and the Future of Theological Truth*, Stanley Hauerwas, Nancey Murphy, and Mark Nation, eds. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 201-225, 206.

of the emotivist claim that moral notions express nothing beyond the personal preference of the speaker. Narrativists thus seek neither to enshrine reason nor untowardly abjure it, but rather to reconstruct rationality within a framework that admits of the tradition-dependent character of moral reasoning and the story-formed character of the moral self.

Stassen's call addresses the lacunae in Christian narrative ethics scholarship concerning justice, particularly in its aspect of *social* justice. That there is a lacuna is not surprising. Because of its familial connection to virtue ethics with its understanding of individual moral development in relation to some view of the good, narrative ethics has by-and-large not been pressed into the service of answering questions of *social* justice, even in view of the acknowledged connection between individual moral development and moral environment. Stassen cites Alasdair MacIntyre as the prototypical offender in this regard, since—notwithstanding his invaluable contributions in the field of moral epistemology—MacIntyre never gets around to offering a workable account of social justice even though implicit forms of oppression and domination continue to dog the kind of moral traditionalism he advocates. (And this despite writing a 450-page book entitled *Whose Justice...!*⁸³) What MacIntyre's extensive corpus of research on Western moral epistemology has taught us about justice: that our inability to settle even the basic parameters of justice results from the operation of fundamentally incommensurable premises at the heart of our moral culture, has been the primary catalyst for the reemergence of virtue and character ethics within academic ethics circles, and the correlative increase in the production of narrative ethics scholarship. Much of that energy

83. Ibid, 208, 221.

has, however, been spent on projects aimed at deconstructing widely-held assumptions carried over from the Enlightenment and not in ones aimed at producing workable definitions of social justice. MacIntyre has for years argued for more local forms of political deliberation along Aristotelian-Thomistic lines in order to capture the sense in which moral vocabulary is employed in actual life at the parochial level. But this clearly requires a radical restructuring of our political institutions and in turn a theory of social justice, which has not been forthcoming. Therefore, any Christian narrative account of justice that would otherwise take MacIntyre's work seriously must derive its theory of social justice from elsewhere.

Another significant reason that Christian narrative ethicists have largely avoided talking about social justice is that Western democratic institutions are committed to impartiality towards the multifarious and often incommensurable conceptions of the good held by their members. Would-be contributors to public political discourse therefore face pressure to leave behind language and imagery that bear the marks of particularity when they enter the public sphere, since the efficacy of their contribution resides in the ability to translate the moral substance of their particular traditions into a universally-palatable idiom. Yet narratives are particular, and narrative theologians and ethicists are rightly skeptical (for reasons among which are those discussed in this chapter) of attempts to reduce them to universal principles for fear of seriously distorting them. Thus these variant ethical structures interface awkwardly with one another, making theorizing problematic. A third reason, which is explored at length in chapter two, is that a subset of narrative ethicists, influenced in varying degrees by voices from the Radical Reformation tradition (especially that of John Howard Yoder), see questions of social

justice as of secondary importance to intra-ecclesial ethical issues, a view that places great emphasis on the dissenting nature of the early Christian community and, correspondingly, the distinction between the church and the world. For at least three reasons, ecclesial ethicists have remained wary of attempts to development normative justice theory⁸⁴. Moreover, the few attempts by Christian ethicists to utilize narrative in answering questions related to social justice have been undertaken in the task of serving public theology projects, and are therefore in varying degrees skeptical ecclesial ethical concerns. Nevertheless, I wish to examine two such attempts, one by the Catholic ethicist Mary Doak, and another by the aforementioned Baptist ethicist Glen Stassen, which may be constructive for guiding the proceeding deliberations toward an ecclesial ethical account of social justice.

84. In an article provocatively subtitled, “Why Justice is a Bad Idea for Christians,” Stanley Hauerwas argues that “[a]lmost all forms of Christian social ethics assume that some account of justice is necessary if Christians are to be responsible social actors. Such accounts of justice...have the ironic effect of reinforcing state power, or, more accurately, reifying a particular form of state power that Christians should rightly challenge.” Stanley Hauerwas, “The Politics of Justice: Why Justice is a Bad Idea for Christians” in *After Christendom: How the Church is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation are Bad Ideas* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991). John Howard Yoder—whose articulation of an alternative sociology for the church is at the heart of this dissertation—preferred a slightly more oblique tack on the question of justice. Without denying the emphasis the biblical tradition places on the *mishpat* of God, Yoder’s focus on the agapic dimensions of the Gospel—namely in its depiction of a pacifistic, enemy-loving Jesus and the radical and unmerited gift of salvation offered by God in Christ—as the hermeneutical key to understanding God, seems to render justice inert by reason of the activity of God’s unmerited grace and the response of Christians to that grace in overlooking their own injuries. In any case, explicit references to justice are tantalizingly rare in Yoder’s work, and generally recapitulate this theme. I revisit these observations at the outset of chapter three of this dissertation.

Mary Doak

In her book *Reclaiming Narrative for Public Theology*, Mary Doak argues for a “public theology that is attentive both to the religious dimension of national narratives and to the narrative dimension of Christianity.”⁸⁵ Thus does Doak situate herself as a narrative theologian seeking to bring Christian moral resources to bear on the issues related to the just structuring of our own American democratic polity. Doak images the human moral constitution as a construct of overlapping narratives of meaning; we are members of families and particular ethnicities, performers of one trade or another, devotees of this or that avocation, adherents of one religion or none, citizens, etc. Despite their sometimes incongruity, each of us must make sense of these narratives by putting them in ordinal relation to the others as we see fit. For Christians, this entails placing the narrative of God’s revelatory interaction with the created universe above the rest. In Doak’s political theological vision, America is an arena in which we exercise the social responsibility that extends from our Christianly concern to love our neighbors. As such, America is one more narrative field among others in our lives that cooperate with the overarching religious narrative—that is, the story that encompasses both the origin and ultimate end of history—in accomplishing its goal.⁸⁶

Narratives are, for Doak, complex histories that incorporate both positive and negative stories from our collective past. When we pose the identity question, “What does it mean to be an American?,” or the constructive one, “How should we seek to improve

85. Mary Doak, *Reclaiming Narrative in Public Theology* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 105.

86. *Ibid.*, 21.

our society?,” we face the story of our entire history: the liberative spirit with which the founders instituted democracy, as well as their corresponding unwillingness to extend freedom to all peoples; the heroic stories of how we came to vanquish foes who stood in opposition to our cherished social values, as well as the those stories which evince our own participation in acts that contravene those same values; our ability to come together as one in times of national tragedy, and our ability to respect the plurality of our people and their freedom to set their own ends. We retrieve from these narratives the implicit values that underlie them, and the personal stories of those in our past who prospered or suffered, who then stand in the same functional relation to us as citizens as the saints do within Christianity. It is the knowledge we gain in this “looking back” that we apply in the reorientation of our present course, in light of new challenges we face, toward our desired future.⁸⁷ And, unlike abstract principles, these narratives remain perennially relevant to us precisely because they bear the same contours, engrained by history, as do the contemporary moral problems we face. Hence Doak argues for

“common” national narratives...not in the sense of a single definitive narrative, but rather as attempts to develop narratives as inclusive as possible of the whole body politic, even though each story of the whole is narrated from a particular perspective. The development of such national narratives is important, because through them we are able to articulate our part in the whole and our relation to the others who participate in our public life; thus might we envision a good of the whole to be pursued together rather than simply competing with one another for the benefit of ourselves and our particular groups.⁸⁸

Insofar as the Christian narrative is, for Christians, the overriding narrative, Doak must locate a positive valuation of plurality within that narrative as befits the pluralistic

87. *Ibid.*, 107.

88. *Ibid.*, 103.

nature of the modern state, which she find in the biblical picturing of harmony (and not uniformity) as the ultimate reality of the universe. It is because creation is itself multifarious that Christians are able to approach pluralism as a good, and participation in public life as a warranted means of exercising responsibility for the conditions of their own lives and their connection to others (those of the past, present, and future). For Doak, the Christian community serves the world justly by supporting institutions that enable the process of achieving unity in diversity. Echoing Paul Ricoeur, Doak speaks in hopefulness of the “one history” of humanity, guided by providence, in which Christians participate alongside non-Christians to direct it towards eschatological fulfillment.⁸⁹

Doak’s work shares several formal similarities with this project; foremost among these, clearly, is the valuation of the adequacy of narrative to overcome the inherent limitations of a morality of rationally-defined principles. Doak also rightly, in my mind, pictures the interactive dynamic between the multiple narratives which we inhabit, and the use of practical reasoning we employ to orient those narratives to one another. That for her the national narrative is not itself indistinguishable from the religious one exempts her from repeating the mistake of “American Exceptionalism” that has historically haunted theologies of the Social Gospel, and the neo-conservative identification of America as the primary agent through which God’s providence is exercised in global affairs.

But in my estimation, Doak overlooks important features of the overarching Christian narrative—namely the New Testament data that speaks directly to the question

89. Doak, 104.

of what the Christian church's stance to regnant powers ought to be—that heavily problematizes the appropriation of a national narrative for theological purposes. That Doak does overlook these is not surprising; indeed, she stands among those at the head of a long and venerable theological tradition that presumes New Testament to lack requisite political theological resources and thus stand in need of supplementation. Whereas in centuries past the Natural Law and Christian monarchy had fulfilled this function, Doak endorses the tenets of liberal democracy and natural rights. Nevertheless, the assumption is carried over. What makes the cooperation of the American and Christian narratives possible here is the presumption that the New Testament presents no fundamental objections *to* their cooperation, that the church's endemic politics are primarily to be directed to abetting democratic structures that promote a neutrality toward ends, and that, most fundamentally, Christians, and the communities to which they belong, ought to exercise political power in the conventional sense: that is, strive for it, obtain it, and act responsibly in bending it to serve the ends of liberal democracy. Whereas in the following chapter, I will take up the question of the relationship of the Christian community to the powers that be, we will now turn our attention to the work of Glen Stassen, whose narrative justice theory seeks to incorporate the vision of the church as the embodiment of alternative sociality.

Glenn Stassen

Glenn Stassen's description of Christian social justice developed with a narrativist's concerns in mind is much closer to my own view than is Doak's. The word "justice," Stassen says, appears in its Hebrew (*tsedeqah* and *mishpat*) and Greek (*dike* and *dikaiosune*) forms 1,060 times in the Bible, and is conceptually integral to the central

revelatory events of the two testaments, the Exodus and the Passion. In light of God's evident concern for justice, Stassen argues that it is incumbent on Christian theologians working in narrative to critically delineate a "justice that guides us in criticizing or correcting injustice, or struggling for justice, in relation to the powers and authorities of our time,"⁹⁰ one that is constructed "with great respect for the thickness of the ethics of communities and particular traditions, rather than obeisance to the thinness of the ethics of universalist and rationalist foundationalism."⁹¹ Stassen turns to the work of the Jewish political philosopher Michael Walzer, whose account of "reiterative justice," he believes ably provides just such a theory of justice.

Stassen's enthusiasm for Walzer's project stems from its "radically particularistic" methodology, which does justice to "particular religious communities and traditions and the local color of their rich, historically situated conception of the good, rather than reducing everything particular and historical to the thin gruel of a detached and abstract principle."⁹² The key step in Walzer's method is reiteration, which is "a narrative step that replaces the Enlightenment demand for universal foundations."⁹³ Reiteration involves, in Walzer's words "see[ing] the world from the perspective of the other," which is "the very opposite of another commonplace, which enjoins us to step back from every particular

90. Stassen, "Reiteration," 205.

91. *Ibid.*, 208.

92. *Ibid.*, 209.

93. *Ibid.*, 210.

perspective, to detach ourselves, to take a God's eye view of the world."⁹⁴ Practicing reiteration accomplishes two interrelated things: first, in putting ourselves in the shoes of others, we begin to see the world from a fresh perspective—the way the member of another community sees it—in all of the complex particularity of that lived experience. Second, our own truths about the nature of things are confirmed when our interlocutors inhabit our world and report back to us about their experience. It may be finally impossible to reason my way to the common moral foundations that I share with my neighbor whose communal traditions are not my own, but in putting myself in her place, I recognize the commitments, interests, and struggles that we both share inhabiting a common political space. And from this data, we may begin to dialog about what justice demands in our context. For Walzer, the primary interest of the practitioner of reiteration is social criticism. His inductive method of moral discernment is aimed at undoing forms of domination and oppression not by establishing a definition of justice once-and-for-all and then holding all parties accountable to it, but through the shared recognition of injustice as is it actually experienced in everyday life. Thus reiteration operates as a means for members of “in” groups to understand the experience of injustice visited upon minority communities, for members of different marginal groups to confirm one another's experience of injustice and offer solidarity and support in their struggles, and for members of marginal groups to inhabit establishment spaces to determine whether their grievances amount to legitimate injustices or simple misfortune. Injustice is attacked where and how it is actually experienced, and the critical distance necessary to mount

94. Michael Walzer, *The Company of Critics* (New York: Basic, 1988), 67f. Quoted in Stassen, 210.

social criticism becomes possible without resorting to an *a priori* set of truth claims about the nature of justice to which all must rationally assent.

Stassen is clear that his use of Walzer is already a second step in a process of formulating a Christian narrative account of justice, one that is aimed at putting Christian conviction to work in the public sphere. The first step of the process involves the intra-ecclesial study of “the meaning of justice in our metanarrative.” Relying on the biblical scholarship of Bruce Birch and Stephen Mott⁹⁵, and the theology of Jürgen Moltmann⁹⁶, Stassen concludes that justice in the bible means, fundamentally,

deliverance from alienation and oppression into a community with *shalom*, for which the norm is the character of Yahweh revealed in the Exodus, delivering those oppressed by the Pharaoh’s tyranny into a new community free of dominion and faithful in community practices that enable the poor to find food, and clothing, and shelter.⁹⁷

Stassen elsewhere speaks of justice as integral to Paul’s understanding of justification as a process of community formation, and as imbedded in the means by which Jesus confronted evil through practices (e.g., healing, forgiving of sin, peacemaking, solidarity with the poor and outcast) aimed at restoring right relationships between people and between persons and God. In fact, for Stassen, the central dramatic thrust of the gospels involves Jesus’ attack on the injustice of Roman rule which directly

95. See Stephen Charles Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), esp. chapters 2, 4, and 5, and Bruce C. Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991).

96. See Jürgen Moltmann and Glen Stassen, *Justice Creates Peace* (Louisville: Baptist Peacemaker International Spirituality Series, 1988).

97. Stassen, “Reiteration,” 225.

precipitates his crucifixion.⁹⁸ Insofar as biblical justice is made manifest in the concrete practices of the characters of the narrative, so too, Stassen says, must justice must be made manifest in the lives of those for whom the narrative is authoritative. As such, being a disciple of Jesus Christ presupposes engagement in concrete political practices that to enable the liberation of those who suffer the myriad forms of oppression.

Stassen views human rights as the key moral concept for actualizing the Christian commitment justice in the struggle for global justice. There is a sense in which the language of rights provides, for Stassen, the entry point into public reiteration, since, for him, human rights is the common moral “watchword” of the modern era. But Stassen also regards human rights as a product of the organic development of the church dealing with issues related to the establishment of religion, and specifically credits the English theologian and Leveller Richard Overton for originating human rights, predating the Enlightenment by half a century.⁹⁹ Deploying the language of human rights, then, acts for Stassen as a mechanism to advance Christian concerns about justice publically, and in a language that has as its home the Christian tradition itself.

This dissertation is indebted to much of Glen Stassen’s thought on justice, and there is much more about it that I could commend. But for now it is sufficient here to say that Stassen’s articulation of a substantive account of justice based on a close reading of

98. *Ibid.*, 204.

99. Stassen, “Reiteration,” 222. See also Glen H. Stassen, “What Baptists Need to Know About the Human Rights Heritage” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Baptist World Alliance, Santiago, Chile, July 2-7, 2012); excerpt available online at <http://www.ethicsdaily.com/what-baptists-need-to-know-about-their-human-rights-heritage-part-1-cms-19779#sthash.ZNuNP66D.dpuf> (accessed February 4, 2015).

the biblical narrative reflects an ecclesial ethicist's concern to found Christian ethics on data native to the community's own life rather than in a broader philosophy in which the Christian experience must be read as a particular incarnation. Moreover, Stassen's rejection of "realist" Christian ethical models that do not understand Christ's own way of life as an authoritative, alternative model for Christian ethical practice squares with the brief outline of discipleship that I have offered above.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, there is a lot to recommend about Stassen's turn to Walzer's concept of reiterative justice, a method that shares much in common with the kind of "bricolage" or *ad hoc* social ethical method advocated by postliberal theologians like William Placher and James McClendon, who have found such methods useful for exploring connections with the wider culture without pursuing foundationalism.

However, I do wish to pose some critical questions of Stassen's work. In articulating a biblical conception of justice, Stassen leaves relatively unexplored the relationship between righteousness and justice (as he understands it), and, perhaps more importantly, that of love and justice, and, in the case of the later, the reader is left to wonder whether and when the claims of one take precedence over those of the other. For example, he speaks of Jesus's servant role as "one who incarnationally and sacrificially embodies God's love for all of humanity, a model of love for all who follow him."¹⁰¹ Given what he has said about the central place that rectifying injustice occupied in Jesus'

100. Duane K. Friesen, John Langan, and Glen Stassen, "Just Peacemaking as the New Ethic for Peace and War" in *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, Glen Stassen, ed. (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1998), 16.

101. Stassen, et al, "Just Peacemaking," 17.

ministry, is it possible conclude, on his terms, that the aim of God's incarnational love lies in establishing justice generally (if understood as right relationship)? This seems to prioritize justice over love in a way that would strike many Christians as odd. And if this is so, then how do we square this with the Bible's claims about the primacy of love?, namely that the nature of God is love and that whoever does not love does not know God (1 John 4:8), that love is the paramount virtue (1 Cor. 13:13), and that love is the animating principle behind God's salvation of the world through Jesus Christ (John 3:16)? Jesus, as far as we know, pressed no claims to the justness of his own cause before his persecutors; nor is it true that those saints who willingly suffer after his example for the sake of others do not often forgo their own (possibly legitimate) claims to justice. It is these desultory musings, and others like them, on justice and love that will provide the grist for chapter three of this dissertation.

Furthermore, Stassen's recourse to human rights seems bolted-on to his theory, appearing almost as an afterthought in the process, rather than as an integral to the theory from the outset. I empathize with the pains he takes to warn the discontents of the Enlightenment not to beg questions of democratic participation and human rights, since these have been vital in staving off insidious kinds of modern communitarianism which replicate patterns of domination and oppression inherent in traditional morality.¹⁰² But human rights ethics is a foundational discourse and, even if it can be shown that it can be legitimately extrapolated from the biblical narrative as Stassen thinks Overton has done, it

102. See Stassen, "Narrative Justice as Reiteration," 219-23. Stassen follows the critique of such forms of communitarianism found in Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965).

does not necessarily follow that such a theory would constitute the same “thing” as a philosophical/foundational account of human rights. As MacIntyre has warned, without a shared conception of the Good and an understanding of both the individual and the community of which she is a member as *functional* entities, the adjudication of competing rights claims becomes impossible (and in fact political discourse collapses into quagmire of unresolvable assertions and counter-assertion that MacIntyre characterizes as “shrill” in nature¹⁰³).

I submit that a more adequate notion of the community’s *telos* would provide a dose of conceptual clarity to the question of the relationship between the demands of love and justice in Stassen’s work. In the following chapter, I will argue that the New Testament offers sufficient ethical data to develop a vision of the church as alternative form of human sociality to what the Apostle Paul calls the “principalities and powers” of the cosmos, which as constituting elements of fallen creation reify forms of oppression and domination. In constituting this alternative society, the church fulfills its own divine *telos* as a pan-ethnic community tasked with re-presenting to God the faithfulness displayed by Jesus in the form of its life, a *telos* from which we must derive our concept of social justice.

103. MacIntyre, “After Virtue,” 8.

CHAPTER TWO
THE COMMUNITY OF THE RESURRECTION VERSUS THE PRINCIPALITIES AND
POWERS OF THE WORLD

Introduction

The goal of unmasking [the powers] is to enable people to see how they have been determined, and to free them to choose, insofar as they have genuine choice, what they will be determined by in the future.¹

In the preceding chapter I made some remarks concerning what I believe to be the inadequacy of several normative, narrative Christian social ethics proposals that deal in some way with the question of the nature of social justice. While I endorse their utilization of narrative as a non-foundationalist framework for social ethics, I believe they nevertheless repeat a common error of foundationalist political theologies: namely, they overlook relevant political theological data from the biblical narrative itself concerning the relationship between the Christian community as a social entity to those in power, data that problematizes the interfacing of the biblical narratives with narratives about nations, classes, or cultures. Because Stassen does take into closer the consideration the citations to justice within the biblical narrative, I adjudge his constructive account more adequate than Mary Doak's. But the broadsided nature of his appeal to a biblical ethics of justice leads him to overlook, in my view, the specific sense in which justice can mean

1. Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press), 7.

within the Bible’s cultural-linguistic context. Specifically, what is the relationship of the biblical appeal to justice to the status of the community of the new creation as a counter-*polis* to organized structures of power?

A generation of theological ethicists working in the wake of John Howard Yoder has learned to identify as “Constantinian” the tendency to move from a theory of structures of power as aspects of creation to a prescriptive account of how these structures ought to be arranged in light of Christian theological convictions. In other words, it is the tendency in Christian theology, observable beginning with (but not limited to) the time of Constantine, to derive from general philosophical rather than biblical or apostolic grounds the social and political resources necessary for the ordering of societies, and it stems from the assumption that the New Testament must lack such sufficient grounds. From the Constantinian perspective, the paradigmatic agent is not the individual Christian believer or the discerning, Spirit-led community, but the prince or the emperor (or, in modernity, the citizen democrat); the field of inquiry is not the pan-social political community formed as a response to the invitation to life in Christ, but everyone. In Constantinian political theologies, the biblical narrative, and especially the stories of Jesus in the gospels, are not epistemologically prior. At the outset of the Constantinian era, the most readily available justificatory means at hand for the new ecclesio-imperial project was the natural law, which afforded “the basis for a social and political programme which was entirely lacking in the Gospel.”² The possible relevance of a Jesuanic³ ethics, or the

2. See Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. O. Wyon, 2 vols., originally pub. 1911 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992).

3. I have chosen “Jesuanic” as an adjectival descriptor of the character of Jesus as he appears in the gospels over “Jesuit”—because of its specific association with the Society of Jesus—

viability of Pauline language about the “principalities and powers” of the world as a way to understanding the relationship between Christ and unruly creation, to any Christian form of politics was basically undercut, only to be recovered episodically in the history of the church outside of a monastery.

In his essay “The Otherness of the Church,” Yoder argues that “[t]he most pertinent fact about the new state of things after Constantine and Augustine is not that Christians were no longer persecuted and began to be privileged, nor that emperors built churches and presided over ecumenical deliberations about the Trinity; what matters is that the two visible realities, church and world, were fused”⁴ [emphasis in the original]. In failing to insist on the distinction between the church and the world, Constantinianism accepts the definition provided by the powers-that-be about what “public” means, and as such, the public, political dimensions of the church’s confession become detached from the gospel and rooted instead in those powers and what they require.⁵ As such, it is caesar, or the monarch, or the everyman in his aspect as a political subject, who provides

and “Christlike,” which might suggest a broader Christological frame of reference than I intend. Though infrequently seen, the Spanish liberation theologian Jon Sobrino has used this word to describe the Jesus-like character of those martyrs of Latin America who have died, in the imitation of Jesus, for the poor. See Jon Sobrino, *Witness to the Kingdom: The Martyrs of El Salvador and the Crucified Peoples* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), particularly chapter five. See also Martin Maier, “The Theology of Martyrdom in Latin America,” in *Truth and Memory: The Church and Human Rights in El Salvador and Guatemala* (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 2001), 97.

4. John Howard Yoder, “The Otherness of the Church,” in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiastical and Ecumenical*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 53-64, 57.

5. Mark Thiessen Nation, “Against Christianity and For Constantine: One Heresy or Two?,” in *Constantine Revisited*, ed. John D. Roth (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 68-82.

the church the model for Christian political leadership, and the meaning of justice comes to reflect the juridical processes of empire rather than the *koinōnia* produced of the Holy Spirit.

This chapter is not about Constantinianism *per se*, but rather about establishing the parameters for a non-Constantinian politics based on what the New Testament *does* say about the social and political *purpose (telos)* of the church. In doing so, I hope to be positioned so as to be able to develop a definition of social justice that can be of use to the church today, particularly in light of its imminent cultural disestablishment. Such a definition of social justice would be appropriate to the church's unique, Spirit-led socio-political life—and hopefully avoid some of the characteristic pitfalls of this task as adumbrated in chapter one. The groundwork for such a politics lies in Paul's vision of the *ekklesia*⁶ community as that specific social body created in the wake of—and tasked with making known to the world, by its own public life and through its proclamation—Christ's victory over the subjugating powers of fallen creation. These entities Paul designates with the phrase “principalities [*archē*] and powers [*exousiae*] of the world” (and related metonyms). Indeed, this message of Christ's victory is for Paul the gospel itself. I begin with a historiographical description of a growing consensus within Pauline scholarship—the “New Perspective on Paul”—which locates the Apostle's primary interest in Jewish-Gentile relations and the social reality of the new emerging community made possible in Christ, rather than in questions related to the subjective dynamics of faith and/or the

6. I use the Greek here to stress the etymological roots of the word “assembly,” generally translated into English as “church”; *ek*, “out from and to,” and *kalēō*, “to call”. The church is a political body called out of wider society for some specific purpose.

roles of law and grace in justification. As a result, I aim to expose the fundamentally social/political nature of Paul's conception of justification, and thus the equally social/political character of the Gospel message itself. I then offer an extended investigation into the nature of the powers by turning to the interpretation of relevant New Testament texts by Hendrikus Berkhof and John Howard Yoder. In so doing, I seek to show that from the Pauline perspective, the point and purpose (*telos*) of the Christian community is to make known God's victory over these fallen powers by representing to God the form of faithfulness made incarnate in the faithfulness of Christ, and thus reclaim them for the divine purposes to which they were originally set. And it is from this *telos* that we must derive our concept of social justice.

A Post-Protestant Paul?: The New Perspective

Beginning with the Reformation through to the later part of the twentieth century, the majority opinion among of New Testament scholars was that Paul's chief concerns lay with the issue of the relationship of the law to the gospel, of the timeless and universal matter of the inefficacy of the individual's personal struggle for justification and her corresponding need for grace.⁷ Paul's language about justification was, for Martin Luther

7. Because I am working with the Pauline text within political theology and not exegetics proper, I should parenthetically here acknowledge the contemporary turn to Paul by leading critical political theorists seeking to rehabilitate aspects of his work as an antidote to the alienation endemic to western societies caused by advanced liberalism and capitalism. Despite the decidedly post-secular character of this move, these thinkers are for the most part not interested in religious belief. Alain Badiou puts this bluntly: "For me, truth be told, Paul is not an apostle or a saint. I care nothing for the Good News he declares, or the cult dedicated to him...I have never really connected Paul with religion". As such, Robbins calls this trend a "reactivation of Paul without religion," although it has been carried forward without the concomitant anti-theology of the parent critical theorist, Nietzsche. See Jeffrey W. Robbins, "The Politics of Paul," *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 6/2 (Spring 2005), 91. Obviously, any purely materialist reading of Paul will distort its meaning as theology; since my interest lies in coming to understand Paul's politics as a response to the incarnate Christ and his death and resurrection, it differs

crucially, a mirror held up to our own failed struggle for righteousness before God, and this law versus grace dualism, written onto the very heart of Reformation theology, became the principle hermeneutical and exegetical standard of Protestantism. Yet with the publication of E.P. Sanders' magisterial *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in 1977, New Testament scholars were forced to critically reevaluate this classical approach to understanding the Apostle. Sander's book gave voice within the community of New Testament scholars to the criticisms of Jewish biblical exegetes and historians of first century Judaism who had for years argued that Paul's conception of Rabbinic Judaism (or, rather, the interpretation of his conception of it within Christian lay and academic circles alike) as a religion of legalistic "works-righteousness" to be rejected by those who belong to Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 3:23; 15:23)⁸ was impoverished at best, and inaccurate at worst. The groundwork for the enthusiastic reception of Sander's work had been earlier laid by the Lutheran exegete Krister Stendahl who, in his now classic essay, "The Apostle Paul and

fundamentally from this cultural rescue project, and so I leave it to the side in this dissertation. As far as I can tell, biblical scholars have largely greeted this new attention from philosophy bemusedly. One excellent example, however, of an exegete taking seriously this dialog is J. Louis Martyn, "The Gospel Invades Philosophy," in *Paul, Philosophy, and the Theopolitical Vision: Critical Engagements with Agamben, Badiou, Žižek, and Others*, Douglas Harink, ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 26-30. The Badiou quote is from Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 1. A good place to start for readers interested in the general contours of this debate is Adam Kotsko's "Politics and Perversion: Situating Žižek's Paul," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 9.2 (Summer 2008), 43-52. Major texts in this conversation include Slavoj Žižek's *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Center of Political Ontology* (New York: Verso, 2000) and *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 2003, and Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary On The Letter To The Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

8. E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London, 1977), 33-59.

the Introspective Conscience of the West,”⁹ cast doubt on this dominant reading of Paul by pointing out matter-of-factly that the Apostle did not share Luther’s own abiding sense of unworthiness. In contradistinction to the way Luther posited human unworthiness before the Law, Stendhal cited Paul’s frank bragging about his own unmatched ability to keep the commandments during his career as a Pharisee (Phil. 3:6). Moreover, while Paul remained aware of the sins of his past as well as those of his fellow Christians, he never spoke about his own continuing struggle with sin other than in a general sense according to which he was among those who have “sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23)—an admission, Stendhal noted, lacking any trace of an anguished conscience. Instead Paul spoke confidently about his ability to avoid sin (Gal. 1:14; cf. the parallel account in Acts 24:16). Moreover, Stendahl argued that the classically Western mode of critical introspection and conscience-searching available to, and typified by, Luther was the product of fifteen hundred years of organic cultural development to which Paul, the first century Jew, had no access. Its origins lay with Augustine,¹⁰ not Paul, whose “great insight into justification by faith,” Stendahl commented ironically, “was forgotten” for the first 350 years of Christianity, a time during which the Church was presumably “by and large under the impression that Paul dealt with those issues with which he actually deals”¹¹, i.e., the continuing relevance of the law in light of the messiah’s coming and the

9. Krister Stendahl, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 56, n. 3 (July 1963), 199-215.

10. Stendhal, “Conscience,” 203. On Augustine’s decisive role in the development of the Western conceptualization of the self, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), especially 127-142.

11. Stendhal, “Conscience,” 204.

new pan-ethnic social organism created in his wake. Thus any reading of Paul as an introvert struggling with existential guilt was to be inevitably read into the text. Against all this, Stendahl pointed out that Paul's preoccupation was with precisely these pressing social questions, namely, what is the relationship between Jewish and Gentiles believers in the new community to be like? Now that Christ has, through his death and resurrection, surmounted the obstacles that previously separated these two people, what ought to remain of the old way of life? Stendahl's insight effected a shift in understanding Paul's concerns from the anthropocentric (justification as related to the internal dynamics of faith) to the Christological (the community of the "new creation" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17) and the continuing role of the law now that Christ has come),¹² a move that paved the way for a reading of Paul as a political theologian, a reconciler of disparate peoples concerned not with individuals but a community of divine purpose united by and in Christ.

Working with this view of Paul as a Jew concerned with Jewish-Gentile relations, Sanders labored to reconstruct as far as possible the varieties of first-century Judaism in the context of which Paul had developed his doctrine of justification. Sanders argued that to be understood correctly, Pauline justification—a theory ultimately rooted in the Hebrew forensic notion of blamelessness before the law,¹³—must be interpreted in the

12. See Stendahl, *ibid.*, and Douglas C. Harink, *Paul Among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology Beyond Christendom and Modernity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003), 16. Much of the subsequent argumentation in this chapter on the development of New Perspective scholarship is indebted to Harink, particularly ch. 1.

13. "צַדִּיק" (*sadeq*), *righteousness* or "right standing" appears forty-one times in the Hebrew Bible, seventeen of which are in the book of Job. The term is rendered in the Septuagint as *dikaioynē*. See N.T. Wright, "Righteousness" in the *New Dictionary of Theology*, David F. Wright, Sinclair B. Ferguson, J.I. Packer, eds., 590-592. According to Sanders, Paul's use of the verb *dikaiooun*—"to righteous" (a form unavailable in modern English since the Anglo-Saxon correlate *rihtwisian* fell out of use long ago)—is novel. The normal meaning of this verb follows

context of, and as a response to, the first-century Jewish understanding of the law as a legal expression of the responsibility of Jews to the covenant established by God with Abraham. Sanders labeled this common understanding “covenantal nomism,” which he defined as

the view that one’s place in God’s plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to his commandments, which provide means of atonement for his transgression...Obedience maintains one’s position in the covenant, but it does not earn God’s grace as such...Righteousness in Judaism is a term which implies the maintenance of status among the group of the elect.¹⁴

from the meaning of its noun *dikaïosynē*. Sanders’ describes it as “regard[ing] someone who is right as being in the right.” Since it derives from a juridical context, it connotes the act of acquittal, that is, of being pronounced innocent in the eyes of the law. “To righteous” thereby implies a changing of one’s status. Since English lacks this word, it substitutes its loan word from French: “justify”. When we say that “justice is done” we mean that someone has been pronounced innocent—i.e., the rightness has been established—in reference to the law. But this usage fails to capture Paul’s intent in several crucial passages related to faith and the law. Sanders cites as one example Romans 6:6-7: “We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is righteoused from sin.” The opposite of being enslaved, Sanders comments, is not to be declared innocent—it is to be set free. And, in fact, this is precisely how Paul follows up this passage a little later on: “you who were once slaves have become obedient...and, having been set free from sin...” (verses 16-18). The (passive) notion of “being righteoused” by God thus has not so much to do with a juridical status as it does with an ontological *happening* to a person, who is changed or transferred into the new humanity made possible in Christ. Hence, for Sanders, “when Paul wrote that he and Peter, though previously not “Gentile sinners,” had been righteoused by faith in Christ (Gal. 3:28), he did not mean that they had been guilty but were now innocent. They had previously been innocent enough, not ‘sinners.’ When they were ‘righteoused’ they were made one person with Christ (Gal. 3:28), or...they had become part of the “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17).” See E.P. Sanders, *Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 47ff.

14. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 420, 544, 751; quoted in James D. G. Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” in Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 190.

Sanders' reconstruction was well received¹⁵, and showed the characterization (or rather, caricaturization) of intertestamental Judaism as religion of legalists and pedants seeking salvation by their own merits to be false. First century Jews did *not* understand the Mosaic Law as a mechanism for forcing their own salvation, as Luther had thought. Rather, they conceived of Torah observance as the proper and necessary response to actions already performed by God on their behalf, actions by which one affirms ones belonging to the elected people of Israel. Salvation by God's grace, in this view, remains the unmerited action of God.

Yet for Sanders, Paul's conversion to Christianity meant turning away from this "covenantal nomist" understanding of the law, a turn that meant finding a new way to define justification apart from "works." Inevitably, Sanders argued, Paul's attention turned to the new righteousness made possible "in Christ" (cf. Gal. 3:26-28) that is a product of having faith in Christ. Paul did not think his position incompatible with the continued observance of the law for Jews (cf. Gal. 5:6), but did think it so for Gentiles now that Christ has made righteousness available to all (Gal. 3:2). Thus for Paul, justification by faith means, for Jew and Gentile alike, "being transferred from the group which will be destroyed to that which will be saved,"¹⁶ a transfer that is accompanied by transformation in the person, in and through whom Christ lives, by virtue of her coming to faith in

15. That Sanders was successful in his work is the conclusion of no less an authority on Second Temple Judaism than Jacob Neusner, otherwise a fierce critic of Sanders: "So far as Sanders proposes to demonstrate the importance to all the kinds of ancient Judaism of covenantal nomism, election, atonement, and the like, his work must be pronounced a complete success." See Jacob Neusner, "Comparing Judaisms," *History of Religions* 18 (1978-79), 180; quote cited in Dunn, *New Perspective*, 103.

16. Sanders, *Paul*, 76.

Christ. From this disposition of faith springs good works, the product of a new humanity, related to the person “as fruit to trees.”¹⁷

While crediting Sanders with groundbreaking advances in the contextualization of Paul’s thought within the Judaism of his day, and his refusal to subject Paul’s doctrine of justification to the “individualizing”¹⁸ reductionism of classical Reformed exegesis, the Presbyterian exegete James D.G. Dunn criticized Sander’s for failing to press his own developments to their logical conclusion, especially in the area of soteriology. For Dunn, Sanders’ perspective of Pauline justification—which emphasized faith alone, and its view of good works as a by-product of righteousness—remain essentially Lutheran because Sanders had not sufficiently taken into consideration the complex social context in which Paul’s rather polemical statements about the law were written: the confluence of Jewish and Gentile cultures within the early community and the larger Jewish community’s efforts to retain its identity amid the increasing cosmopolitanism of Roman Palestine. Dunn argued that several specific tenets of the law had taken on a heightened importance in the intertestamental period, obvious outward signs of Jewish belonging—or “social functions” of the law—by which Gentile society identified members of the Jewish community. Jewish identity had crystallized around these sets of legal requirements, specifically the laws related to exclusive table fellowship and the abstaining from unclean food, circumcision, and Sabbath observance, precisely because they were recognized to confer in-group status. When Jewish communities found themselves in conflict with the

17. *Ibid.*, 71.

18. James D. G. Dunn, “The Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Gal. 3:10-14)” in *The New Perspective on Paul*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 122.

authorities, it was often these precise points at which pressure was applied.¹⁹ Such conflicts formed the socio-political backdrop to the meeting of Paul with Peter and the Jerusalem contingent sent by James at Antioch, at which the particular issue of boundary marking was the focal point of discussion.²⁰ Given the gravity of these events for Jewish political life, it is easy to see why the resolve to continue to observe these statutes hardened alongside the hardening of Jewish resolve to resist the foreign occupation of, and political marginalization within, Palestine. Dunn argued that Paul's objection to justification by the law (cf. Gal. 2) can only be properly understood in this context. What appears as a general condemnation of the law by Paul is in reality only a statement about those specific "boundary marking" observances that served to sever Jews from Gentiles, socially. Indeed Paul considered the Jerusalem contingent's insistence on Torah-following a symptom of

19. Dunn cites the episode in 1 Maccabees when the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes used Torah observances against the Jews in his attempt to enforce their cultural assimilation: "According to the decree [of Antiochus], they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks. But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die" (1 Macc. 1:60-63). Text is quoted in *ibid.*, 123. In 38 AD, the Greek population of Alexandria in Egypt rioted in an effort to curtail Jewish civic privileges, which led to a massacre of the Jewish population by the Roman governor, as Philo relates in *In Flaccum*. Two years later, Caligula tried to erect his own statue in the Jerusalem Temple in an attempt to enforce among the Jews the recognition of his imperial cult. According to Tacitus, "...when Caligula ordered the Jews to set up his statue in their temple, they chose rather to resort to arms, but the emperor's death put an end to their uprising." Tacitus, *Histories*, v. 9, in *Tacitus III: Histories 4-5 and Annals 1-3*, trans. C.H. Moore, in the *Loeb Classical Library* series (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931). Quoted in Harrison, 80. On Caligula's attempt to install the statue, see James R. Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities in Thessalonica and Rome* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 78-84.

20. Dunn, "Works of the Law," 123. See also, Dunn, "Incident," 7-11; Dunn, "New Perspective," 191; and N.T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul" in David M. Hay & E. Elizabeth Johnson, eds., *Pauline Theology*, v. III (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 30-67, 32.

the problematic, albeit prevailing, Jewish view of the law as coterminous with the people of Israel. It was indisputably a point of national pride for Jews that God had chosen them over all people to establish the covenant.²¹ Why else would Paul's fellow Jewish Christians have insisted so strongly on these observances at the cost of consummating fellowship with their Gentile brethren?²² But for Paul, Dunn argued, the coming of Christ had changed all of that, for in his death and resurrection Christ has made even Gentiles ancestors to Abraham! To require (these divisive) works of Gentile believers meant to overlook the fact that all those who profess faith in Christ are one "in Christ".²³ Whereas for Israel the function of the law had been to separate Israel *to* God—which it understood as its holiness²⁴—and *from* the other nations out of which they had been called, Paul argued that this work has been accomplished on behalf of the Gentiles by Christ.

21. Dunn, "What Was the Issue Between Paul and 'Those of the Circumcision'?" 153-171 in "The New Perspective". See also N.T. Wright, "The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith," *TynBul* 29 (1978), 61-88. Dunn sees a parallel phenomenon at work in the "sectarian" text of the self-exiled community at Qumran (4QMMT); See Dunn, "4QMMT and Galatians" in *The New Perspectives on Paul*, 339-345. One may glimpse a reflection of Paul's attitude toward the high esteem in which Israel held themselves in the "boasting Jew" metaphor of Romans 2:17-23. See also John Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988). Expanding on Sander's and Dunn's work, Barclay states that "The problem here is not legalism (in the sense of earning merit before God) but cultural imperialism—regarding Jewish identity and Jewish customs as the essential tokens of membership in the people of God." (239).

22. See Dunn, "The Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Gal. 3:10-14)" in *The New Perspective on Paul*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 122. See also Mark A. Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 174-8.

23. According to Dunn, moreover, Paul was aware that Jesus regularly practiced a mixed-table fellowship that included sinners (i.e., Jews who did not follow the law) as well as Gentiles. See Dunne, *Theology of Paul*, 191-2.

24. Hebrew, **שָׁדָשׁ** (qadash), *to be set apart*.

Justification by faith is then, for Dunn's Paul, the means by which the covenant promises made by God to Abraham, and by extension the Jewish people, are in turn made available to Gentiles (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 2:14). In short, justification by faith makes Gentile believers members of Israel. It is thus the mechanism by which a new kind of community is made possible, one whose basis is not ethnic, tribal, cultural, or linguistic, but rather belief. To require Torah observance of these new members of the people of God would be to lay on them an unnecessary burden accomplishing nothing more than had already been accomplished through Christ.

In failing to appreciate that it was the socio-political reality made possible in Christ that occupied Paul's mind, Dunn argued that Sanders had misconstrued Paul's attitude toward the law generally. If we take a broader view of Paul's letters, in fact, we find Paul repeatedly commending his readers to practice good works. Thus Dunn presents Paul as a post-conversion covenantal nomist, who incorporated his knowledge that Jesus Christ had fulfilled the promise of the covenant into the extant framework of Jewish obedience. In completing the covenant in Christ, God has acted alone in Christ's death and resurrection; the act of justification, mirrored in the emancipatory action of God on behalf of Israel, is a *fait accompli*, and the promises of the covenant are now made available to those who "belong to Christ" (Gal. 5:24).

Dunn's observations became a popular resource for some prominent exegetes and biblical theologians who began to use elements of Dunn's work on Pauline justification to call into question the legitimacy the classic doctrine of justification *in toto*. But in the debates that followed, notably with Richard Hays, Dunn repeatedly and forcefully disavowed the charge that his work could be used in such a way. Although for Dunn,

justification cannot be understood the way Luther understood it—where the believer’s faith engages a correspondingly rectificatory action on God’s part—it still must be understood as connected to faith, since the justificatory act has already been finally completed in the object of faith, Jesus Christ. For whereas Christ has brought salvation to the Gentiles by incorporating them in God’s people, thereby making God’s promises available to them, *participation* in that people still requires the individual to have faith in Christ. In the succeeding pages, however, I will diverge from Dunn’s conclusion about justification by faith in Christ. The line of argumentation I pursue retains the view of Paul as a Jew concerned with questions of the status Judaism and the Law, as a covenantal nomist, as a convicted believer in what Christ has done to bring Gentiles into the bosom of Abraham, but calls into question “faith in Christ” as an accurate rendering of Paul’s intended meaning and so too therefore the classic understanding of the role of justification by “faith in Jesus Christ” as such. We will thus entertain a brief shift from exegesis proper to syntax, before returning to exegesis to see what our syntactical observations have to contribute to the explication of the particular *telos* of the Christian community that I wish to defend. In what follows, I endorse Richard Hays’ translation of the seminal phrase in Paul’s doctrine of justification—*pistis Christou* (e.g., Gal. 2:16)—as “faith(fullness) *of* Christ,” rather than the traditional rendering “faith in Christ,” and explore what theological and ethical possibilities open up on such a “post-Protestant” reading of Paul.

The Faith of Jesus Christ

The phrase *pistis Christou* (πίστεως Χριστοῦ) and its close equivalents occur eight times in the New Testament.²⁵ The grammatical case of the phrase is genitive, indicating that it is composed of two nouns (“faith” and “Christ”), one of which modifies the other. Almost all modern English bibles translate this phrase as an *objective* genitive, meaning that “Christ” modifies, or is the object that belongs to, “faith.” Hence, we arrive at the familiar expression “faith in Christ.” But as early as the first decade of the 20th century, scholars noticed that this translation was not consistent with similar usages of *pistis* elsewhere in the bible or in contemporaneous literary sources.²⁶ In fact, to properly translate the thirty-two instances in the Pauline epistolary where *pistis* is found in a genitive construction, a *subjective* form of genitive is required. Following this logic, *pistis Christou*, ought to be translated in such a way that “faith” modifies “Christ,” which would render the construction, “faith of Christ” (or “faithfulness of Christ”). Upon inspection, the Hebraist George Howard discovered that the early translations of the New Testament (the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Sahidic versions) all featured the subjective genitive rendering of this phrase, which shows that in earlier eras the Church understood *pistis Christou* to

25. Rom 3:22, 26; Gal. 2:16 (twice), 20; Gal. 3:22; Eph. 3:12; and Phil. 3:9

26. Kittel seems to have been the first to point out problems with the use of the objective genitive construction. According to him, the effect of an objective genitive in Rom. 3:22, 26 (“faith in Christ”) would have muddled the prose and confused readers in light of the obvious subjective rendering in Rom. 3:3 (the “faith of God”), and 4:16 (the “faith of Abraham”). See George Howard, “Faith of Christ” in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, v. 2 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 758-60. Howard’s cite is to G. Kittle, “Pistis Iesou Christou bein Paulus” *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 79 (1906), 419-36. According to Howard, there is no evidence in the entire corpus of Hellenistic Jewish literature for parallel *pistis* + genitive constructions taking the objective form.

mean the “faith of Christ.”²⁷ The Vulgate, in fact, makes explicit the differences between the subjective and objective genitive by consistently rendering *pistis Christou* as “*fide Christi*”—the “faith of Christ”—and describing the act of the believing in Christ with the phrase “*in Christo credimus*”. The same thing is found in translations in use throughout the Middle Ages,²⁸ and even in several Reformation-era texts, including the Authorized Version (the King James Version) of 1611.²⁹

Although the news of this discovery, and its attendant significance for our understanding of the doctrine of justification, is little known among the laity, there has been a “major shift”³⁰ in the attitude of contemporary biblical scholarship toward this translation since the publication in 1983 of Richard Hays’ doctoral dissertation, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*. In it, Hays presents a thoroughgoing case for “faith of Jesus Christ” by appealing not only to the form of the two-word phrase itself (the utility of which is necessarily limited, given how short the expression is, and the inability to prove definitively that it does *not* mean “faith in Christ”), but also to a broader story that Paul was telling in his letter to the Galatians in which the phrase plays a central role.³¹ This

27. Howard, 759.

28. This includes John Wycliff’s bible (1380), in which the phrase appears as “the feith of Jhesu Crist”. Ibid.

29. Ciprano de Valera’s 1602 translation of the older Spanish text of Casiodoro de Reine invariably uses “la fe de Cristo”. The lone exception to “faith of Christ” in the Authorized Version is Rom. 3:26. Ibid, 759.

30. Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2001), 110-1.

31. Richard B. Hays, “Πίστις and Pauline Christology: What is at Stake?” in *Pauline Theology, Volume IV: Looking Back, Pressing On*, Elizabeth E. Johnson and David M. Hay (Atlanta: Atlanta Scholars Press, 1997), 35-60, 37-8. Hays’ point is echoed by a many scholars who

story of Paul's is about Jesus, the divinely-commissioned agent who freely and obediently sacrifices his life on the cross in order to liberate humanity from bondage (cf. Gal. 1:4; 2:20; 3:13-14; 4:4-7).³² Indeed, this story is, for Paul, just the Gospel.³³ Jesus' act, which is continuous with the pattern of obedience to the Father shown by Christ throughout his earthly life, is at once a loving act of faithfulness (*pistis*) to the Father *and* the decisive manifestation of God's faithfulness to his covenant promise to Abraham.³⁴ Given the emphasis that Paul places on the exclusive activity of God on behalf of humanity, rather than on the cooperative activity of humanity with God, *pistis Christou* constitutes for Hays the hermeneutical and axiological key to the narrative, or what Hays calls the *dianoia* (the overall sense) of the story.³⁵

have weighed in on both sides of this debate. See Morna Hooker, 'ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ', *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 321-42, esp. 321; L. Ann Jervis, *Galatians*, in the *New International Biblical Commentary on the New Testament* series, v. 9 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 21; R. Barry Matlock, "Even the Demons Believe': Paul and πίστις Χριστοῦ," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64 (2002), 300-18, esp. 302; J. H. Moulton, *Prolegomena*, v. 1 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, ed. J. H. Moulton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908), 72; and Debbie Hunn, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ in Galatians 2:16" Clarification From 3:1-6" *Tyndale Bulletin* 57.1 (2006), 23-33.

32. Cf. Rom. 2:16, 15:19; 1 Cor. 9:18, 9:23; 2 Cor. 11:4, 11:7; Phil. 1:16, where Hays reads this same story as forming the backdrop of Paul's arguments.

33. Against the tide of conservative Reformed and evangelical opinion identifying the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith with the good news, N.T. Wright has joined Hays in stressing that "the doctrine of justification by faith is not what Paul means by 'the gospel'. It is implied by the gospel; when the gospel is proclaimed, people come to faith and so are regarded by God as members of his people. But 'the gospel' is not an account of how people get saved. It is [rather]...the proclamation of the lordship of Jesus Christ." See N.T. Wright, *What St. Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 132-3.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., 39.

With this theme of the faithfulness of Christ in mind we might pause to consider how strikingly different is the claim to be “justified by faith *in* Christ” from the claim to be “justified by the faith(fullness) *of* Christ.” In the first claim, the accent falls clearly on the individual believer’s decision of faith. Faith, in this sense, as an act of belief, engages a process through which God’s justification is made manifest in the transmuted status of the believer from sinner to righteous. When we read it as such, especially in tandem with Paul’s nearby statements about the justificatory worthlessness of the law, it is easy to see why someone such as Luther, suffering already from existential guilt over his inability to attain to righteousness through the practices of the monastic life, might take solace in knowing that simply believing is enough. Actually, it is almost certainly Luther who is responsible for introducing the translation “faith in Christ” in the first place,³⁶ and it is in his lengthy shadow that the work of biblical translation has been conducted ever since.

To be justified by what Christ has done already through his faithfulness to God is, however, an entirely different matter. For now the accent is on what occurs *extra nos*, independent of any disposition of ours at all.³⁷ In this act we participate only vicariously, only, that is, insofar as it has been done *for us*. God’s justificatory act toward humanity is not, then, contingent on the believer’s “yes” to faith. Rather, the gospel demonstrates that

we are justified not by anything we do but by Jesus Christ—indeed... [it is] through the Πίστις of Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us... [I]t is a terrible and ironic blunder to read Paul as though his gospel made redemption

36. Howard, 760.

37. According to Martyn, “the primary antimony in Paul’s writings is never between ‘faith’ versus ‘works,’” but instead, “the event of God’s presuppositionless grace versus human efforts to create indebtedness on God’s part”. J. Louis Martyn, “The Apocalyptic Gospel in Galatians,” *Interpretation* 54/3 (July 2000), 246-66, 250.

contingent upon our act of deciding to dispose ourselves toward God in a particular way.³⁸

Seen in this light, faith ceases to be a precondition for receiving God's blessing, but "the appropriate mode of response to a blessing already given in Christ."³⁹ We see, in the form of this statement, a clear connection to covenantal nomism. Just as for the Jews the Law provided the framework for a common form of life that constituted an adequate response to God's prior action to elect and to liberate the people of Israel, by which individuals maintained their "good standing" as participants in the national covenant, so too now does faithfulness constitute the appropriate mode of response to God for what God has accomplished in and through Christ on behalf of the entire cosmos. What is such faithfulness like? Its form is the enactment of a common life-pattern definitively shaped by the "prototype of the new humanity" (cf. Col. 1:15), Jesus Christ.⁴⁰ It is common, and not individual, because the divine logic of covenant can only be expressed in corporate terms, as a recapitulation of God's covenant with the people Israel. This is in fact the meaning of faith—to adopt this communal form of belief and practice in and through which we participate in Christ (cf. Rom. 6), who has overcome on our behalf all the social, economic, political, ethnic, cultural, sexual, and religious boundaries that previously had separated individuals and groups from one another (Gal. 3:28). Indeed, "justification by

38. Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 211.

39. *Ibid.*, 211.

40. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 212. Cf. Gal. 3:26-29.

faith” and “participation in Christ” are synonymous.⁴¹ To accept this story as the definitive model of our own lives is to participate in Christ through viewing our own destiny and Christ’s destiny as one, to allow it to change us as it engages our individual and collective imagination and will.⁴²

In a 1997 essay reflecting on *The Faith of Jesus Christ* and its reception, Hays remarked that one area of weakness in the original text had been a lack of sufficient attention paid to the apocalyptic character of Paul’s writings, and that revealing studies on Pauline apocalyptic theology published since his book could be of further aid in understanding Paul’s theology of justification.⁴³ Whereas Hays (at least in 1983) had seen a Paul occupied with more than questions of social identity, indeed, a Paul articulating a new kind of sociality made possible in Christ, studies in Pauline apocalyptic revealed that Paul was working out the theology of this new sociality—as the incarnation on earth of “new creation” (Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17)—within a broader cosmological vision of a cosmos enslaved by fallen rebellious powers, agents responsible for the condition of what Paul refers to as “the present evil age” (Gal. 1:4). One scholar producing such studies on Pauline apocalyptic, Martinus C. De Boer, has called Paul’s theological cosmology a “cosmological apocalyptic eschatology,” which stresses the dualistic sense in which competing “ages” struggle for supremacy over the world.⁴⁴ In the succeeding section, I

41. Hays, “What is At Stake?” 287.

42. *Ibid.*, 214.

43. *Ibid.*, 39.

44. For an illuminating discussion of the overall apocalyptic character of Paul’s writings, see de Boer, “Paul, Theologian of God’s Apocalypse,” *Interpretation* 56 (2002): 21-33.

will follow Douglas Harink's analysis of two major figures in Pauline apocalyptic studies, J. Christian Beker and J. Louis Martyn, in order to frame our discussion of justification within Paul's overall cosmological vision of the collision between the coming messianic rule of Jesus Christ with the "principalities and powers" of the world.

Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel

In his *Paul Among the Postliberals*, Harink argues that apocalyptic theology is "theology without reserve," or

theology which leaves no reserve of space or time or concept of aspect of creation outside of or beyond or undetermined by the critical, decisive, and final action of God in Jesus Christ. Discriminating judgments, definitions and differentiations, even "totalizing" claims, are intrinsic to the grammar of apocalyptic theology...[since it is] the manner in which Christian theology participates in the apocalypse of Jesus Christ.⁴⁵

Harink observes that the modern incarnation of this theological perspective is postliberalism.⁴⁶ Why is this so? We recall from chapter 1 that postliberalism is firstly committed to a description of the character of God and God's action in the world, and only secondarily to a description of realities (e.g., the subjective experience of faith; the natural world) "as they appear to be," with a commitment to undertaking this second task in light of the first. This epistemological perspective is, then, essentially apocalyptic insofar as it views the world in its visible and invisible aspects as decisively determined by the action of God towards it. Apocalyptic is therefore not so much a theological

45. Harink, 69.

46. Harink identifies Stanley Hauerwas as the quintessential example of the postliberal method. See Harink, 68, 74.

“category” (for to speak of it as such would be to place it among other “categories”), but a frame of reference within which to conduct theological inquiry generally.

Harink makes a bold claim that in the New Testament, Ἀποκάλυψις (*apokalupsis*) usually translated as “revelation” or “unveiling,” is simply shorthand for “Jesus Christ.” By this he means that for the New Testament authors, Paul in particular, reality is to be understood only and never apart from “God’s critical, decisive, and final action for Israel, all the nations, and the cosmos at large in the life, death, resurrection, and second coming of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁷ For Paul, Christ is not a “religious event, but a world-making event.”⁴⁸ In “apocalypsing” Jesus Christ, God broke through the very fabric of creation. Jesus Christ thus becomes the epistemological and hermeneutical key to understanding God *and* the true nature of the cosmos. Harink follows the scholarship of J. Christian Beker and J. Louis Martyn in making several important claims about Paul’s understanding of the apocalypse of Jesus Christ (which I have here modified and expanded).⁴⁹

God wages war against fallen creation

God’s action in Christ is a war against those enslaving cosmic powers that oppose God and God’s purpose for creation. In his description of this war, Paul trades on the dualism inherent to the Jewish apocalyptic tradition dating back to the period of the Exile (cf. Isa. 43:18-19). Borrowing from this tradition, Paul makes repeated distinctions between what was and what is/is to come (e.g., Gal. 6:14), but only now is he able to see, thanks to God’s

47. Harink, 68.

48. Ibid., 89.

49. Ibid, 68-9.

apocalypse of Jesus Christ to him (Gal. 1:12, 1:16),⁵⁰ that this current age is evil. While the nature of these powers will occupy our attention in the next section of the chapter, we note that Paul thinks about their dominion in terms of the evilness or fallenness of the present age (Gal. 1:4). Paul is convinced that the apocalypse of Christ is a confrontative move by God against the powers' dominion (Gal 5:17), although in a striking reversal of the normal operation of warfare, God's version of bellicosity precipitates not chaos, but order.⁵¹ The original and final proof that something is indeed different in the new creation is the means by which God wages warfare: the cross.⁵² In what will become a crucial passage for us later on, we read in Col. 2:15 that by the cross, God "disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it."

God's victory through Christ liberates humanity

Because the cosmos is enslaved, God's action in Christ is necessary for its liberation and rectification (justification), and it is efficacious. God's action is corporate in aim and cosmic in scope; it is not action directed toward the *metanoia* of individuals,⁵³ but instead to all people, suffering from the pains of "the present crisis" (1 Cor. 7:26). Whereas Paul is well aware that individuals do sin (i.e. Gal. 6:1: "if anyone is detected in a

50. There is a clear synoptic parallel to this line of thinking in Matt.12:32: "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." See Martyn, *Galatians*, 98.

51. Ibid. 100. As Martyn notes (citing Widengren), the two main motifs of apocalyptic thought are (a) cosmic changes and catastrophes and (b) the war-like final struggle in the cosmos. See Ibid., 101.

52. Ibid., 101.

53. On this point, see Joseph L. Mangina, *Revelation*, in *the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* series (Ada, MI: Baker Books, 2010), 8.

transgression...take care to restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness”), such sin is *not* the primary referent of Christ’s atonement. This much is evident in Gal. 1:4 where Paul completes the early liturgical confession that Christ “gave himself for our sins” with his own words, “so that he might snatch us out of the grasp of the present evil age, thus acting with the intention of God the Father.”⁵⁴ Here, it is the (evil) *age* that is the culprit and root of sin, not the individual delivered from it.⁵⁵ As Lloyd Gaston has pointed out, Paul’s statement in Rom. 6:23 that the “wages of sin is death” means not that death is what we receive from God when we commit sin, but rather that Sin, as a power, pays out the wages of death to those who are in its service.⁵⁶ Liberation from death—really, a new kind

54. Martyn, 95-97. For an argument that the entirety of Gal. 1:4 forms an early confession, see Nils Dahl, “Form-Critical Observations on Early Christian Preaching” in *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1976), 30-36.

55. In his later work, Martyn has argued that Paul reconfigured the standard Second Temple period view of moral agency to accommodate the presence of the powers. Martyn points out that the common way of speaking of ethics (*tou ethikon*) in ANE literature was as a choice between two ways, namely, “the way of the good/life,” i.e., the way of life preferred by the gods, and “the way of death/evil” (e.g., Deut. 30). In the *Wisdom of Sirach* (c. 200 BCE) however, we find this scheme modified slightly to incorporate the presence of the human agent, who stands, as it were, before these two ways and must make a choice between them. Here, this choice is itself separate from the offer of the way of life by God. But Paul does not to speak of *ethikon* in this way, not, that is, in terms of Flesh (representing the way of death) and Spirit (the way of life), but rather about the *effects* of each of these, i.e., the “effects of the Flesh” and the “fruit borne by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:3-26). For Paul, because human agency is caught up in the combat between two active powers, choosing between competing ways of life is not simply a matter of choice. Instead, the coming of Christ has inaugurated a “three moral actor drama,” consisting of the divine agent, the Spirit of Christ; the human agent, the Galatian community; and the anti-God powers—the impulsive desires of the flesh, a power Paul elsewhere just calls “Sin” in the singular (cf. Gal. 5:13-25). It is God’s sending of the Spirit to the Galatians that enables the community to persevere in the face of the evil powers. It is no puppet, however, but is radically free from Sin, liberated by the Spirit to love, to rejoice, to be patient, to have faith, to be gentle, to have self-control, to bear another’s burdens (cf. Gal 6:1-2). See Martyn, “The Gospel Invades Philosophy,” 26-30.

56. Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 9-12.

of wage—is for Paul the way of the cross. Hence, he boasts only of “the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the cosmos has been crucified to me and I to the cosmos” (Gal. 6:14; cf. Gal 2:19). The cross is not simply a past event for Paul, but the eternal reality through which God accomplishes the liberation of God’s people. This participation by “co-crucifixion”—a “baptism into death” into “newness of life” (Rom.6:4; cf. Gal. 5:4)—is the foundational experience for Paul of Christianity. Finally, this work is accomplished; God *has* defeated the powers in Christ.⁵⁷

Christ reveals our sin

As the archetype of faithfulness, Christ exposes the faithlessness of Israel and the nations, who now stand condemned. Christ thus fulfills the “elenctic” function of the law, that is, Christ exposes to humanity its ignorance of its own sin. This view is rooted in Paul’s declaration that God gave the law “in order to hold the world accountable...for through the law comes the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:19-20). Now, however, this role is played by Christ, whose faithfulness even unto death forms the paradigm for our obedience. To have fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), therefore means to have failed to represent to God the kind of faithfulness made manifest in Christ. On the other hand, Christ’s resurrection serves as God’s invitation to newness of life for all people.⁵⁸ Whereas before, life “in God” was made possible only according to the Law, which as the special province of the Jews befitted their status as the chosen people of the covenant, through Christ’s resurrection God has made in new life available to all.

57. Martyn, 102.

58. On this this theme, see J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 135-81.

Christ's action is God's action

We spoke of the “totalizing” nature of the apocalyptic vision above. In Paul’s Christological apocalyptic theology, no event or reality transcends the reality of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the judgment, justification, and redemption of the cosmos is exclusively (and already!) accomplished in Christ and through nothing else. In Christ, therefore, God overcomes the antimonies of creation, metonymically identified by Paul as Greek and Jew, slave and free person, male and female, circumcised and uncircumcised (Gal 3:28; Col. 3:11).⁵⁹ As such, Israel’s expectations for its own exaltation among the nations must be transformed in the light of Christ, the messiah. In his death and resurrection, Christ realizes creation’s eschatological fulfilment, and is thus the form of God’s upholding of the promises of the covenant. The new creation is here, now, because of Christ; the Holy Spirit is the continuing presence of God that makes possible the sustaining of the new creation until the end times.⁶⁰

59. Joshua B. Davis, writing about the significance of Martyn’s recovery of Pauline apocalyptic for the future of theology, argues that for Martyn, God’s rectificatory (i.e., justificatory) act dissolves the antimony of the sacred and profane around which developed cultic religion. “In the light of God’s apocalyptic act in the faith of Jesus, the Teachers’ [i.e., Paul’s opponents in the letter of Galatians] adherence to the religious distinctions of the Law is ironically revealed to be the same idolatry they fear in uncircumcised Gentile Christians because it is based on the same constitutive domination and antagonistic separation that are the work of the very ‘flesh’ they demand to be excised.” See Joshua B. Davis, “The Challenge of Apocalyptic to Modern Theology,” in *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology: With and Beyond J. Louis Martyn* by Joshua B. Davis and Douglas Harink, eds. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 40.

60. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 309ff.

God acts on behalf of the entire creation

God's action in Christ is universal in scope and relevance; it is the in-crashing of a different reality ("the age to come") into the world's own ("the present evil age"). Those who participate in Christ participate in the first-fruits of the new creation (Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:20-3) through the sending of the Holy Spirit, and are freed from the oppressive powers that govern the old (cf. Gal. 3:25). The in-breaking into "this age" of a new world that has begun and will be fulfilled through Christ is imminent. It cannot be understood as occurring in a temporal sequence—as if things moved from "now" to "then"—or as an event that occurs simultaneously in some separate reality existing in isolation or at a distance from this one.⁶¹ Rather, the new age is here and now, vanquishing the old reality and liberating everyone, Gentile or Jew, who through their participation in the life of the community of the resurrection, re-presents to God the faithfulness shown by Christ. Whereas the destiny of the old age is defined by sin and the powers of evil, the new world proves in its life what God has accomplished in the resurrection.⁶² Paul's call to the Galatians to reject circumcision is a call to make manifest in their lives this freedom newly made available. Will these churches testify to the coming of the new creation? Or will they be just another version of the old?"⁶³

61. Martyn, *Galatians*, 99. For Martyn, "Paul's distinction between the present evil age and the new creation is not at all a distinction between the profane and the sacred. It is in fact the end of that...distinction." (98). Harink further contends that it is also inaccurate to conceive of the new age as being "unveiled," as if it had existed unseen all this time, "behind," as it were, perceived reality. See Harink, 71.

62. J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 47..

63. Cf. Gal. 4:8. See also Harink, 71.

Before we proceed, some summative comments are in order. First, we must hold the sociological and apocalyptic dimensions of Paul's theology of justification in balance. In light of the influence that the anthropocentric interpretation of justification continues to exercise in Protestant theology, it remains crucial to stress the point that Paul's primary arena of address was the concrete social experience of his convert communities, that is, what life was to be like in the new sociality—*not* the subjective faith experience of the individual. But the exposure of the apocalyptic layer of the Apostle's thought shows us that this view alone is incomplete.⁶⁴ Only when we situate Paul's sociological concern within the broader context of his cosmological vision, does it become possible to appreciate that for Paul adopting Torah meant more than the appropriation of a form of life incongruous with God's action in Christ; indeed it meant nothing less than failing to recognize the new life—and indeed, the new world—made possible because of that action. On the other hand, we would likewise do a disservice to the testimony of the Apostle if in our haste to press the apocalyptic/eschatological point about the meaning and significance of Jesus Christ, we forget that Paul is writing to actual people experiencing real spiritual crisis. The victory accomplished by God in Christ's death and resurrection is a victory over the rebellious cosmos, but it is a human historical and community-forming event, occurring on this side of the eschaton. Paul understands the crises to which the counsel of his letters is addressed as the flashpoints in the battle God is waging against the powers. In fact, it is through the life of the ecclesial community—that is, the community identifiable by its recognition of Jesus as messiah—that the battle is waged, for only the

64. Harink, *ibid.*

community that knows Jesus knows there is a war going on! Martyn has tried to hold all of this—the priority of God’s objective action over the subjective decision of the individual, the stress on the concrete community and the cosmic scope of the apocalypse of Christ—in balance by rebranding justification as “rectification”.⁶⁵ For Martyn, “rectification” encapsulates the full meaning of God’s liberation of the cosmos from the enslaving powers of sin in Christ, while pointing to the status of the constitution and life of the community that announces this victory in the world through its re-presentation of Christ’s own faithfulness to the will of the Father.

Secondly, Paul’s concept of justification as extending from the faithfulness shown by Christ in the course of his life and, paradigmatically, in going to the cross, is inseparably tied to the concrete acts of discipleship. To speak about justification in terms of Christ’s faithfulness is to stress, in a strong way, that it is the teachings and actions of Jesus that structure the pattern of obedience that constitutes *our* faithfulness. To be justified then, is to be positioned rightly to God by God’s own gracious action through Jesus Christ, to which the only adequate and proper response is the imitation of Jesus the prophet, the healer, the teacher, the martyr (John 14:15).

Thirdly, and relatedly, if justification, and by extension, salvation, involves adopting a particular form of life in imitation of Jesus in which what we believe and what we do are not opposed but interdependent and mutually-reinforcing, then we may no longer approach our salvation as Protestantism classically does. If *my* salvation relies on

65. On Martyn’s characteristic use of “rectification,” see Joshua B. Davis’s introduction to *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology: With and Beyond J. Louis Martin*, Joshua B. Davis and Douglas Harink, eds. (Eugene: OR, Wipf & Stock, 2012), 1-49.

my faith, then I, rather than Jesus Christ, become the focal point of the justificatory schema. Jesus recedes into the role of an intermediary through whom I accomplish the project of my own salvation, producing a gap between my mental assent to his lordship—what I believe—and actions done in his name—what I do, and establishing them in an obvious ordinal/subordinal relation to one another. Now I must find ways to relate faith to works, myself to my neighbors, theology to ethics, religion to politics (indeed these kinds of exegetical/hermeneutical/epistemological exercises are the stuff of so much Christian ethics). We have seen already that kind of introspective pathways followed by Luther in examining his own conscience were unavailable to Paul, for the roots of the modern subject presupposed in late-medieval Catholicism lie ultimately in the writings of Augustine and not in the Hellenism or Judaism (or Hellenistic Judaism) of the intertestamental period of first century. In our own context, Stanley Hauerwas has labored over the course of his career to convince us that these dichotomies, which appear even starker when filtered through the rationalist and individualist prisms of the Enlightenment, are actually illusory anyway. We do not come to our deepest convictions, such as Christian faith, through the application of mental energy alone; nor do we begin to conduct the business of our lives after and only after we settle on a systematic philosophical construal of the world from which we extrapolate an ethical theory.⁶⁶

66. See Stanley Hauerwas, “From System to Story: An Alternative Pattern for Rationality in Ethics” in *The Roots of Ethics*, eds. D. Callahan et al (Garrison, NY: The Hastings Center, 1981), 75-116; and “How Christian Ethics Came to Be” in *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 37-50 (this essay was originally published as “On Doctrine and Ethics” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin Gunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 21-40.). See also, Chris K. Heubner, “The Work of Inheritance: Reflections on Receiving John Howard Yoder” in *Power and Practices: Engaging the Work of John Howard Yoder*, Jeremy M. Bergen and Anthony G. Siegrist, eds. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 19-27, 22. Heubner argues that Yoder, as a

Moreover, it is difficult to see how in the anthropomorphized version of justification faith is not itself another work, for faith is, on these terms, an intentional disposition to direct my mental assent to the object of Jesus Christ, as opposed to someone or something else. A common response to this objection—that faith cannot be a work because it is itself a gift of God—trades on the notion of faith-as-mental-assent that this position has already undermined.

Finally, this updated (or, rather, very old) perspective of justification—what might be called a “Post-Protestant” theology of justification—retains the Reformation emphasis on the priority of God’s action, but moves beyond the central Lutheran insight towards a more holistic view of Christianity as an offered form of life, in the context of which to have faith means to possess a faithfulness like the one who went to the cross faithfully for all. If such a “Post-Protestant” approach lifts justification out of an anthropocentric framework and (re)places it in a Christocentric one, in so doing it also rejects the subjective/individualistic interpretation for a communal one, replicating, at least

self-professed occasionalist, sounds his most Wittgensteinian notes in describing the work of inheritance, that is, the interruptive and transformative process by which our identity as individuals and as a church is shaped as a *Christian* identity. The process of inheritance for Yoder does not operate as if one first receives, then evaluates, and finally adopts a set of self-constituting theological beliefs in a “neutral” or “objective” sense. Rather, for Yoder, being or becoming a Christian “is inseparable from a struggle with the ongoing practice of receptivity” (22) that always takes place in the context of the entire network of practices, beliefs, and assumptions about the world that we develop through our experience of it. Heubner quotes Fergus Kerr: “It is because people exult and lament, sing for joy, bewail their sins and so on that they are able, eventually, to have thoughts about God. Worship is not the result but the preconditions of believing in God,” and Raimond Gaita: “one [does] not first believe in God and then as a further step, perhaps of inference or perhaps of faith, believe that the world as He created it is a good world. Belief in God as the creator of heaven and earth is inseparable from gratitude for the world.” The Kerr citation comes from *Theology After Wittgenstein* (London: Blackwell, 1986), 183; the Gaita citation comes from *The Philosopher’s Dog* (London: Routledge, 2002), 136; both are quoted in Heubner, 22-3.

formally, the same basic covenantal nomist pattern of obedience that undergirded Paul's spiritual career as a Pharisee. That justification results from God's own action in Christ means that no one can claim it as his or her own accomplishment. The new socio-political community formed in the wake of God's fulfillment of the covenant promises to Israel in Christ—which is, in fact, the concrete expression of that fulfillment—“is the primary addressee of God's imperatives,”⁶⁷ and the “primary sphere of moral concern is not the character of the individual but the corporate obedience of the church.”⁶⁸ Unlike the prevailing philosophical tradition with which Paul was familiar, his hortatory and imperative verbs are plural, indicating that God is establishing a new creation in a people. This new agent is the community.⁶⁹

67. Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 196. Hays elsewhere ties his contention directly to the Abrahamic covenant, “Pauline ethics is fundamentally ecclesial in character and that we begin to grasp his moral vision only when we understand that he sees the church as inheriting the corporate vocation of God's covenant people, Israel.” See Hays, “Ecclesiology and Ethics,” 31. Hays quotes Victor Furnish on the fundamental ecclesial basis of Paul's ethics: “The conception of salvation as an individual matter between man and God is utterly foreign to Paul's preaching. . . . To be in Christ, in the Lord, in the Spirit means to be in the community of Christ, the Lord, and the Spirit.” See Victor P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 203. On this topic, see also Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Historical Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), and J. Paul Sampley, *Walking Between the Times* ((Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

68. *Ibid.* In a private correspondence with Hays, the Christian ethicist Allen Verhey commented that the New Testament does not neglect the question of individual responsibility, but always frames it within the context of communal living. In some texts, strategies for discipline and discernment begin with the question “What should I do as a member of this community?” with the answer appearing against a backdrop of the individual's resocialization into the social patterns of the his or her new community. See Hays, *Moral Vision*, 204, n. 11.

69. J. Louis Martyn, “The Gospel Invades Philosophy,” in *Paul, Philosophy, and the Theopolitical Vision: Critical Engagements with Agamben, Badiou, Zizek, and Others*, Douglas Harink, ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 13-33, 31

To live “in Christ” is just to live in this community of the resurrection—in fact the meaning of the phrase points directly to the political space made possible by Christ.⁷⁰ This is not to say that discipleship is not finally a matter of individual decision or that individual Christians are not sometimes faced with the prospect of discerning and acting alone, but that in the biblical narrative, the focus of God’s involvement with humanity is on the formation of a covenant people, and not heroic or countercultural individuals. That we have difficulty thinking our way into this kind of ecclesially-oriented framework for morality is largely a product of centuries worth of theologically (as well as politically and culturally)-motivated exegetical and hermeneutical accretions that have obscured the corporate character of New Testament morality in favor of an individualized one.

The Exousiology of the New Testament

Berkhof’s Christ and the Powers

As we have seen, the powers play a central role in Paul’s theology of justification. The purpose of this section is to explore the nature of these powers, their relationship to creation, and the way they function in determining the mission of the ecclesial community. The definitive modern statement on the Pauline motif of the powers is the Dutch theologian Hendrikus Berkhof’s small classic *Christ and the Powers* (1953; trans. Yoder, 1962⁷¹). The exegetical consensus on the powers prior to Berkhof read *exousiae* as a reference to willful demonic spirits who inhabited the cosmos and contested human and

70. Martyn, *Galatians*, 81.

71. Prather notes that Yoder learned Dutch for the express purpose of translating this book. See Scott Thomas Prather, *Christ, Power and Mammon: Karl Barth and John Howard Yoder in Dialogue* (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 254, n. 33.

angelic agency. For conservatives, these passages validated orthodox doctrine concerning angels and demons⁷²; for liberals, they represented one more vestige of Paul's archaic worldview to be subjected to demythologization, and collectively merited little special attention.⁷³ Berkhof's insight was to connect the *exousiae* to their outward manifestations as social and political structures that shape and govern human life. Yoder had already used Berkhof's insight to develop his early theory on the relationship between the church and the state,⁷⁴ a theory which remained remarkably consistent over the course of his

72. The tendency to identify the principalities and powers exclusively as demonic forces derives from the mixed matrix of church and state beginning in 317 CE, after which time to have identified the principalities and powers with concrete political entities would have compromised the justificatory efforts of the emerging political theology, which began with Eusebius. On this eclipse of the original reference, Bill Wylie-Kellermann argues that "Rome was effectively preempting its own exposure by and vulnerability in the Word of God. The New Testament was being read Romanly as it were, the substance of the powers written into the oblivion of spiritual individualism." See Bill Wylie Kellerman, "Not Vice Versa. Reading the Powers Biblically: Stringfellow, Hermeneutics, and the Principalities," *Anglican Theological Review* 81.4 (Fall 1999): 667. In modern Charismatic and Evangelical circles, the unique identification of principalities and powers with personal, spiritual forces of evil has occasioned a body of literature advocating for a Christian prayer life of "strategic spiritual warfare." On this literature, see Chris Ford, "Paul's Principalities and Powers: Demythologizing Apocalyptic?" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 82 (June 2001): 61-88. Ford argues that, against the backdrop of Paul's overall cosmological vision, the principalities and powers function not as personalized agents themselves (angels, demons, spirits), but rather as less personal, more abstract spiritual forces associated with the Law, Sin, and Death, and other "elements of this world." See also, *ibid.*, "Pauline Demonology and/or Cosmology: Principalities, Powers, and the Elements of the World in their Hellenistic Context," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 85 (March 2002), 51-73.

73. Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, trans. John Howard Yoder (orig. pub. 1953; Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1962), 9. Marva Dawn has identified Rudolph Bultmann and Ernst Käsemann as representative of the liberal approach. See Marva Dawn, "The Concept of 'The Principalities and Powers' in the Works of Jacques Ellul," unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1992.

74. Cf. John Howard Yoder, "Does Natural Law Provide a Basis for a Christian Witness to the State?" *Bretheren Life and Thought* 7/2 (1962), 18-22; the essays given at the "The Lordship of Christ Over Church and State" conference in Puidoux, Switzerland in 1955, which were reworked and published as *The Christian Witness to the State* (Newton, KS: Faith & Life Press, 1964); and the two papers from 1957 published as *Nachfolge Christi als Gestalt politischer Verantwortung*

long career, and published an English translation of *Christ and the Powers* in 1963. But it was the scholarship provoked by Yoder's treatment of Berkhof's work on the powers in his widely-read *Politics of Jesus* (1972) that elevated "exousiology" to a discrete field within New Testament exegesis. Much of the scholarship that unfolded from Berkhof and Yoder's respective presentation of the powers has focused on their ontological status, that is, whether they exist as actual, personal beings, impersonal spiritual forces, or something closer to metaphors for abuses of power or fallen creation itself—or some combination thereof.⁷⁵ In his powers trilogy, Walter Wink has developed this strand of exousiology further than anyone else.⁷⁶ More recently, we have also seen fruitful work connecting powers theology to sociology, politics, and ecclesial practice.⁷⁷ Since few

(Basel: Agape Verlag, 1964) and translated as *Discipleship as Political Responsibility*, trans. Timothy J. Geddert (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2002).

75. For the purposes of this study it is not necessary to give a full-blooded defense of one of these ontological positions. Despite all of his work to develop an ontology of the powers, I believe Wink is right to maintain that a phenomenological rather than ontological approach to understanding the powers is more fitting for the development of Christian critical resistance to them.

76. These books are *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); and *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992). Throughout, Wink uses the helpful expression "Domination System" to describe the collusive effect of the powers as they work toward human oppression. His *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), is an amalgam of this trilogy intended for a lay audience, and is an excellent introduction to the major themes of his work.

77. See, for example, the collection of essays published as *Transforming the Powers: Peace, Justice, and the Domination System*, Ray C. Gingerich and Ted Grimsrud, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006); and Scott Thomas Prather's *Christ, Power and Mammon*. There are still, however, myriad areas of theological ethical inquiry that remain relatively unexplored from an exousiological perspective; one such obvious one is economic globalization. By way of examples, I cite the following: in a recent commentary on the Marxist David Harvey's critique of global capital, the theologian and social theorist Justin Tse argued alongside Harvey

scholars have seen fit, however, to levy criticism at Berkhof's central arguments

themselves, we will treat his work as basically paradigmatic for Pauline exousiology.

that capital itself is a supra-individual entity with agency of its own. Tse quotes from Harvey to argue that 'capital is...in love with monopoly,' 'capital often appears indifferent as to which particular social differentiations to support and which to discriminate against,' 'capital has adapted to compound growth,' 'capital must . . . somehow occupy the free time that new technologies release.'" After citing these examples, Tse asks rhetorically, "What if Harvey's assertions of a supra-individual entity having agency were to be taken seriously? What if Harvey's religious simile were more than a comparison? What if Harvey's ontological assumptions...are grounded in theological narratives?" Using Harvey's insights, Tse critiques the adoration of capital as a "god" by way of the scriptural prohibition against idolatry. But a more adequate to the biblical narrative to express the agency of capital and its oppressive effects than "idolatry" is the language of the powers, the worship of which as "gods" is only the perceptible form of their influence on us. To view capital as an economic *exousia* is to observe its deep rootedness in the overall structure of fallen creation, and to see its limitedness outlined by the figure of the risen Christ. See Justin Tse, "If Capital is a God: On the Theological Reconciliation of Two Davids in Urban Geography," *Syndicate* April 8, 2015, available at <https://syndicatetheology.com/commentary/if-capital-is-a-god/> (accessed 4/14/15). Tse's Harvey citations are from David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 25, 139, 166, 235, 278. In an interview in *Dissent* magazine, the political scientist Wendy Brown has argued that the justification for both the personhood of corporations and the unregulated flow of capital into the democratic election process found in the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision was permitted by the thoroughgoingly economized logic of Justice Kennedy, who wrote the majority opinion. By casting the public arena as a freely-circulating marketplace of ideas that ought to remain unregulated, Kennedy paved the way for the removal of statutes designed to restrict the influence of money on the political process. What results from his argument is that "political speech itself is rendered as a kind of capital right, functioning largely to advance the position of its bearer, whether that bearer is human capital, corporate capital, or finance capital... [P]eople, do not appear as the foundation of democracy, and a distinctly public sphere of debate and discussion do not appear as democracy's vital venue." From an exousiological perspective, what Brown has exposed are the powers masquerading first as human agents (in the form of corporations-as-people), and then as the ultimate arbiters of the democratic polity. Here capital is exercising its own agency in politics at an even more fundamental level than by its manipulation of individual citizens. As is the case with learning a new vocabulary word and then finding it everywhere, cognizance of powers-theology not only illumines scripture in new ways, but also shows how so much of theological engagement with politics and the sciences is engagement with the workings of the idolatrous powers. See Wendy Brown, Interview with Timothy Shenk, *Dissent*, April 2, 2015, available at: <http://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/booked-3-what-exactly-is-neoliberalism-wendy-brown-undoing-the-demos> (accessed April 15, 2015).

In the epistles⁷⁸ we find the following about the Powers:

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:38-39)

None of the rulers of this age understood [the hidden wisdom of God]; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (1 Cor. 2:8)

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (1 Cor. 15:24-26)

... the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. (Eph. 1:19-21)

And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. (Eph. 2:1-2)

... through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Eph. 3:10-11)

For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Eph. 6:12)

[Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Col. 1:15-17)

78. For our purposes of this chapter it does not matter whether all of the following letters were written by Paul himself or one of his early disciples (Paul's authorship of Colossians and Ephesians is disputed); the deutero-Pauline epistolary represents an extension of the Pauline logic on this issue and is consistent with that of the letters of undisputed Pauline authorship.

... having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him. (Col. 2:15)

For Berkhof, the justification for doubting a purely metaphysical interpretation of *exousiae* derives first from Rom. 8:38, in which we find both principalities and powers enumerated in a list of “experienced realities”⁷⁹ that condition earthly life and function to separate us from the love of God. That this list includes explicit reference to angels but also other obviously non-personal agents means that we cannot read Paul as understanding the powers as personal spiritual agents themselves. Rather, for Paul they co-exist alongside and collude with other creaturely elements, including such spirits, whose role is one of domination.⁸⁰ What Paul has, in fact, together enumerated here (and elsewhere, cf. 1 Cor. 3:22), are the elements of creation itself. For Berkhof, “Creation has an invisible foreground, which is bound together with and dependent on an invisible background. This latter comprises the Powers”⁸¹. These powers are “the framework of creation, which invisibly supports the tableau of the life of men and society,”⁸² and thus “serve as the invisible weight-bearing substratum of the world, as the underpinnings of creation.”⁸³ Paul’s use of a correlate term to *exousiae*—*stoicheia tou kosmos*—to denote both the physical elements⁸⁴ of the cosmos as well as to fundamental philosophical or

79. Berkhof, 13-14.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid., 22

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid., 28-9.

84. cf. 2 Peter 3:10-12: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements [*stoicheia*] will be dissolved with fire,

theological principles or concepts,⁸⁵ testifies to this fact. For Paul there is no meaningful separation to be made between the tangible and the intangible realms of creation. Whereas we do not see these powers, which reside “in the air” (Eph. 2:1) or “in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12), we nevertheless experience them through the exercise of those structures that are their manifestation. Indeed, we are instinctually drawn to rely on them just as we are instinctually drawn to God’s love.⁸⁶ As creatures, the powers “have their being” (Col. 1:17) in Christ, the author and sustainer of all things. Christ is thus their foundation and their goal.⁸⁷ As elements of the original cosmic design, their intention was to serve God by ordering God’s good creation. By binding humanity in fellowship through organized co-existence, they serve “not as barriers,” as Berkhof says, “but as bonds between God and man” which “form the framework within which [the service of God] must needs be carried out.”⁸⁸ They are thus “the link between God’s love and visible

and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements [*stoicheia*] will melt with fire?

85. cf. Heb. 5:12a: “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements [*stoicheia*] of the oracles of God,” and Col. 2:8 “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits [*stoicheia*] of the universe, and not according to Christ.” In Gal. 4:3 (“while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits [*stoicheia*] of the world”) and Gal. 4:8 (“Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods. Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits [*stoicheia*]?”) the distinction between physical and invisible is not apparent.

86. Ibid., 26.

87. Berkhof, 22.

88. Ibid.

human experience,” and are thus not in themselves evil.⁸⁹ Yet, as Berkhof notes, we do not know them this way. The powers are fallen, along with the members of the human communities that they enable, and in their rebellion they have turned from their divine purpose to seek their own ends. Whereas they were meant as servants of God’s love, they now seek to make humanity servants unto themselves by “separat[ing] us from the love of God” (Rom. 8:38). They have become gods (cf. Gal. 4:8), proclaiming themselves the ground and goal of the cosmos and demanding from humanity acknowledgement of this status. As powers, their controlling interest is their own survival.⁹⁰

Yet, according to the author of Colossians, Christ exposes the powers for what they really are, “disarming” them and “making a public example of them, triumphing over them thereby.” (Col. 1:16). Before they were accepted as “the most basic and ultimate realities, as the gods of the world.”⁹¹ The gods of philosophy, science, government, religion, law, and custom, which purported finally to interpret reality, and which had functioned to seal off the world hermeneutically from its Creator, were unmasked in the death and resurrection of Christ as false gods. “This unmasking,” Berkhof says, “is already their defeat” since they have lost “the power of illusion, their ability to convince us that they were the divine regents of the world, ultimate certainty and ultimate direction, ultimate happiness and the ultimate duty for small, dependent humanity.”⁹²

89. Ibid.

90. Stephen McCutchan, “Church, State, Principalities, and Powers,” *Theology Today* 33, n. 3 (October 1976): 244-252.

91. Ibid., 30.

92. Berkhof, 30-1. Ted Grimsrud, reading Wink, comments that it is the nature of “[t]he fallen Powers in our world [to] conceal—distorting and hiding from us the true nature of reality,

In dying on his cross, Jesus suffered the fate of countless unnamed thousands of dissidents and criminals whose very existence threatened the always tenuous hold of Rome over its expansive empire.⁹³ Jesus' death as recorded in the Gospels is "unmistakably an episode in the rule by terror that characterized the Roman policy of occupation and domination."⁹⁴ The soldiers who arrest Jesus treat him as a bandit, a rebel against the rule of law; they later mock his pretention to rule with a robe, sceptor, and crown of thorns, and guard both his cross and his tomb to ensure that the theft of his body by his followers does not give rise to further political insurrection. Pilate, the acting agent of a government which saw itself as the very incarnation of true law and justice ultimately chooses the option of execution for its utility. And what is true for Rome is likewise true for the religious authorities who had plotted against Jesus from birth (cf. Matt. 2:16-18). We read about Jesus drawing the ire of the Pharisees by subverting their scriptural interpretive priority and keeping company with tax collectors and sinners. All four gospels paint the story of the Jesus' cleansing of the Temple as a direct confrontation

and thus keeping us from accurately perceiving that which binds us and that which liberates us." See Ted Grimsrud, "Engaging Walter Wink," in *Transforming the Powers*, 1-13, 8. Nancey Murphy, building on Wink's work on the "concealing" nature of the powers, argues that the social sciences are not only about the powers, but they are powers in and of themselves insofar as they claim ultimate explanatory power. Their fallenness is observed in their purported neutrality, by which they mask (even to themselves) the ideologies (e.g., liberal democracy, the capitalist economic model) that they serve. See Nancey Murphy, "Social Sciences, Ethics, and the Powers" in *Transforming the Powers*, 29-38.

93. See Theodore W. Jennings Jr., *Transforming Atonement: A Political Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 30-31. Jennings points out that even at its height, Rome employed an army not numbering over 400,000, whose role was not only a military one, but also one of policing and engineering. Thus it required the threat of crucifixion to keep local populations in line.

94. Jennings, 33.

with the religio-economic complex built around the practice of ritual sacrifice, which threatened to upset the precarious political balance established between the Romans and Jews. At Jesus' trial, the Jewish authorities all but force Pilate to levy the charge of treason against him.⁹⁵ While the political overtones of the Christian profession—"Jesus is Lord"⁹⁶—are easily lost to us today, they would have been unavoidable in the first century. For Marianne Meye Thompson, "the significance of the imperial cult, the cult of Caesar, [w]as not just...an interesting aspect of the early church's social world, it permeat[ed] it to such an extent that any announcement of Jesus as Lord would inevitably have been heard as a challenge and an alternative to the role of Caesar as Lord."⁹⁷

The characters in the drama of Jesus' passion can be read as metonyms for these powers—governmental, military, religious, economic. We find in the stories of Jesus the teacher and healer similar clashes with the established order of things: Jesus confronts the power of mammon with the practice of carrying a common purse, the power of subjugation with the inclusion of women into his ministerial band, the power of segregation by inviting a guerilla (Simon the Zealot) and a collaborator (Matthew) into his inner circle of followers⁹⁸, the power of economic exploitation and the expropriation

95. nb. John 19:12

96. nb. 1 Cor. 12:3; Rom. 1:3-4, 10:9; Phil, 2:11

97. See Thompson's address given at the *214th Annual General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church* in Columbus, OH in 2002, published as "Jesus Is Lord: How the Earliest Christian Confession Informs Our Proclamation in a Pluralistic Age," available at <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/theologyandworship/issues-jesusislord/> (accessed 11 March, 2015).

98. Jennings, 36.

of the food system through a miracle of multiplication of bread and fish that begins with them sharing of what little food was in their possession.⁹⁹ Although a full examination of the stories of Jesus' confrontation with the powers is not possible here, from these few examples among the many available it is clear that the powers are the central antagonists of the gospel narratives.¹⁰⁰ And with the Pauline testimony the gospels are in accord: that Jesus' life constitutes God's definitive confrontation with the powers of fallen creation; the narrative thrust of the gospels leads us inexorably on towards the logical and expected outcome: the cross. Yet, his death is not the end, for in Jesus' resurrection, God has proved God's lordship over them.¹⁰¹

Armed with the knowledge of their true nature made available in Christ, Berkhof argues that it is incumbent on the church to take a definitive stance toward the powers so

99. On reading the feeding miracle stories as a critique of imperial politics, see Jennings, 32.

100. McClendon, *Ethics*, 174.

101. The Mennonite theologian J. Denny Weaver has developed an atonement motif that draws together two strands of Pauline logic on the powers, which he has named "Narrative *Christus Victor*." As a resuscitation of the old *Christus Victor* atonement model that predominated in the first six centuries of church history, it encapsulates the cosmic dimension of Christ's defeat of the powers of evil. Christ's resurrection is on these terms a victory over evil insofar as the power of evil is no longer strong enough to extinguish life. By the modifier "narrative," Weaver points to the Gospel accounts of Jesus establishing a characteristic pattern of resistance to the world's powers by which they are named and unmasked, as well as stresses the post-foundationalist nature of Christian moral discernment. On this account, it is the powers of the world acting in their characteristic fashion, and not a bloodthirsty Father, who demand the death of the Son. Weaver argues that the community's response to the resurrection must be the incarnation an alternative form of politics—i.e., a form of life counterpoised to the powers—in imitation of Jesus; for, although their ultimate demise is assured, and the new life is made available on term other than their own, the powers nevertheless endure to enslave humanity. It is easy to see how this dovetails with the covenantal nomist position sketched out above. See J. Denny Weaver, *The Non-Violent Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).

that “the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places” (Eph 3:10). What is this stance and how does it take shape?

For Berkhof,

The very existence of the church, in which Gentiles and Jews, who heretofore walked according to the *stoicheia* of the world, live together in Christ’s fellowship, is itself a proclamation, a sign, a token to the Powers that their unbroken dominion has come to an end...[a positive or aggressive approach to the Powers] is superfluous because the very presence of the church in a world ruled by the Powers is a superlatively positive and aggressive fact...it is a sign of the end time, of the incipient encirclement and the imminent defeat.¹⁰²

That the church does not actively wage war on the powers means that the church does not seek to destroy or remove the powers from human existence. To attempt to eradicate the economy, for example, is not a goal of the church simply because economies have always acted at some level as an oppressive power. There will always be something like money whenever social groups advance to the point of engaging in complex exchange; the economy in this sense is therefore recognizable as having its roots in God’s providential design for the cosmos (and the same could be said about the military or the justice system). Indeed, the fixed points of human existence—cultural traditions, religious and ethical injunctions, the ordering of states, economic institutions—“all these can be tyrants over our life, but...they are not the devil’s invention; they are the dikes with which God encircles His good creation, to keep it in His fellowship and protect it from chaos.”¹⁰³

Despite their rebellion, these elements continue to function as ordering instruments under God’s control; even tyrannical governments impose an order more desirable than

102. Berkhof, 42.

103. Berkhof, 23. See also Stephen McCutchan, 245; and Walter Wink, “Principalities and Powers: A Different Worldview,” *Church and State* 85, n. 5 (May-June 1995), 19.

total anarchy, even corrupt markets afford a measure of economic stability preferable to rampant theft, even prejudicial social institutions (families, social clubs, civic organs) provide for the psycho-social needs appropriate to our gregarious species. Yet whenever Christ is preached and believed, the powers are limited, unmasked, precisely because they are exposed for what they really are.¹⁰⁴ For Berkhof,

[p]rimarily this limitation is seen in the continued existence of the church of Christ. By her very presence she breaks through that unshaken stability of life under the Powers, which we know and marvel at in ancient civilizations. She is made up of men who see through the deception of the Powers, refusing to run after isms. Standing within the community of a people or a culture, their presence is an interrogation; the questioning of the legitimacy of the Powers. By her faith and life the church of Christ labels the dominion of the Powers as *un-self-evident*. She is the turnstile which shuts off all return to the unconscious taken-for-grantedness of the former cultures... All resistance and every attack against the gods of this age will be unfruitful, unless the church herself *is* resistance and attack, unless she demonstrates in her life and fellowship how men can live freed from the Powers. We can only preach the manifold wisdom of God to Mammon if our life displays that we are joyfully freed from his clutches. To reject nationalism we must begin by no longer recognizing in our own bosoms any difference between peoples. We shall only resist social injustice and the disintegration of community if justice and mercy prevail in our own common life and social differences have lost their power to divide. Clairvoyant and warning words and deeds aimed at state or nation are meaningful only in so far as they spring from a church whose inner life is itself her proclamation of God's manifold wisdom to the "Powers in the air"¹⁰⁵

In his own poetic style, Berkhof is here issuing more than a call to avoid the hypocrisy that often renders Christian evangelism ineffective (although this is implicit to his call as well). Rather, he is saying that in arranging itself as an alternative political order in the midst of the powers—an order that reflects the divine intention for them (which

104. Berkhof, 35. Berkhof prefers to speak of the "limitation of the powers" as a means to capture the "already, but not yet" dynamic of underlying the New Testament conviction that the Powers are both defeated, and yet subject to the lordship of Christ.

105. Berkhof, 35, 42.

exemplifies, in Berkhof's words, "the modest and purely instrumental place which was meant for them"¹⁰⁶)—the church proves their indeterminacy, that they are not in fact gods, that they are not in fact the *really* real. It is in arranging itself as an alternative *polis* that the church performs its intended function, namely, to testify to the defeat of the powers in Christ in and through the public enactment of a form of life whose own use of power corresponds to the purposes to which the powers were originally set in the act of creation.

The Powers in the Work of John Howard Yoder¹⁰⁷

Berkhof's insights lie at the heart of Yoder's lifelong defense of the church as an alternative political community for whom the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is

106. Berkhof, 46.

107. Since 1992, when allegations of sexual misconduct against Yoder first surfaced publicly in a series of articles in the *Elkhart Truth* between June 29 and July 16, theologians and ordinary Christians influenced by Yoder's prodigious scholarly output—particularly his writings on pacifism—including myself, have struggled to come to grips with the staggering differences between the thought and the personal life of the thinker. What has emerged in the recent decades about Yoder's sexual aggressiveness towards women members of the Mennonite and other Christian faith denominations with whom his work brought him in contact (not incidentally, Yoder never disputed the charges), has rendered the straightforward reception and use of his work without recognition of his abuse impossible. There has been much literature produced on this scandal. For one attempt to reconcile Yoder's actions with his theology, see Ted Grimsrud, "Reflections from a Chagrined 'Yoderian' in Face of His Alleged Sexual Violence" in *J. Denny Weaver, ed., John Howard Yoder: Radical Theologian* (Cascade Books, 2014), 334-50. Other revelatory attempts include the jointly written, "On Contextualizing Two Failures of John Howard Yoder" by Yoder scholar Mark T. Nation and the Catholic theologian Marva Dawn, a former doctoral student of Yoder's, available at <http://emu.edu/now/anabaptist-nation/2013/09/23/on-contextualizing-two-failures-of-john-howard-yoder/>; and Tobias Winwright's "I Was John Howard Yoder's Graduate Assistant: Should I Still Use His Work?" *Sojourners*, 23 Oct. 2015, available at <https://sojo.net/articles/i-was-john-howard-yoders-graduate-assistant-should-i-still-use-his-work>. For a comprehensive account of the Mennonite church's response to Yoder's actions, including a survey of many previously unreleased documents, including victim testimony, see Rachel Waltner Goossen, "Defanging the Beast': Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder's Sexual Abuse," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89 (January 2015). The Mennonite Church USA maintains a database of articles and essays related to Yoder's sexual

ethically paradigmatic.¹⁰⁸ In the chapter “Christ and Power” from *The Politics of Jesus*, Yoder carries forward Berkhof’s work on the Powers as a part of his wide-ranging critique of the assumption that the New Testament is silent on social-systemic questions.¹⁰⁹ In his characteristically careful style, Yoder begins his expansion of Berkhof’s exousiology by providing broad definitions for the words “structure” and “power.” He defines “structure” as “the patterns or regularities that transcend or precede or condition the individual phenomena we can immediately perceive.” They are self-maintaining and function

abuse scandal which can be accessed at <http://mennoniteusa.org/menno-snapshots/john-howard-yoder-digest-recent-articles-about-sexual-abuse-and-discernment-2/>.

108. Several of the key Berkhof passages cited at length here are also cited by Yoder in the “Christ and Power” chapter. Cf. n. 73 above. In the epilogue to the second edition of Berkhof’s *Christ and The Powers* (1977), Yoder stated that his summary of Paul’s view of Christ in the *Politics of Jesus* constituted “little more than an expansion of Berkhof’s analysis.” On Berkhof’s influence on Yoder, see also *Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest: Merton, Berrigan, Yoder, and Muste at the Gethsemani Abbey Peacemakers Retreat* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 147-48. Craig A. Carter’s *Politics of the Cross*, which is the first and most comprehensive of the available monographs assessing Yoder’s theology, fails, in my view, to appreciate Berkhof’s influence of Yoder’s thought. Given the central role the powers play in Yoder’s theology as not only the definitive agent of the community’s *telos*, but also the primary shaping doctrine of Yoder’s creation theology, one would rightly expect to see Berkhof’s name among Yoder’s other primary influences given by Carter: Karl Barth, Oscar Cullman, and the American Mennonite theologian Harold S. Bender.

109. It is worth reprinting the quote of the Welsh exegete and theologian C.H. Dodd chosen by Yoder to open *The Politics of Jesus*: “The Gospel is firmly rooted in a story of that which once happened. The story is familiar. But we should observe that the situation into which Jesus Christ came was genuinely typical (the outcome of much previous history) and too long to tell here. The forces with which he came into contact were such as are permanent factors in history:—government, institutional religion, nationalism, social unrest...” The pertinence of this quote to the material of the “Christ and Power” chapter is evident, but upon a close reading of the varied, and somewhat disconnected chapters that comprise the book, we find that the same is true for each as well. Although each chapter takes its own tack, they are all aimed at defending a central premise: that the gospel accounts of Jesus are relevant to the social-political questions faced by the Christian community in every age. Dodd’s quote comes from, “The Kingdom of God and the Present Situation,” *Christian News-Letter*, May 29, 1940, supplement no. 31. It appears on page *i* of the *Politics of Jesus*.

according to their own internal logic. Structures produce certain effects, which Yoder identifies as “power,” that is, “some kind of capacity to make things happen.”¹¹⁰ In the Pauline language of “the powers,” Yoder identifies the Apostle’s way of speaking about both this structured patternedness of human life, and of its mediated power, the experience of which produces impressions of dealing with the entities’ discreet “personalities,” or even their own willfulness.¹¹¹ The structures-cum-powers are more than the sum of the individual persons who make them up, and Yoder identifies this “more” as the animate power.

Yoder then turns to the specific words Paul uses for these structures and the power they generate, typologically identified in the language of empire, cosmology, and religion as “principalities and powers,” “thrones and dominions,” “angels and archangels,” “elements,” “heights and depths,” “law,” and “knowledge,” before asking, “What does he say with this vocabulary? And are the things he says translatable into the concepts of modern social science?”¹¹² The key to answering this question lays in using these broad definitions to discern the structures that mediate power in contemporary life, and then connecting that insight to the scriptural testimony.¹¹³ What becomes clear for

110. Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 138.

111. Ted Grimsrud, “Against Empire: A Yoderian Reading of Romans,” in Sharon L. Baker and Michael Hardin, eds., *Peace Be with You: Christ’s Benediction amid Violent Empires* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2010), 120-37, 26.

112. Ibid.

113. Barber remarks that for Yoder the powers constitute pre- and supra-individual modes of social organization. By characterizing Jesus’ life as a dramatic conflict with the Powers, Yoder exposes the fundamental social and political dimension of Christianity. See Daniel Barber,

Yoder from this exercise is the *indispensability* of the powers— the foreignness of the New Testament world to our own, sociologically speaking, notwithstanding—we find the same basic patternedness, though inevitably altered, expanded, or diminished, to be a constitutive feature of our own social existence. He narrates an “inclusive vision” of the powers as follows: “religious structures (especially the religious undergirdings of stable ancient and primitive societies),” that seek to ground everyday life in transcendent or ultimate values, “intellectual structures (‘ologies and ‘isms)” that attempt to interpret and make sense of the world, “moral structures (codes and customs)” that provide the rules for interpersonal and group relations, and “political structures (the tyrant, the market, the school, the courts, race, and nation),” by which human society arranges itself and provides for the distribution of its myriad resources.¹¹⁴ Though these generalizations are “overwhelmingly broad,” they force us to confront the connection between the Apostle’s world and our own—namely, that by these powers alone is social existence made possible.

“The Particularity of Jesus and the Time of the Kingdom: Philosophy and Theology in Yoder,” *Modern Theology* 23, v. 1 (Jan. 2007): 65.

114. Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 142-3. In “Non-Violent Jesus, Violent God? A Critique of John Howard Yoder’s Approach to Theological Construction” (*Politics and Power*, 29-46), Philip E. Stoltzfus argues that Yoder’s unwillingness to engage in constructive ontological speculation about the divine being leaves him unable to reconcile convincingly the violence of God in the Hebrew Scriptures with the pacifism of Jesus. Yoder’s distaste for constructivism, Stoltzfus notes, stemmed from his view of constructive theology as a “method, an ‘ism’, a meta-position that can all-too-easily do violence to the ordinary language and common life of the disciplining community” (39), which, in practice, perennially “relativize[s] the social ethic of Jesus” (38). One need not concur with Stoltzfus critique to appreciate that, in the language of this study, for Yoder constructive theology runs the risk of becoming just another power acting as its own end—and one with particularly grave consequences for the ecclesial community given the nature of its divinely-commissioned mandate.

This observation is the first of three exousiological observations that act definitively to help shape the Christian community's overarching *telos*:

We Cannot Live without Them

Since most of the references in the New Testament to the powers stress their fallenness, Yoder argues alongside Berkhof that it is imperative to emphasize that they are part of God's good creation. As divine gifts, their original function was to provide the ordering structure necessary to foster creaturely existence in a manner consistent with the divine will. Indeed, "there could not be society or history, there could not be humanity without the existence above us of religious, intellectual, moral, and social structures."¹¹⁵ Despite their rebellion, they continue to be subjected to the divine will and thus serve as instruments of God's providential control of the cosmos. This last insight, in fact, determines Yoder's understanding of the relationship between the church and the state as the cooperation of interdependent divine mandates. For Yoder, God has mandated the church's task in the world to be the overcoming of evil through the practice of cross-carrying love. The state's mandate, on the other hand, is to keep evil in check by evil means, namely, the use of the "sword." The state's mandate, as the lesser of the two mandates, "only has meaning because the church is accomplishing its mission."¹¹⁶ When it oversteps its mandate, it enters the service of sin, and thus becomes a fallen power. Moreover, if the distinction between the church and the world is lost—as is the case with

115. Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 143.

116. Yoder, *Discipleship as Political Responsibility*, 23.

Constantinian Christianity—the church loses the critical foothold outside of the state from which it might hold the state accountable to the mandated limits. Yet:

We Cannot Live with Them

The powers have rebelled and thus fail to serve according to their design, and now demand loyalty unto themselves. Whereas they are intended for the well-being of humankind, left to their devices, they become vehicles for oppression.¹¹⁷ The primordial form of this oppression is, naturally enough, the obfuscation of the truth concerning their limitedness. Yoder insists that the frequent use of the language of “slavery” in the New Testament (e.g., Rom. 6:17; Gal. 4, 5:1; 1 Cor. 7:22) as a descriptor of the lost condition of humanity outside of Christ is a reference to the oppressive effect of the powers. Humans have become subjects of those values and structures which are necessary to social existence but which have usurped the status of God and have managed to evoke service to them as if they were of absolute value.¹¹⁸ Their effect is to separate us from the love of God (Rom. 3:38). Therefore:

We Endure in Their Midst

The Christian community finds itself caught between needing these powers and recognizing them as its idolatrous adversaries, adrift on the world and amid its structures, and bandied by the currents of social advancement and decline. For Yoder, “[O]ur lostness and our survival are inseparable, both dependent on the Powers”.¹¹⁹ Taking

117. John Howard Yoder, “*Jesus: A Model of Radical Political Action*,” *Faith and Freedom* 1.4 (December 1992): 8.

118. Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 142.

119. *Ibid*, 143.

refuge in the church is one's best bet, but by itself is no *certain* hope, since both its institutions and its ideology are power-producing and power mediating structures and therefore subject to the same principle of fallenness. This last point is especially relevant to an *ecclesial* account of justice because it accepts what so many other ecclesiologies overlook, namely, that the church is not only salt, leaven, and light to a fallen world, but that the salt can lose its flavor, leaven can become corrupted, and light can succumb to darkness.

The uncovering of the exioustiological dimension of the New Testament worldview beginning with Berkhof seriously problematizes the classical doctrines concerning the moral autonomy of life's various "orders" or "spheres".¹²⁰ In preferring a hermeneutic

120. The political infeasibility of Christ's high moral demands remains at the root of these compartmentalizing stratagems. Aquinas, for example, distinguished between those tenets of Jesus' social morality appropriate to those seeking spiritual perfection through consecrated life ("evangelical counsels") and those required of everyone according to the new law given by Christ ("evangelical precepts"). These "counsels"—namely, the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount—enabled more expeditiously the accomplishment of the human *telos*, but were neither required of, nor practical for, all believers. See the *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 108, a. 4; II-II, q. 184, a. 3; and *Commentary on the Psalms*, Ps. 24, n. 4. The effect here is to segregate the monastic life (lived in the monastery or convent) from that lived by the rest of the world according to the tenets of natural law. Despite Martin Luther's contempt for scholasticism, he basically replicated Aquinas' fundamental ethical dualism. Luther envisioned creation as governed by God under two auspices of divine providence: the secular and the spiritual. Through spiritual government, "the Holy Spirit makes Christians and pious people" and rules the souls of believers; through the secular government, God "restrains the unchristian and wicked so that they are obliged to keep the peace outwardly...[Its] authority and government extend no further than to matters which are external and corporeal" (Sec. 4). The Christian person, in whom God rules inwardly and who needs no secular governance herself, is free to engage in the administration of the sword, insofar as he or she does so only as a functionary of a legitimate government. See Martin Luther, "Secular Authority: How Far Does the Obedience Owed to it Extend?" in *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority*, ed. and trans. Harro Höpfl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 3-46. Helpful for understanding the nuances of Luther's position is Anders Nygren's excellent "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," *Ecumenical Review* 1, n. 2 (Summer 1949); and William J. Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms: A Response to the Challenge of Skepticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), esp. ch. 4. For a modern re-statement of Luther's essential position that attempts to avoid some of the abuses to which Luther's "orders"

informed heavily by a theology of creation, the dominant Lutheran, Reformed, and Thomistic biblical interpretive traditions have bypassed the normativity of Jesus thereby, connecting these ostensibly discreet life-domains to the doctrine of providence rather than to the revelation of Jesus. But in doing so, they have struggled to maintain with any real clarity in their handling of the simultaneity of the fallenness of humanity and God's ultimate control of the world.¹²¹ A hermeneutical framework cognizant of powers-theology, however, offers to the interpretation of creation on biblical grounds concrete data about the source of the powers as Christ himself, in and through whom they find their original meaning and purpose. Yoder points out that the verb *synistēmi* in Col. 1:17 (see above) shares the root of our modern word "system." In the Pauline worldview, all things "systematize," or hold together, in Christ; that is, the system of cosmic powers is rooted in

theology have been subjected historically, see Carl E. Braaten, "God in Public Life: Rehabilitating the 'Orders of Creation,'" *First Things* 8 (Dec 1990): 32-38. The modern Reformed tradition has tended to formulate this basic framework as "sphere sovereignty," beginning with Abraham Kuyper and, subsequently, Herman Dooyeweerd. For Kuyper's account of sphere sovereignty, see his 1898 Stone Lectures, (especially the third lecture "Calvin and Politics"), published as *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1943). For a synopsis of Kuyper's positions, see Irving Hexham, "Christian Politics According to Abraham Kuyper," *Crux* 19, n. 1 (March, 1983), 2-7. For Dooyeweerd's version of sphere sovereignty, see Herman Dooyeweerd, *The Roots of Western Culture*, trans. John Kraay (Toronto: Wedge, 1979). It is worth noting that Dooyeweerd believed "Barthianism" to be one of the three greatest threats (along with historicism and Biblicism) to the project of Christianizing the social order because it "tried to deny the coherence between creation, fall, and redemption." See McKendree R. Langley, "Creation and Sphere Sovereignty" *Pro Rege* 9 (June 1981), 12-22. To address what he saw as a troubling "unitarianism of the second person," H. Richard Niebuhr developed a three-fold Christian ethic predicated on the distinct persons of the Trinity, wherein each person was assigned a specific sphere of creation over which it ruled. Yoder addresses Niebuhr's position in *Politics of Jesus*, 144, n. 7. For Niebuhr's theory, see "The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Unity of the Church," *Theology Today* 3.3 (Oct. 1946), 371-384.

121. Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 144.

and is maintained by Christ, who is Lord of them.¹²² The exioustiological perspective thus stands for Yoder as a more adequate and “more biblical way to systematically relate Christ and creation” than the “dominant (Thomistic) vision of natural law”.¹²³

Far from being only distantly related to the goings-on of these “non-religious” or “secular” spheres, then, the exioustiological view becomes another way for Yoder to prove the relevance of *Jesus* to those spheres, which had been the impetus for writing *The Politics of Jesus* in the first place. Thus, for Yoder, the division of orders lies not in the discernment of various “spheres” of life which operate according to their own intrinsic ethical code (to which Jesus’ moral teaching may only be tangential), but between those who have said “yes” and those who have said “no” to the proclamation of Jesus’ lordship. His is therefore a division between the church and the world, between the orders of

122. Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 141.

123. Ibid., 159. Yoder’s now well-known observation that “people who bear crosses are working with the grain of the universe” ties together two fundamental strands of his theology: the coherence of the cosmos in Christ, who is Lord of the powers, and the axiological basicness of the ethic incarnated by Jesus. Far from being an ethic that *denies* the natural or a strong role for creation, Yoder’s exioustiological ethics presuppose a strong connection between cross and creation, such that he can claim that the true pattern of the cosmos is a cruciform one. For his argument that the crucifixion is “natural,” and not foolish or weak, see John Howard Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 212, and the discussion of Yoder on this point in Paul G. Doerksen, *Beyond Suspicion: Post- Christendom Protestant Political Theology in John Howard Yoder and Oliver O’Donovan* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 76-78. The phrase itself appears first in “Armaments and Eschatology,” *Studies In Christian Ethics* 1 (1988), 43-61, 58, and is slightly amended to “grain of the cosmos” in the epilogue of the final chapter of the second edition of *Politics of Jesus*, on page 246. On Yoder’s theology of creation see Jaime Pitts, *Principalities and Powers: Revising John Howard Yoder’s Sociological Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 1-35; Branson L. Parler, “John Howard Yoder and the Politics of Creation” in *Powers and Practices: Engaging the work of John Howard Yoder*, Jeremy M. Bergen and Anthony G Seigrist, eds. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 65-82; Parler, *Things Hold Together: John Howard Yoder’s Trinitarian Theology of Culture* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2012); and J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 149.

redemption and conservation that arise from the condition of corporate confession and are made visible by corporate obedience.¹²⁴

The Role of the Community in Relation to the Powers

Since we cannot live without the powers, as aspects of creation that make human sociality even possible, it remains to the community who knows them for what they really are to show the world what they are for. Indeed, this is its point and purpose—to proclaim through its words and its form of life the gospel that Jesus is Lord of the cosmos to a world that does not know itself to be in the throes of the fallen adversaries of God. To do this, the church must come to constitute an alternative politics consistent with the pattern of obedience established by Christ, who unlike the powers themselves did not regard God-likeness as something to which to aspire¹²⁵ (Phil. 2:6). In freely accepting the natural and expected outcome of his denial of their own self-aggrandizement and pretention to establish ultimate meaning, Jesus Christ broke their power.¹²⁶ In so doing, he enabled the redemption of peoples *in their humanity*—that is, as powers-dependent peoples.¹²⁷

Jamie Pitts has argued that

124. See Yoder's "The Anabaptist Dissent: The Logic of the Place of the Disciple in Society," *Concern* 1 (June 1954), 45-68.; and Mark T. Nation, *John Howard Yoder: Mennonite Patience, Evangelical Witness, Catholic Convictions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 154-157. Nation cites Oscar Cullman, one of Yoder's teachers at the University of Basel, as a determinative influence on his understanding of the "orders." For Cullman's views, see his 1940 essay, "The Kingship of Christ and the Church in the New Testament" published in English as *The Early Church* (SCM Press: London, 1956), 101-137.

125. Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 145.

126. *Ibid.*, 144-5.

127. *Ibid.*, 144.

[i]t is through Christ that anything is known of the ‘original’ shape of the Powers, and therefore it is through Christ that a clear understanding is gained of their distorted, fallen shape and of their future state of redemption. By attending closely to Christ’s own interactions with the Powers, Christians have a clue as to how they might participate in their ongoing redemption.”¹²⁸

Indeed, the redemption of the powers by and in Christ makes authentic and free life possible for the community who participates in Christ’s victory. It is with an eye to the powers that Yoder writes:

[T]he crucified Jesus is a more adequate key to understanding what God is about in the real world of empires and armies and markets than is the ruler in Rome, with all of his supporting military, commercial, and sacerdotal networks...in Jesus we have a clue to which kinds of causation, which kinds of community-building, which kinds of conflict management, go with the grain of the cosmos, of which we know, as Caesar does not, that Jesus is both Word (the inner logic of things) and the Lord (“sitting at the right hand”).¹²⁹

From an exousiologal perspective, the course of discipleship is thus just one in which the Christian comes to understand how, in the context of communal praxis, to develop a Jesuanic form of life in the midst of a world besieged by the powers of sin. As the community carries does so amid the watching world, the Christian community announces Christ’s rulership, “hidden but made visible by the servant church.”¹³⁰

Conclusion

David Kelsey has argued that any systematic Christian theology or ethics requires for its coherence a prior imaginative construal of what the Christian “thing” is all about—that is,

128. Pitts, xxxv-xxxvi.

129. Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 246.

130. Stanley Hauerwas, “The End of Sacrifice: An Apocalyptic Politics” in *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology*, 354-368, 359. See also Yoder’s prolegomenous remarks vis-à-vis the powers and theological method published posthumously as, John Howard Yoder, *Preface to Theology: Christology and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 247.

a purpose or a function that defines the Christian community, in the light of which the community understands what it does (and does not do) as characteristically and properly its own. As such, Kelsey concludes that “the activities comprising the common life of a Christian worshipping community should all be ordered to one end, viz., shaping the identities of its members so that their forms of speech and action will publically enact in the world the mission to which the community is called and by which it is defined.”¹³¹ It will be recalled that at the beginning of this chapter, I sought to establish the parameters for a non-Constantinian politics based on what the New Testament says about the social and political *telos* of the church—Kelsey’s “thing,” in other words—in order to establish the conditions on which the definition of a Christian account of social justice might commence. Building on the epistemological prolegomena of chapter one, and leaning heavily on the work of “New Perspective” exegetes and sympathetic biblical theologians, I have attempted to show which elements of the biblical narrative serve as such parameters. Broadly construed, they unfold—mutually reinforcing one another—as follows:

(a) (Against the tide of Reformation exegesis,) Paul’s doctrine of justification is neither about the timeless reality of individual human sin, nor the mechanics of how individuals are saved, but rather the “new creation” embodied in the novel, pan-ethnic social organism created in the wake of the cross and resurrection event. Therefore, *God’s justificatory action in Christ creates the political possibility of authentic reconciliation for all people, which the New Testament calls the church.*

131. David Kelsey, “The Bible and Christian Theology,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48, n. 3 (Sept. 1980): 386.

(b) The reconciliation of the world to God accomplished through this apocalyptic, community-forming event liberates the total cosmos from the throes of the fallen powers and exposes their divine pretensions. Therefore, *the target of God's justificatory action in Christ is the powers.*

(c) As the living testimony to Christ's victory, the church announces the lordship of Jesus over the powers by its very existence. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the community's task is to faithfully re-present to God the form of Christ's own faithfulness as revealed in the normative man, Jesus. Therefore, *the church's unique sociology is a counter-politics to the way the operant, yet defeated, powers work to oppress.*

(d) Insofar as its politics are not contingent on a confession of faithfulness that obliges practices that reconfigure the powers toward Jesuanic ends, Constantinianism operates without explicit regard for the persistent eschatological insistence of the New Testament authors that history is God's and that the Kingdom's fullness cannot be achieved through the means available to the State (or the World Bank, for that matter)—which are themselves powers. Therefore, *the church's counter-politics recognizes the basic distinction between the church and the world.*

(e) (Looping back to chapter one,) the socio-politics of the church is the life-world from which the Christian theological and ethical imagination takes its starting point. Therefore, *any Christian theory of social justice developed to serve a non-Constantinian politics must begin with the ecclesial polis, with the raw ethical data produced by the enacted counter-politics of the community for whom the risen Jesus is Lord.*

More detail will need to be supplied about what the church's re-presented faithfulness looks like, that is, the specifically Christian ways of practicing power aimed at

countering the oppressive powers. But before that task begins, I wish in the next chapter to examine some of the relevant contours of the broad contemporary and historical discussion of justice within Christian political theology, with particular focus on the varieties of the formulation of the relationship between love and justice therein. By doing so, we will be position to see, moving into chapter four, the ways in which justice theory might support and problematize the reification of, and testimony to, agapic love after the manner of Jesus that is the point of the practices themselves. Based on this examination, I will be in a position to propose a definition of ecclesial justice that I believe is adequate to the exiousiological considerations outlined above.

CHAPTER THREE

LOVE AND JUSTICE

Introduction

Christians were never meant to be normal. We've always been holy troublemakers, we've always been creators of uncertainty, agents of a dimension that's incompatible with the status quo; we do not accept the world as it is, but we insist on the world becoming the way that God wants it to be. And the Kingdom of God is different from the patterns of this world.¹

For love does speak, but it does so in a kind of language other than that of justice.²

Patterns of this world. To what "patterns" does Ellul refer in the above quote? These are the normal operation of things in our world, predictable iterations that produce within us legitimate expectation for the future. The reaction of capital to the cost of labor. The cycle of violence. The dynamics of rational choice. The politics of city hall. These are the foundation of common sense and the grist of pragmatism. Without them, we could scarcely make sense of our experiences. Yet as we have seen, the patterns of our world are the province of the powers, and, insofar as these patterns exercise their influence over how we think and behave, our own ways of understanding and anticipating this patternedness are *themselves* powers. But as Ellul reminds us, Jesus' apocalyptic kingdom is not of this world. Its apocalyptic logic runs an alternative course, defying legitimate

1. Jacques Ellul, *The Meaning of the City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 120.

2. Paul Ricoeur, "Love and Justice" in *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, Richard Kearney, ed. (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 23-39.

expectation. And as the Christian community develops its life and practice in the world, it follows this logic in discerning which powerful patterns are in concert with the ethic of the Kingdom, which are not, and how the later of these might be redeemed to reflect God's victory in Christ.

If theory is itself subject to the powers, theories of justice are no exception to the rule—they are, indeed, perhaps especially susceptible to the powers because of the domineering tendencies of self-interest which drive the production of such theories in the first place, tendencies that require the specification of protections and empowerments of individuals and groups against the power plays of fellow citizens. So how might a theory of justice be developed appropriate to the apocalyptic community of the resurrection—a community that rejects a contract model of human sociality for a covenantal one—and what might such a theory look like? Unfortunately, we have but a few clues within the work of authors sympathetic to the basic theological outlook of this project. I suspect that the question of why we do not yet see many attempts to talk about justice theory from an ecclesial ethics perspective, in spite of its insistence that the church constitutes a *polis* (and that the Aristotelian insights that make such a claim possible are thoroughgoingly caught up with questions of justice), is a product of interrelated causes. First, deep epistemic differences that divide our parent culture of liberalism and the kind of communitarianism implicit in ecclesial ethical reasoning, chiefly, the specific kind of nonfoundationalism addressed in chapter one. Second, the New Testament's priority for love which the community's own practices are meant to reify in the form of mutual service finds little purchase in contemporary justice theory, which by and large makes little, if any, room for love. Third, the influence of the Radical Reformation legacy on

ecclesial ethicists breeds a particular suspicion for the Constantinianism inherent in many Christian accounts of justice. Fourth, agapic love complicates justice normally understood, because one can readily envision instances in which the demands of other-centered love require *forgoing* the demands of justice altogether, as can be the case with forgiveness (cf. 1 Cor 6:7).³ Among the leading ecclesial ethicists, Stanley Hauerwas disavows the search for a Christian theory of social justice altogether, as we have seen.⁴ Yoder rarely treats the question of justice, but on the few occasions he does so he is terse; in an early essay entitled, “The State in the New Testament,” he comments simply that “God’s justice is God’s grace,” and notes that it is very different from the justice of the state.⁵ Elsewhere, remarking on the nascent ecclesiology of the apostolic community, he writes: “The Spirit of God...enables a justice of grace. We pray to be forgiven as we forgive others.”⁶ These tantalizing references remain unexplored by Yoder in the explicit language of justice, and one unfortunately also finds this reticence among theologians who work in his wake.

3. I take it as basic that justice refers in some way to whatever principles, norms, values, rules, etc., order or structure the socio-political relations of persons within a given polity (however big or small it may be), based on some concept of desert. I bracket questions of “internal” justice (e.g., the justice that rules the individual *anima*), such as those which so occupied Plato in his *Republic*, in this dissertation.

4. See Stanley Hauerwas, “Why Justice is a Bad Idea for Christians,” in *After Christendom: How the Church is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas* (Nashville: Abingdon Pres, 1991), 45-68.

5. John Howard Yoder, “The State in the New Testament,” in *Discipleship as Political Responsibility*, trans. Timothy J. Geddert (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2002), 24. See n. 74 in chapter two for details on this work.

6. John Howard Yoder, “The Spirit of God and the Politics of Men” in *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 221-236.

In the second half of this dissertation, I seek to realize in a more robust way something akin to what I believe Yoder must mean by “a justice of grace” and then explore its connection to a second communitarian account of political justice which abets the fulfilment of the ecclesial *telos* as outlined in Chapter Two. This summative work will occupy us of chapter four. Before we get to that, however, I believe important preparatory work lies directly before us, that is, the interrogation of the relationship between these—not polar, but perhaps, *tensive*—categories, love and justice. Whereas the nearly universal consensus has always been that love is something more than justice, there exists no account that approaches consensus on the meaning and relation of these two great ethical themes, not even in Christian theology, whose rich ethical tradition lends great substance to each.

Unfortunately, we frequently find the language of justice and the language of agapic love (often expressed under the related headings of “mercy,” “cruciformity,” “other-centeredness,” “gratuity,” “forgiveness,” etc.) side-by-side in popular and academic theology being advanced as equally normative principles for Christian life, but without forthcoming explanation as to their relationship or lexical priority. The effect is more often than not conceptual confusion rather than clarification. To understand this, we must ask whether and in what sense love and justice differ, how their difference affects their relationship, and which has normative priority if and when the demands of each conflict. What follows in this chapter is an exploration of how the relationship of love and justice is conceived from three distinct theological perspectives, each venerable on its own merits. The first perspective is that which appears across two papal encyclicals of Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* and *Caritas in Veritate*, which trades on the Thomistic distinction

between the church and the world.⁷ The second, widely diverging, account is that of Reinhold Niebuhr, who underscores the difference between love and justice by stressing the impracticability of love as a normative principle in a fallen world, and the corresponding necessity of a “relative justice” that mediates claims made from self-interest. The third account is Paul Ricoeur’s dialectical mediation of the fundamental disproportionality, but ultimate harmony, of love and justice. After analyzing these works, I proceed to offer a commentary on them relative to the perspective I have taken in this dissertation, and then explore what from each of these accounts might contribute fruitfully to the development of an ecclesial justice.

The Thomistic Option: Two Encyclicals of Benedict XVI

In two of his encyclicals, *Deus Caritas Est* (2005)⁸ and *Caritas in Veritate* (2009)⁹, Benedict XVI attempts to express the centrality of love to every authentic human relationship and to the corporate life of the church. For Benedict, Christian love (*caritas*, in Latin; *agape* in Greek) is initially provoked within the subject by the gift of love that is Jesus Christ, *Immanuel*. Christ, as the exemplar *par excellence* of the gratuitous nature of God’s love, is, as self-gift, God’s tellingly agapic response to our infidelity. What follows from the logic of the incarnation is that as an intra-human act, loving always leads to the diminution of the giver and the enlargement of the receiver. Indeed, for Benedict, “love

7. Benedict’s position on the relationship of love to justice is consistent with Catholic social thinking on the topic in the modern era. The choice to begin our analysis with Benedict, whose papal output obviously postdates Niebuhr by some decades, is justified by his continuity with a longer historical tradition.

8. Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006); hereafter, *DCE*.

9. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2010); hereafter, *CIV*.

is...an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving.”¹⁰ To love thus means to experience liberation through one’s own loss. Hence Benedict characterizes love as gratuitous self-disposal that forgives rather than condemns, that seeks not the benefit of the giver, but that of the receiver. Yet because our finitude prevents us from being unremitting gift, “[a]nyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift,” and so must continually “drink anew from the original source, which is Jesus Christ.”¹¹

An important aspect of understanding the nature of agapic—or, as he characterizes it, *descending* love, as a means to capture its divine origination—is to understand its interrelation with its earthly, ascending counterpart, *eros*. Benedict’s philological predilection is helpful in service of this. Benedict emphasizes the centrality of agapic love to the Christian faith by drawing the reader’s attention to the marked difference between biblical expressions of love and those commonly found in contemporaneous Greek literature. For example, we find in the Septuagint *eros* used only twice, and not at all in the NT; of *eros*, *philia*, and *agape*, the NT overwhelmingly prefers *agape*, despite its infrequent usage in extrabiblical Greek literature. (*Philia*, he says, is used “with added depth of meaning” in John’s gospel to convey the nature of Jesus’ relationship to his disciples.) From this, Benedict surmises that the biblical authors

10. *DCE*, 6.

11. *DCE*, 7. Especially relevant for this dissertation is the ethical form of his claim that those who wish to love must also receive love as a gift. To say that Christ is the ultimate source of love is to comment at the same time on human finitude, and this has an ethical corollary in Christian practice. In the next chapter, I will argue that the sustainability of a community whose end is the reification of agapic love depends upon the extent to which its members receive the love that makes self-gift possible.

avoided *eros* because of its popular association with the feeling of intoxication that signaled fellowship with the divine, and so also pagan temple rites involving both polytheism and prostitution. Their intent, he argues, was to signal something new and distinct about the Judeo-Christian understanding of love (that it was manifestly *not* to be associated with orgiastic),¹² rather than to deny its erotic dimension. The Thomistic thematic constant in Benedict's corpus that the revealed Christian religion does not abrogate nature, but completes or perfects it, is here made manifest. This view leads him from the typological radicalization of different kinds of love to a view that stresses the interconnectedness of the types. "Love," he argues, "is a single reality, but with different

12. *DCE*, 3-5. To the Hebrew term *ahabà* (which the Septuagint renders *agape*), Benedict assigns the meaning of "moving beyond selfish love; concern and care for the other; not self-seeking...[not] intoxication, but seeking the good of the beloved...; ready, and even willing, for sacrifice". It appears notably in *Song of Songs* in contrast to a more insecure, indeterminate and searching love, *dodim*, which it replaces as love deepens. *DCE*, 4. Writing about the history of the production of the LXX, Bruni notes that "[t]here was a kind of love that in Hebrew was expressed with the word *dodim*, which relates to the sphere of desire and was well-translated with *eros*: but for the term that expressed in Hebrew the concept of spousal love, involving *eros* but also a reciprocal gift, through the term *ahabà*, the Seventy could not find anything better than adopting the term *agape* [which was not itself an existing Greek noun], also chosen for the assonance from the verb "agapao" which appears already in Homer with the meaning of 'taking care of.' ...*Agape*...among the first Christians also meant the fraternal banquet, which used to take place during the Eucharistic ceremony. This ambivalence in *agape*, as love/banquet, now part of the history of mankind, says more than any other theory about the novelty of this type of love that is communion, reciprocity, a new form of life in common." See Luigino Bruni, *The Genesis and Ethos of the Market* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), ch. 3, n. 27. The scriptural citations that denominate the apostolic "lovefeast" with the noun "*agape*" are 1 Cor. 11:20-34; Jude 12; and 2 Peter 2:13. The sub-apostolic practice is mentioned in the extant work of several second and third century writers, including Ignatius of Antioch (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans*) and Pliny the Younger (*Letter to Trajan*). By the fourth century, the *agape* feast, whose name derived from the communal practice of sharing of food across class boundaries at a common table—during which time the words of institution were intoned over the bread and wine—had mostly faded from practice. The Eucharist came to be rehoused within its own liturgical rite celebrated at each of the communities' regular gatherings, but was now precipitated by *fasting* from food. On the *agapic* meal, see Paul Fike Stutzman *Recovering the Love Feast: Broadening Our Eucharistic Celebrations* (Eugene: OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), particularly Part One.

dimensions; at different times, one or other dimensions may emerge more clearly. Yet when the two dimensions are totally cut off from one another, the result is a caricature or at least an impoverished form of love.”¹³ In reading these types together (while acknowledging their difference), he reveals a key aspect of what he calls the “newness of biblical faith.” Whereas even Aristotle could not envision a love beyond that which grasps for knowledge of the highest reality—God, from whose disinterest in its creation, returns none,¹⁴ the God of the Bible on the other hand reveals a love that is the sustenance and fulfilment of *eros*. Not merely an object of love, this God is an active subject of love who longs for relationship with creation. God’s love, while totally agapic, is also wholly *eros*¹⁵—it is the consummation of the dimensions of love in a single reality, the latter of which is typified by God’s choosing of, and particular concern for, Israel among the peoples of the earth. In God’s desire to reconcile creation to God, we find an *eros* supremely ennobled, divinized and purified by its encounter with agape. As natural to the human being¹⁶ as to the divine, *eros* for Benedict is the scene of the first-flowering of the

13. *DCE*, 8.

14. *DCE*, 9. For Aristotle’s conception of the “Unmoved Mover,” see *Physics*, 8; *Metaphysics*, 12; and *On the Heavens*, 1.

15. *DCE*, 9. Benedict is here drawing from Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names*, IV, 12-14: PG 3, 709-713.

16. For Benedict, “*eros* is rooted in man’s very nature,” as evidenced by a person’s natural gravitation from his family towards a partner, with whom he or she becomes “one flesh”. See *DCE*, 10. Benedict notes concerning the naturalness of this that it is fitting that we find similar ideas in philosophical reflection, and picks out Plato’s myth in *Symposium* (Bks. 14 and 15) concerning human origins as evidence. In Plato’s telling (through the character Aristophanes), humans originally existed as spherical wholes, but were cut in half by Zeus as punishment for pride. As such, they spend their days attempting to regain their original state, which explains why people speak of love as producing a feeling completeness or wholeness.

agapic impulse, and so the means by which we begin approach to the self-giving love of God as something that is not altogether foreign to us. When we experience the *agape* of God, we recognize within it the erotic impulse, yet we are drawn out of ourselves into a new reality of love which crosses over the threshold of desire.

This is in fact the picture of love that we glimpse over the course of salvation history, for which the biblical authors not infrequently employed the connubial metaphor. In discussing the adultery of the prophet Hosea's wife, Gomer, for example, Benedict concludes that it is God's agapic love for Israel—which has been enflamed by *eros*—that motivates God to forgo the execution of Israel's sentence and forgive the people (Hos. 11:8-9). Thus the spurned God is turned against God's self, that is, "his love against his justice."¹⁷ In God's forgiveness of Israel's infidelity is exemplified, Benedict claims, the ultimate reconciliation of justice and love, and as such, Hosea's story dimly prefigures the crucifixion, insofar as God's own love for humanity bids God to undergo the just sentence of the cross.¹⁸ This reconciliation involves love enveloping and defeating justice, of violating the legitimate claims of justice (in this case, claims against sinful individuals) in the interest of gratuity. In the cross, Benedict argues, we gaze at the pierced side of Christ, which is "love in its most radical form,"¹⁹ and only then do we

17. *DCE*, 10.

18. Benedict's interpretation of the Atonement is driven by the Thomistic conception of satisfactory punishment, according to which Christ's death, as a righting of a moral injustice (human sin), provides the merit required to restore the penitent to a justified state, made available in the sacraments. For Thomas' theory of the Atonement, see the *Summa* IIIa 85.3, IIIa 86.2, and IaIIae 113.2.

19. *DCE*, 12.

begin to understand love's real significance. It is in "contemplation [of this that] the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move."²⁰ Indeed to believe God as self-emptying love for us is the summation of the Christian life (cf. 1 John 4:16).²¹

It is the acknowledgement that we are first loved that makes possible our own re-presentation of *agape* to God and to one another, elevating love beyond an ethical "command."²² As our natural *eros* encounters the "visible manifestations of God's love"—the person of Jesus Christ as revealed in the scriptures and made present in the sacraments, and the living community of the church—our sentiment, will, and intellect receive discipline, and so mature. Increasingly, this complex is brought into coincidence with God's own will. By this transformation, described by Benedict as learning to "see with the eyes of Christ," I now can "love even the neighbor whom I do not like or even know," because I now perceive in her the image of our common creator.

Correspondingly, I perceive more than my neighbor's need for outward necessities, I perceive his or her need for love.²³ Justice, which outlines and secures for each subject these outward necessities, neither recognizes nor mediates this second human requirement. Thus does love enter the political sphere as the characteristic Christian contribution to social welfare—we who recognize our lives as gifted in love, who have learned to see as Christ sees, know that mere justice cannot manifest true human

20. *DCE*, 12.

21. *DCE*, 1.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *DCE*, 17.

development, individually or socially. Love is necessary to human politics, but it cannot be given by the state; the church thus proves her political indispensability.

Justice, for Benedict, is a matter of practical reason mediating claims of desert, and is the province of the state rather than the church. Because the distinction between the two realms is fundamental to Christianity, the church does not impose the justice of the state on any polity, nor makes recommendations on specific policies or laws²⁴, but reserves instead its contribution to justice to the purification of political rationality, as befits its stewardship of the natural law, and the “reawakening of spiritual energy” that peoples’ require to commit the inevitable self-sacrifices required by justice.²⁵ As a normative principle manifested in an expression of equality among people named the *common good*, political justice is the responsibility of the lay faithful, in their capacity as citizens, for “a just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church.”²⁶

24. *CIV*, 6.

25. *DCE*, 29. “The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society...is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation “in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the *common good*.” Quote is from to John Paul II’s Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), 42; *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 81 (1989), 472.

26. The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* includes the following summary of the social justice teachings included in the *Catechism*: “Society ensures social justice when it respects the dignity and the rights of the person as the proper end of society itself... Furthermore, society pursues social justice, which is linked to the common good and to the exercise of authority, when it provides the conditions that allow associations and individuals to obtain what is their due” (no. 411). Social and economic life “should be pursued according to its own proper methods within the sphere of the moral order, at the service of the whole human being and of the entire human community in keeping with social justice” (no. 511). See Benedict XVI, *Compendium: Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005).

For Benedict, love remains the paradigmatic principle for micro-relationships (friends, family members, or small groups) as well as macro ones (social, economic, and political associations)²⁷; yet love always presupposes justice. I am prompted by love to “offer what is mine,” he says, yet, “I cannot ‘give’ what is mine to the other, without first giving him what pertains to him in justice. And so, my offer “never lacks justice, which now prompts [me] to give to the other what is ‘his,’ what is due to him by reason of his being or his acting.”²⁸ As long as we love others in charity, “then first of all we are just towards them.” Hence, “justice is not extraneous to charity, [nor] an alternative or parallel path to charity: justice is inseparable from charity, and intrinsic to it.”²⁹ If our love for others is authentic *caritas*, then justice is always there present along with it; it is the “minimum measure” of it³⁰. What justice reveals is that authentic love always accepts the other as good, as worthy of love and worthy of rights, by virtue of his or her very being. And, if to love someone is to desire that person’s good and to take effective steps to secure it, then to advance the common good of all is to be solicitous toward, and to avail oneself of, the institutions that structure society and provide all individuals what is due to them for authentic human development. “This is the institutional path—we might also call it the political path—of charity,” says Benedict, “no less excellent and effective than

27. *CIV*, 2.

28. *CIV*, 6.

29. *Ibid.* Benedict builds here on themes considered in *Populorum Progressio*, 268 and *Gaudium et Spes*, 69.

30. *CIV*, 6. The formula “justice is the minimum measure of love” is Paul VI’s. See *Address for the Day of Development* (23 August, 1968): *AAS* 60 (1968), 626-627.

the kind of charity which encounters the neighbour directly, outside the institutional mediation of the *polis*.³¹ For Benedict, responsibility for the common good is a requirement of *both* justice and charity, hence, “love bids me to care about justice so that I can participate in building up the universal *city of God*.”³²

While reason may dictate the requirements of social/political justice, it may do so only according to precepts that are ultimately given meaning by love.³³ And this is important because, for Benedict, justice is sterile without love; indeed, justice is sufficient for mere accord, but only love produces authentic fraternity—the very end of justice.³⁴ Yet in professional and academic social analysis it is usually dismissed as irrelevant for interpreting and suggesting moral responsibility. Hence, a prominent subtheme in *Caritas in Veritate* is Benedict’s concern to prevent love from degenerating into mere personal sentimentality, and so preserve its political relevance as a “principle of gratuitousness” for animating social and political development.³⁵ When economic laws of

31. *Ibid.*, 7.

32. *Ibid.* It is for this reason that Benedict places so much emphasis in *CIV* on the church’s official charitable organs and their role in the common good—these institutionalized charities uphold the relational and social *content* of love; that is, not merely its agapic character, but its particular rootedness in the doctrinal tradition of the church. “[A] Christianity of charity without truth would be interchangeable with a pool of good sentiments.” *Ibid.*, 4.

33. “Thinking does not always give proper direction to the will. Reason, by itself, is capable of grasping the equality between men and of giving stability to their civic coexistence, but it cannot establish fraternity.” *Ibid.*, 34.

34. The explicit object of Benedict’s attack here is Marxism, which promised a doomed social vision where love (i.e., charity) was rendered redundant by justice. “In the end, the claim that just social structures would make works of charity superfluous masks a materialist conception of man: the mistaken notion that man can live “by bread alone” (*Mt* 4:4; cf. *Dt* 8:3)—a conviction that demeans man and ultimately disregards all that is specifically human.” *DCE*, 26.

35. *CIV*, 34.

exchange and forms of redistribution are governed by the “spirit of gift,”³⁶ “internal forms of solidarity and mutual trust,”³⁷ reinforce widespread commitment to the common good and foster authentic human development.

Critical Analysis

How might Benedict’s conception of love and justice do practical work for Christians who are interested in realizing justice (and, presumably, love as well)? Benedict speaks for a moral and political tradition that at the height of its influence gave rise to a socially and intellectually sophisticated culture, a tradition formative in many ways of some of the basic values of liberalism: the inherent worth of the individual, equality among people (or, at least the treating of equal cases equally before the law), and a commitment to humanism and authentic human development, to name a few. In these two encyclicals, he displays its continued vitality in articulating a robust, at times even poetic, account of the nature of God’s love and its ramifications for social ethics and politics, directly connecting “God’s ways of loving [to] the measure of human love.”³⁸

But there are at least three problems, in my view, with Benedict’s theory. First, there is, I think, a difficulty in linking love and justice in the way Benedict does. Given

36. *Ibid.*, 37. Benedict discusses the regulation of the market through freely-enacted contracts between parties under the heading of “commutative justice,” but argues that even this kind of justice is by itself insufficient to actualize true human development because of the mutual skepticism on which contracts are in principle founded (*CIV*, 35) Without social and political justice, which breed the powerful incentive to share society’s reciprocal duties, “[i]ndividual rights [become] detached from a framework of duties which grants them their full meaning, [and] can run wild.” (*Ibid.*, 43).

37. *CIV*, 25.

38. *DCE*, 11.

that God's love is fundamentally agapic, one may question how the administration of justice, which is predicated on ensuring precisely what is due to others, can withstand the gratuity of love. In other words, how does love not always overwhelm justice? Love, for Benedict, is prior to justice, and this must be so if it is to be the impetus to do justice. At the same time, justice is both a "minimum measure"³⁹ of love and is exceeded by love. Therefore, he leads to conceive of a kind of ontological relationality between them. But if this is so, then what is it about love that prohibits moving beyond justice into love? What standard or procedure legitimates justice alone in a Christian ethics, and not the full measure of love? Linking love and justice in such a way makes the practice of justice something that falls short of authentic *caritas*. If the moral paradigm for Christian discipleship is the self-disposing love that is displayed in the cross, how can we defend the justifiable use of violence in the pursuit of justice? Or, seen from a different perspective, the pressing of one's rights in court? Or of desiring legitimate recognition for one's achievements? What Benedict's account seems to require is a logical mechanism for preventing love from "turning against justice" (as he claims love does), for dealing with the reality that the potency of gratuity is derived from its frustration of justice. Does not the conceptualization of love and justice as points on a spectrum elide the different role or purpose of the principles?⁴⁰

39. *CIV*, 6.

40. Conspicuous by its absence in Benedict's discussion of the necessity of love to establishing authentic *fraternity* among people, beyond the *equality* made possible by justice, is *liberty*, which plays no substantive role in these encyclicals. When Benedict elsewhere defines freedom it is in direct contradistinction to the freedom bequeathed to modernity by the Enlightenment, which of course sought to read these three values as indispensable to one another. Benedict equates Enlightenment liberty with the negative liberty (the freedom to act without external restraint), and he regards this as the most determinative for our contemporary Western

Second, Benedict's position is worked out in the context of a global economy in which every person is in some way economically interconnected to every other person, and is a version of the Augustinian theory that the relationship between the church and the world is fixed by their mutual interest in maintaining earthly peace in order to accomplish their separate, divinely-established, purposes.⁴¹ Stanley Hauerwas has pointed out the degree to which the (Ana)baptist concept of the two mandates (put to use in Chapter Two) resembles the Thomistic view that state ultimately exists to aid the mission of the church, which is the sanctification of human politics.⁴² The crucial difference between the two positions is the question of how the church plays out its role in

political culture. Yet it is precisely liberty, guaranteed through rights and affording a space in which individuals develop themselves according to a table of their own goods, that in liberal political theory acts to prevent violations of the fundamental autonomy of others under the heading of justice, and, as such, would censure those attempts to implement the positive content of love that Benedict seeks to normatize via the natural law ("To love someone is to desire that person's good and to take effective steps to secure it," *CIV*, 7). In theorizing love as affective rather than ethical, liberalism avoids the problem inherent in Benedict's conceptualization scheme. But clearly such a liberal conception of freedom will have little purchase in Benedict's moral teleology. Central to his own, positive conception of freedom on the other hand are ontological and anthropological objective truths that he argues prevent freedom from becoming simply the means to express unchecked individual desire. Hence he says, "in order to understand freedom properly we must always think of it in tandem with responsibility... which includes acceptance of the ever greater bonds required both by the claims of humanity's shared existence and by conformity to man's essence. If responsibility is answering to the truth of man's being, then we can say that an essential component of the history of liberation is ongoing purification for the sake of the truth. The true history of freedom consists in the purification of individuals and of institutions through this truth." We only become free, on this account, when we actualize ourselves in accordance with those truths which remain true for all people. See Joseph Ratzinger, "Truth and Freedom," *Communio* 23.1 (1996), 17.

41. See Augustine, *City of God Against the Pagans*, 19:14. In *CIV* 39-41, Benedict speaks of the state as the organ tasked with redistribution as befits the standards of justice and the maintenance of order (including "effective imprisonment that respects human rights...")

42. See Stanley Hauerwas' "Foreword" to Yoder, *Discipleship as Political Responsibility*, 8-9.

announcing Jesus' lordship to creation—what means, in other words, does it employ in its mission? How far does its mandate extend? Both positions agree that the state exists foremost to keep order, and both claim to know what the state does not, namely, that it is not coterminous with the end of human social existence. But Benedict's argument makes the Constantinian presupposition that there exists a sphere of Christian social activity—in this case, the state—in which the course of discipleship is determined by responsibilities unrelated to, or underived from, the divine mandate made evident in Christ's faithfulness vis-à-vis the powers. In other words, in Benedict's vision, the church's mandate overlaps with the state's, not insofar as the institution itself administers public justice, of course, but because the church, as the steward of right natural law, is responsible for giving direction to the state's actions for the proper maintenance of the social order, and because it is the Catholic layperson who is responsible for exercising just citizenship through the democratic organs available to her, and to bring them into being where they are not.⁴³ But it has been my continuing contention that, whereas the church does employ its knowledge of the state's limits in calling it to live up to its (the state's) own mandate, *Christians* must rely on their eschatological hope in God's providential care of creation as a substitute for themselves exercising the violence mandatory to maintain the social order—and indeed, this is the only way to replicate in our common life the agapic love we perceive in Christ's response to, and reconfiguration of, fallen power. The divinely-ordained order secured by this violence, which Yoder refers to as the “pre-condition for

43. *CIV*, 7.

human society,”⁴⁴ is what makes possible the church’s living out of its kingdom ethic, and the justification to proscribe that which is ordained by God is just the church’s mandate: to follow Christ’s lead by representing his faithfulness to God before a watching world.⁴⁵ The Christian church is vital to the larger society in a host of ways, including at least one way that Benedict makes plain—the church makes visible the necessity of love to true human politics. But the first task of the church is (to borrow from Hauerwas’ typical phraseology), “to be the church,” and thereby “make the world the world.”⁴⁶ That this requires a morality beyond that of the state is self-evident; love is always something more than justice. But this also means the church must be careful to maintain the integrity its own practices, lest it risk a crisis of trust with society at large. And this is precisely where a theory of ecclesial justice might mitigate against this possibility. Its absence points to a third insufficiency in Benedict’s argument.

For Benedict, charity is as integral a practice to the church as liturgy and proclamation. While “[l]ove of neighbour...is first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful,...it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial

44. John Howard Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State*, reprint (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2002), 12.

45. Every church/state (or church/world) theology posits an ethical double standard (see n. of this chapter for more on this); stating it in the way I have above has, since the time of the early church, occasioned some form of the rejoinder: “but what if everyone did that?” The response to this perennial objection is first intimated (in the extant literature) by Justin Martyr⁴⁵. and given great force by Origen⁴⁵. already in the mid-third century. See Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 11, and Origen, *Contra Celsum*, VIII, 70-75.

46. See for example Stanley Hauerwas, “Worship, Evangelism, Ethics: On Eliminating the ‘And,’” in *A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernity*, Stanley Hauerwas, ed. (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2000), 157.

community at every level: from the local community to the particular Church and to the Church universal in its entirety. As a community, the Church must practice love.”⁴⁷ Like liturgy and proclamation, charity is an ordered expression of the church’s mission, which has its roots in the diaconate, specifically, in the apostle’s choosing of seven men (the “*diaconia*”) to carry out the daily distribution to widows (Acts 6:5-6), being themselves overburdened by their spiritual responsibilities.⁴⁸ Following this original pattern, “[l]ove...needs to be organized if it is to be an ordered service to the community.”⁴⁹ Because this ordered form of loving (which he will call *ecclesial charity* three times in *DCE* ⁵⁰) remains tied institutionally to the church, it remains substantively connected to, and reliant on, God’s agapic love. By extension it thus remains connected to the broader doctrinal tradition of the church.⁵¹

47. *DCE*, 20.

48. *DCE*, 21.

49. *DCE*, 20.

50. *DCE*, 23, 29, 31.

51. Benedict’s worry in this section is clear—“the growing secularism of many Christians engaged in charitable work”. For Benedict, it is imperative that Catholics working alongside those inspired by irreligious leftist causes retain an “[i]nterior openness to the Catholic dimension of the Church” and thus, “respect[...] what is distinctive about the service which Christ requested of his disciples.” Without a grounding in the love of God and the biblical vision of the Kingdom, charity workers risk developing “an arrogant contempt for man, something not only unconstructive but actually destructive, or surrendering to a resignation which would prevent us from being guided by love in the service of others.” As such, “[a]n authentically religious attitude” is necessary to prevent people from “from presuming to judge God, accusing him of allowing poverty and failing to have compassion for his creatures. When people claim to build a case against God in defense of man, on whom can they depend when human activity proves powerless?” See *DCE*, 32-37.

Benedict therefore envisages the Christian *practice* of justice and love in the following way: responsibility for justice is the task of politics, and so it falls on the shoulders of the lay faithful, in their capacity of citizens⁵², to enact justice in ways congruent with their respective political systems. Love, on the other hand, has no overt political directionality; its practice “must be independent of parties and ideologies,” since it is “not a means of changing the world ideologically, and it is not at the service of worldly stratagems.” It is rather “a way of making present here and now the love which man always needs.”⁵³

We shall pass over the question of whether any charitable act, insofar as it takes place in an actual social setting defined by some politics, can truly be *apolitical* to pose one more concretely related to our task: does not the church, which possesses a “proper independence and is structured on the basis of her faith as a community which the State must recognize”⁵⁴ itself require a concept of desert by which duties, roles, rights, resources, and decision-making are structured, even if the object of those activities is the reification of *caritas*? Neither encyclical broaches an *ecclesial justice*, either as it relates to individual Christians *qua* Christians (rather than as citizens), or the church as a distinct society. The omission of a mention of anything like an ecclesial justice may reflect Thomistic “orders” theology (see chapter two, n. 119)⁵⁵, which separates monastic from lay

52. “[I]t is not the instrument that must be called to account, but individuals, their moral conscience and their personal and social responsibility.” *CIV*, 36.

53. *DCE*, 31.

54. *DCE*, 28.

55. Because “[Benedict] is...known to be a sympathetic student of the theology of the Augustinian-formed Martin Luther,” Richard John Neuhaus cited certain “elements of Luther’s

life, that is, those who practice a politics of love from those who practice a politics of justice according to the natural law.⁵⁶ Yet, it is all the more conspicuous in its absence given the context of the documents' respective releases. By 2005, the year of *Deus Caritas*

concept of the 'twofold kingdom of God',” in the Pope's conceptualization in DCE of the duties of Christians acting as agents in ecclesial and democratic capacities. See Richard John Neuhaus, “Pope Benedict on Love and Justice,” *First Things*, May 2006.

56. The relationship between a Benedict's view of justice and canon law is not addressed in these encyclicals, but a explicitly Roman Catholic theory ecclesial justice would have to pass through the canons, which have responsibility for “ensur[ing] order both in individual and social life, and also in the Church's activity itself...by lay[ing] down certain rules and norms of behavior.” (John Paul II, *Sacrae Disciplinae Leges*). The authority to promulgate canon law has been consistently tied to the institution of the church by Christ himself; it therefore rooted the same way as the broader magisterial doctrinal and ethical right claimed by Rome. But its justificatory basis, as a body law aimed at securing justice, has evolved. The 1983 revision of the Code of Canon Law (currently in effect) replaced the 1917 code which followed the divisions in classical Roman Law, namely, norms, persons, things, procedures, and penalties. The former arrangement reflected a concern to ground canon law philosophically in the Aristotelian conception of the perfect society (see, e.g., Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*, 10), where it was paired with a resolute insistence on the legal autonomy of the church (“To wish the Church to be subject to the civil power in the exercise of her duty is a great folly and a sheer injustice,” *ibid*, 33). However, whereas the church's theoretical legal autonomy remains a disputed question, in a broader sense, all modern, postconciliar canonical scholarship “has shown a theological concern...to determine more clearly the place of the juridical in the mystery of the Church.” Carlos Jose Errázuriz, *Justice in the Church: A Fundamental Theory of Canon Law*, trans. Jean Gray and Michael Dunnigan (Montreal: Wilson & Lefleur Ltée, 2009), 71. In other words, contemporary theory seeks to root canon law not in political philosophy, but the mystical basis of the church as the Body of Christ and the People of God. John Paul II addressed this fresh perspective in his promulgating the new code, writing “[t]he instrument, which the Code is, fully corresponds to the nature of the Church, especially as it is proposed by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in general, and in a particular way by its ecclesiological teaching...this new Code could be understood as a great effort to translate this same doctrine, that is, the conciliar ecclesiology, into canonical language.” (*Sacrae Disciplinae Leges*). Thus, as Ladislav Orsy observed, “The very headings of the various books and chapters [of the 1983 Code] indicate that the present laws are more closely related to their theological roots than the earlier ones were.” See Ladislav Orsy, “The Church's New Laws,” *The Tablet* 7 May 1983. Although the impulse to determine the fundamental character of canon law has shifted from philosophy to theology, reflecting the broader move in modern Catholic social ethics to recenter discourse on the language of scripture and the tradition, rather than philosophy, what has remained is the sense that canon law is proper to the ecclesial body because it has the character of a distinct society, and therefore retains ordering and disciplining rights consistent with its assumed political sovereignty.

Est's promulgation, the church was well in the throes of the very public global clerical sexual abuse crisis. Between 2008 and 2009 alone, when *Ceritas in Veritate* was written and released, the Vatican defrocked 171 priests in connection with the scandal.⁵⁷ The rebuilding of the church's moral credibility will in all likelihood take decades. While there is not space to delve into the specifics of that crisis here, I do think it germane to note, in light of that scandal, the inadequacy of a model of love and justice that cannot evaluate the extent to which ecclesial practices—be they kerygmatic, liturgical, or charitable—do or do not achieve the ends to which they are set.

Because of the difficulties associated with Benedict's position, I believe we must move towards an understanding of love and justice that expresses the differences, and different aims of each. One such position is that of the Reinhold Niebuhr, to whom we now turn.

An Honest Realism: Reinhold Niebuhr

Although he thought and wrote quite a bit about Christian love, it is not a topic readily associated with the social ethics of Reinhold Niebuhr. His long career was marked above all by a resolute focus on the nature and effects of sin in human affairs and the attendant requirements of justice for a fallen world. Love, reified for Niebuhr in individual life as the achievement of the spiritual elite, and in politics as the non-resistance and non-participation of the same, remains in his work an ever-present specter haunting the margins of the politically feasible, always judging, but never making purchase in the real world of inevitably sinful human politics.

57. Eric Brown, "Pope Benedict XVI Defrocked 400 Priests Over Child Abuse In Just Two Years," *International Business Times*, 18 Jan. 2014.

Exemplified perfectly in Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, love is for Niebuhr the ultimate standard of Christian ethics and, because our own self-realization can only take place within the context of an authentic human community, the "primary law" of human nature.⁵⁸ The cross, as the very embodiment of the ethical perfection of self-sacrifice, remains ultimately paradigmatic for Christians as the symbol of siding with the needs of the other over those of the self.⁵⁹ But the law of love which is the rule of the Kingdom of God to which Jesus was witness, and the supreme ethical norm which must finally relativize all actual human moral achievement, stands in opposition to the brute fact of sin. It is the reality of sin that convinces us that love is in fact "transhistorical," meaning that it points to a realm beyond history, remaining an impossibility *in* history. Sin, on the other hand, which as the idolatrous opposite of love ("the sin of man is that he seeks to make himself God"⁶⁰), is the assertion of the self against others ("sin is always trying to be strong at the expense of someone else"⁶¹), names the dynamic that actually structures human sociality in all its forms. It is, in fact, injustice itself, the "taking advantage of other life"⁶² in the interests of the self. The problem of sin is compounded in corporate relationships, where the disinterestedness required of self-sacrifice is faced

58. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 2 vols. (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1943), 2: 244.

59. Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York: Seabury, 1979), 100.

60. Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 1: 179.

61. *Ibid.*, 2:252.

62. Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, 90. I am here aided in my reading of Niebuhr by Karen Lebacqz, *Six Theories of Justice: Perspectives from Philosophical and Theological Ethics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 83-85.

down by the collective interest of the group. The individual who would sacrifice herself as a member of the group now sacrifices the interests of her fellows, which constitutes their “unjust betrayal.”⁶³ Hence groups must always remain less moral (i.e., more self-interested) than the individuals who comprise them, and this is particularly true of classes and nations. Thus does Niebuhr endorse the arresting observation of Johannes Haller that “[n]o state has ever entered a treaty for any other reason than self-interest...A statesman who has any other motive would deserve to be hung.”⁶⁴

If the law of love, as the ultimate, if inapplicable, ethical standard remains an “impossible possibility”⁶⁵ in a world governed by sin, then the Christian community is compelled by its responsibility to the world to settle for a less demanding, practicable norm: justice. Justice is a multifaceted term in Niebuhr’s usage; he delineates “perfect justice”—a state of brotherhood absent conflicts of interest (an ideal as unrealistic as love itself which is, in fact in the end, for Niebuhr identical to love)—from “relative justice,” which involves the balancing of competing interests and the assignment of rights and duties.⁶⁶ Relative justice, because it carries our moral obligations through complex economic and political systems beyond our immediate sphere of influence, serves the “spirit of brotherhood,” and thus is at the service of the interests of love.⁶⁷ But because

63. Niebuhr, *Moral Man, Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (1932; reprint. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 267; also Lebacqz, 85.

64. Johannes Haller, in *The Aera Buelow*, quoted in Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man, Immoral Society*, 84.

65. Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, 19.

66. Lebacqz, 86.

67. Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 2:248; Lebacqz, 86.

this justice is only ever relative, and it can always be improved towards the ideal of love, it remains something less than love. As the best possible, though not the best imaginable, outcome, it always faces the judgment of love. Thus justice is love's practical compromise with sin; whereas justice requires love as a standard by which its historical enactments may be ever purified, love requires justice to make itself actionable in a fallen world.

While the modern renewal of non-Constantinian ethics largely post-dates Niebuhr's output, he does take aim at some of its central concerns in a widely-read article pointedly entitled, "Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist," written at the outset of World War II.⁶⁸ Niebuhr's central thesis in this essay is that the advocacy of non-violent passive resistance by liberal Protestants claiming legitimation in the Jesus of the gospels is a heresy. For Niebuhr, this is because the nature of Jesus' love ethic is self-sacrificial, and

68. The background for the position Niebuhr advances in this essay—a position that one might call "just war realism"—rounded into form during an earlier public spat with his brother H. Richard in the pages of the *Christian Century* over the American response to the Japanese invasion of China. In the essay at hand, in which those convictions are brought to bear, Niebuhr makes clear his rejection of both the historical just war tradition and the practice of non-violent resistance among Protestant liberals. For Niebuhr, traditional just war theory was too indebted to the Roman Catholic perspective on the natural law, and so for him represented a kind of rigid principlism that was finally unhelpful for contending with the vagaries of modern warfare. Theological liberals championing the cause of pacifism had, he felt, failed to contend adequately with the reality of sin and overestimated the efficacy of appeals to love as a political basis.⁶⁸ Given the problems with both alternatives, as he understood them, he turned to an ethics of "lesser evil," using the failures of both as justification. See Keith Pavlischek, "Reinhold Niebuhr, Christian Realism, and Just War Theory A Critique," in Eric Patterson (ed.), *Christianity and Power Politics Today: Christian Realism and Contemporary Political Dilemmas* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 53-72. Pavlischek points out that in light of Niebuhr's unceasing polemic against theological liberalism, it is easy to overlook how thoroughly saturated with liberal presupposition was his theological vision—from his rejection of "literalist" biblical hermeneutics (including—and especially relevant to our discussion—straightforward appeals to Jesus' ethical statements) to his doctrinal reductionism, through which, "all the great doctrines of the Christian tradition get transformed into saying something about human nature or human hope." See Pavlischek, n.1, 69.

thus totally non-resistant. Liberal theologians and activists appropriating Jesus in this way misunderstand Jesus' absolutist ethic as an actionable political theology, and disguise from themselves their everyday complicity in violence—and thus their own self-righteousness. The *point* of the law of love, for Niebuhr, is to expose to us our own personal need for grace; it is manifestly not a political platform. The root of this “absolutist” error, Niebuhr claims, lay in its heretical anthropology. Whereas the Bible paints a picture of humanity as fallen species in need of regenerative grace, the origin of liberal anthropology is the “Renaissance faith in the goodness of man.”⁶⁹ This has invited liberals to “reject the Christian doctrine of original sin as an outmoded bit of pessimism,” and, as a result, liberal theological ethics makes a tidy connection between the law of love and the human will.⁷⁰ Yet such a theology fails to conform to the “standards of the whole gospel,” which confirm those “facts of human existence” (i.e., sin) that must inform a politics adequate to its subject.⁷¹ Indeed, “Christianity is a religion which measures the total dimension of human existence not only in terms of the final norm of human conduct, which is expressed in the law of love, but also in terms of the fact of sin.”⁷² Because Jesus points to a normativity beyond history that exposes our need for grace,

69. Niebuhr, “Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist,” Originally published in 1940, and subsequently reprinted in *War in the Twentieth Century*, 28-46, 30.

70. A consistent theme in Niebuhr's writings is the hermeneutical value of the biblical narrative in identifying the sin inherent in all human action. A central claim of his *Moral Man, Immoral Society*, for example, is that secular social scientists and political theorists habitually (because methodologically) err as a result of their failure to account for the dynamic of individual and group self-interest.

71. Niebuhr, “Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist,” 28.

72. *Ibid.*, 30-1.

only a justice which acknowledges the use to force as an adequate mechanism to deal with the violence caused by sin is responsible to the total biblical witness. Far from achieving a society of authentic fraternity, “[t]hose who attempt to bring society under the dominion of perfect love will die on the cross.”⁷³ Niebuhr elaborates:

[t]he perfect disinterestedness of the divine love can have a counterpart in history only in a life which ends tragically, because it refuses to participate in the claims and counterclaims of historical existence. It portrays a love which “seeketh not its own.” But a love which seeketh not its own is not able to maintain itself in historical society. Not only may it fall victim to excessive forms of the self-assertion of others; but even the most perfectly balanced system of justice in history is a balance of competing wills and interests, and must therefore worst anyone who does not participate in the balance.⁷⁴

Niebuhr does, however, recognize the orthodoxy of the pacifism of the medieval ascetics and of the “Protestant sectarian perfectionism” of the heirs of the radical reformers. This type of Christianity he regards as an authentic response to the profundity of the mystery of evil that in its perfectionism, not superficially symbolizes the Kingdom of God for the rest of the church. He commends these communities for rightly perceiving that implementing the law of love as a normative ethic has necessarily meant disavowing any responsibility for social justice, since they can have “no immediate relevance to any political situation.”⁷⁵ By adhering to the law of love, these Christians remind the church of the relative character of Christian social ethical norms, which are not final.

73. Ibid., 19.

74. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 2: 72.

75. Ibid., 33.

Critical Analysis

A central idea of Niebuhr's realism is that "it is impossible to move history without being tainted by guilt."⁷⁶ All of our actions take place within a network of political associations which are aggregate expressions of self-interest, and thus inherently sinful. Yet we are compelled by the law of love to act for justice, and so from responsibility we do act. Darrell Cole has called this "dirty hands thinking"⁷⁷: because my action is always contaminated by self-interest, I must do evil in order to do any good. To put this in starker relief, I must do evil because I am following Jesus' ethic of love! Timothy Luke Jackson explains this logic as one in which love, "claiming to transcend justice, actually falls below it in embracing too violent means for political ends."⁷⁸ In fact, self-interest is for Niebuhr as much a hermeneutical skeleton key as a *bete noire*; even if human sinfulness is the vital missing ingredient in liberal theological and secular social theory, and its proper acknowledgement would produce more adequate theory, the theme becomes absurd when seen through to its end, and this is especially true given that "dirty hands thinking" often serves as a justification to engage in ever-escalating forms of violence and other odious conclusions of utilitarianism. Indeed, the classic historical

76. Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Bombing of Germany," in *Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr*, ed. D. B. Robertson (New York: Meridian Books, 1967), 222; orig. published in *Christianity and Society* (Summer 1943).

77. Darrell Cole, "Virtuous Warfare and the Just War: A Christian Approach" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2001), 111–12.

78. Timothy Luke Jackson, "Christian Love and Political Violence," in *The Love Commandments: Essays in Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, ed. Edmund N. Santurri and William Werpehowski (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1992), 191; quoted in Cole, "Virtuous Warfare," 112–13.

Christian justification for self-interest—that in performing the concrete actions that constitute the good of the other I am thereby simultaneously doing my own good, which consists in neighbor and enemy love, and that, in receiving love, I am participating in the end of human existence⁷⁹—can find no purchase in a dialectic sketched so broadly between impossible love and incomplete justice that only vague cautions and prophetic criticisms are able to emerge. Owing to his view of reason as a cover for disguised egoism,⁸⁰ Niebuhr failed to trust in the possibility for humans to identify shared goods and will them for one another, or to know God’s concrete will and, with the aid of grace, collectively follow it—if not always, than at least often,⁸¹ that led him to reject a potentially less pessimistic view of the self and its own interests. Ronald Stone traces this

79. For an example of this strain of reasoning, see Augustine, *City of God Against the Pagans*, Bk. 19, 14.

80. Niebuhr, *Moral Man, Immoral Society*, 40-1.

81. On this point, Martin Luther King Jr. criticized Niebuhr for the “inability of his system to deal adequately with the relative perfection which is the fact of the Christian life...He fails to see that the availability of the divine *agape* is an essential affirmation of the Christian religion.” See “Reinhold Niebuhr’s Ethical Dualism,” in Clayborne Carson, Ralph Luker, et al, eds., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume II: Rediscovering Precious Values, July 1951-November 1955* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). In further pursuit of his critique, King cites Walter Muelder, “There is a Christian perfectionism which may be called a prophetic meliorism, which, while it does not presume to guarantee future willing, does not bog down in pessimistic imperfectionism. Niebuhr’s treatment of much historical perfectionism...hardly does justice to the constructive historical contributions of the perfectionist sects within the Christian fellowship and even within the secular order. There is a kind of Christian assurance which releases creative energy into the world and which in actual fellowship rises above the conflicts of individual and collective egoism.” See Walter Muelder, “Reinhold Niebuhr’s Conception of Man”, *The Personalist* 36 (1945), 282-293.

pessimism to Niebuhr's conviction that justification by faith and not social perfectionism was the message of the church.⁸²

Moreover, Niebuhr's characterization of Christian pacifism and his reasons for rejecting it are themselves problematic for a several reasons. First, even if we grant that Jesus' pacifism is non-resistant, it does not follow that this means Christian non-resisters have "no immediate relevance to any political situation." Even a community of non-resisters is a visible social entity, and the witness of such a community can have a direct political effect. The earliest anti-slavery organizations in the United States were composed primarily of Quakers, whose missionary outreach to former slaves beginning in the 1750s sparked the abolitionist conscience among northerners that led to the widespread repudiation of the institution of slavery in the North.⁸³ One can only presume that Niebuhr's failure to develop any account of an ecclesiology left him unable to appreciate the sense in which every ecclesial body constitutes a political society in its own right. The communal life of the Christian community has a political dimension unto itself, and so

82. Ronald H. Stone, *Professor Reinhold Niebuhr: Mentor to the 20th Century* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 74.

83. In a related vein, the self-immolation of Thích Quảng Đức and Mohamed Bouazizi, as acts of self-sacrifice, each had enormous positive political consequences. Đức's suicide in 1963 led directly to the collapse of the autocratic regime of Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam. See Howard Jones, *Death of a Generation: How the Assassinations of Diem and JFK Prolonged the Vietnam War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 269. Bouazizi's actions, "change[d] the course of Arab political history," initiating a series of popular rebellions across the Arab world collectively now known as the "Arab Spring". See Larbi Sadiki, "The Bouazizi 'Big Bang', *Al Jazeera* English Edition, 29 Dec. 2011, available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/12/2011121713215670692.html> (accessed 6 Nov. 2015). It is not clear how Niebuhr's theory can account for the practicability of said actions.

too does the osmotic effect of its witness on the wider civil community in which it takes up space.

Second, modern biblical scholarship casts serious doubt on the validity of Niebuhr's own New Testament exegesis. For Niebuhr, Jesus is the "pledge and revelation of God's mercy which finds man in his rebellion [from God's law] and overcomes his sin."⁸⁴ Jesus' cross atones, but is not political. But since the 1960s, a seemingly unending tide of exegetical and biblical theological studies has effectually exposed multiple New Testament strata identifying Jesus' opposition to the incarnate powers, seriously problematizing the classical Reformed two kingdoms doctrine on which Niebuhr based his political theology (one of these strata concerns *pistis Cristou* discussed in Chapter Two). From the resurgence of interest among biblical theologians concerning the ancient *Christus Victor* Atonement motif, to the social criticism laid bare by NT exegetes in the parables of the Kingdom of God (could Jesus have chosen a more politically pointed term than "Kingdom"?), to the rereading of Jesus' food and healing miracles as threats to the consolidated power of the religious and governing authorities of biblical Palestine, Jesus' involvement in breaking concrete cycles of oppression and exploitation is today taken more or less as a matter of course in the guild. The irony therefore of Niebuhr's claim that the Jesus of the pacifists represents a naïve, pre-Bultmannian view of the purpose and meaning of his life lies in Niebuhr and his fellow realists' insistence on a dehistoricized

84. Niebuhr, 37.

version of Christ that is today regarded by the majority of biblical scholars as an outmoded product of its time.⁸⁵

Authentic Christian pacifism, unmistakably a form of non-violent resistance in the mode of Jesus, represents the “concrete, historical political humanity of the Jesus of the Gospels”⁸⁶ and is therefore in my view the most congruous political stance with the classical Christological confessions of the ecumenical councils. To posit a dehistoricized Christ at the center of Christianity, who is so transcendent as to be essentially irrelevant to any concrete Christian politics, is, on the other hand, to profess a Docetic Christ.⁸⁷ Far from disavowing political responsibility, Christians seeking to emulate the Jesus of the gospels directly do so as a form of responsibility to a politics that most adequately expresses the nature of God as revealed in the incarnate Christ.

Given the preceding reservations, we now turn to a dialectical philosophical account of the relationship between love and justice, that of Paul Ricoeur.

85. For a discussion of this point in the context of Yoder’s initial reception outside of Mennonite circles, see Stanley Hauerwas, “Why the *Politics of Jesus* is Not a Classic,” in *A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2000), 135. For a good overview on some of this scholarship see E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); William Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994); Richard A. Horsely, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2002); and Walter Wink’s *Powers* trilogy.

86. John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 7.

87. Ibid.

A Dialectical Approach: Paul Ricoeur

Paul Ricoeur was a twentieth-century French Protestant philosopher who worked across multiple disciplines, including (and most relevant to our purposes here) theology, biblical exegesis, ethics, and political justice theory. Ricoeur's formulation of the love/justice relationship consists in a series of practical, albeit "fragile" and "provisory" mediations on the essential disproportionality between the two terms. These reflections constitute his late essay "Love and Justice," an essay that finds Ricoeur seeking to answer two interrelated questions: Can the moral content of love can be isolated apart from its manifold guises and circumstances through the methodology of analytical philosophy?, and, if so, does love in our ethical discourse has a normative status comparable in its role to that of the principle of utility or the Kantian Categorical Imperative? His answer unfolds as a tacit—though sometimes explicit—critique of the method and conclusions of one such prominent and influential attempt to isolate and activate love as such a principle, Gene Outka's *Agape: An Ethical Analysis*.⁸⁸

Outka himself identified three features of *agapic* love, features that emerge consistently from his reading of the biblical narrative. These are: an "equal regard for the neighbor which in crucial respects is independent and unalterable," insofar as "neighbor" designates every person *qua* a human person⁸⁹; self-sacrifice, the "inevitable historical

88. See Gene Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Have, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), where Outka seeks isolate "the basic normative content" that Christian love possesses "irrespective of circumstances." Outka, 7.

89. Outka, 9.

manifestation of *agape* insofar as *agape* [is] not accommodated to self-interest”⁹⁰; and, the mutuality characteristic of actions that “establish or enhance some sort of exchange between the parties, developing a sense of community and perhaps friendship.”⁹¹ Of these, Outka regards mutuality as the most decisive descriptor of the normative content of agapic love. Ricoeur notes that while each of these features stand in uneasy tension to the others (something Outka admits as well), a particular discord exists between self-sacrifice and mutuality. Rather than elide, then, the “variations, disagreements, and confusions” produced by the “leveling down” effect of analytic philosophy, Ricoeur elects for a dialectic method that places love in conversation with justice. Like Niebuhr, Ricoeur begins by positing the radical discontinuity between love and justice while avoiding “simply praising it or falling into sentimental platitudes.”⁹² He begins his analysis with one of Pascal’s *pensées*:

All bodies together and all minds together and all their products are not worth the least impulse of charity. This is of an infinitely superior order. Out of all bodies together we could not succeed in creating one little thought. It is impossible, and of a different order. Out of all bodies and minds we could not extract one impulse of true charity. It is impossible, and of a different, supernatural order.⁹³

90. For Outka, the theologian who asserts most explicitly self-sacrifice as the quintessence of *agape* is in fact Reinhold Niebuhr himself. See Outka, 24-5.

91. Outka, 36.

92. Ricoeur, “Love and Justice,” 23. Ricoeur shares Benedict’s concern to retrieve normative love from “sentimentalism,” which is a major theme of *CIV*. See, e.g., 3; 17. Whereas, however, Benedict seeks to place love within a concrete framework established by “Truth” (i.e., the nature of the being of God) that ultimately reveals the “one reality of love,” Ricoeur seeks to establish a semantic bed of reference(s) so that love may serve an indeterminate number of human goods and life-plans.

93. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A.J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1966), 125; cited by Ricoeur, 25.

This “harsh judgment” of Pascal’s is, according to Ricoeur, meant to underscore the difficulty in establishing a clear link between love and justice, and thus a clear picture of love.

Ricoeur takes seriously what happens after the linguistic turn in philosophy. Unlike Benedict, who eschews a dialectic approach for recourse to the natural law, and unlike Niebuhr, who draws the dialectic in the starkest terms, consequent to his exclusive focus on an uncompromising, self-sacrificial vision of love, for Ricoeur the meaning of love cannot be established apart from the linguistic context in which the words themselves are deployed. And it is only after having investigated these that he instigates the dialectic with justice. He begins by identifying in the “strangeness or oddness” of the Bible’s love language a feature by which the discourse of love functions as a discourse of praise, insofar as praise consists in rejoicing “over the view of one object set above all the other objects of one’s concern.”⁹⁴ This is the modus of love in Paul’s famous hymn to love (1 Cor. 13:1-13) in which the Apostle in the first and second strophes plays on the contrast between negative hyperbole⁹⁵ and positive ascription⁹⁶, where love correlates to a litany of

94. Ricoeur, 25.

95. “If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,—but do not have love, I gain nothing.”

96. “Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.”

quite different virtues. This dialectic is itself then obliterated in the third strophe by a description of love's transcendence:

It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly,—but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

In addition to the hymnic feature of praise, Ricoeur identifies a second and third feature, benediction (“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked...he is like a tree planted by streams of water.”; Ps. 1:1,3) and macarism (“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”), where praise takes form as the enumeration or promise of the results of God’s friendship. The combined effect of these three features is resistance to conceptual clarification through the application of an analytic philosophical method. Paul’s hymn reflects Psalmic rhetorical tendencies, which themselves constitute part of the broader biblical poetry tradition whose function is to undermine univocity at the level of principles.⁹⁷ “In such poetry,” Ricoeur comments, “the key words undergo amplifications of meaning, unexpected assimilations, hitherto unseen interconnections, which cannot be reduced to a single meaning.”⁹⁸ The second oddity of the Bible’s discourse on love is the appearance of love as a command (e.g., “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your

97. Ricoeur cites Robert Alder, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 25.

98. Ricoeur, 25.

mind, and with all your strength...[and] you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”; Mark 13:30-1/Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18). What disturbs us, Ricoeur says, about the imperative form of the love commandments is that it seems to be ordering what is beyond the reach of the ethics of obligation, namely, to command a feeling.⁹⁹ Ricoeur notes however that this is not so disturbing if we consider that the commandment to love is nothing other than love commanding itself. The command to love is primordial, and situates the institution of the law as a function of love. This “poetic imperative” to love is not itself ethical, but rather pre-ethical; the command anticipates law—indeed, it makes law, law, but also sets free a broad range of potential expressions of love that have ethical implications, “from the amorous invitation (“Love me!), through pressing supplication, through the summons, to the sharp command accompanied by the threat of punishment.”¹⁰⁰ The third feature of the bible’s odd description of love concerns its ascription to love a constellation of feelings, bestowing on love a dynamism that inspires a number of affections: pleasure, satisfaction, rejoicing, benediction, and many more. Thus the biblical discourse of love

99. Ricoeur argues that “Kant diminishes the difficulty [in ordering a feeling] by distinguishing ‘practical’ love, which is nothing but respect for persons as ends in themselves, with ‘pathological’ love, which has no place in the sphere of ethics.” *Ibid.*, 26.

100. *Ibid.*, 27. Love is thus what drives us to concern for the other, which is enshrined in law—it is the reason for law, in other words. Musing on 1 John 4:10, Benedict makes a parallel point: “[God] has loved us first and he continues to do so; we too, then, can respond with love.” (*DCE*, 17). As a result, “love is now no longer a mere “command”; it is the proper response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us, and thus more than a requirement. Love can be “commanded” because it has first been given; our response is not impossible because, notwithstanding its concrete ethical substance, we are already familiar with it the kind of sentiment for which it calls. See also, *DCE*, 18. Niebuhr discusses a similar phenomenon under the aspect of the “sense of moral obligation,” and comments that, “it must be observed that reason may provide the law but does not, of itself, furnish the reverence [for it].” Niebuhr, *Moral Man, Immoral Society*, 37.

retains linguistically the “power of metaphorization,” since these various end-states of love can come to represent one another across multiple combinations. The fields of analogies that are produced through such combining allow the affective modes of love to signify one another, which makes it impossible to point to strict divisions between the kinds of love.¹⁰¹

After sketching out these initial thoughts on love, Ricoeur turns his attention to justice, first distinguishing between the circumstances in which concerns about justice arise, and then moving to an examination of the principles of justice that evaluate the “justness” of existing political institutions. Both of these moves serve to underscore the differences, rather than similarities, between love and justice. Ricoeur notes first that the social practice of justice is housed within institutions (the legal code, the elected judiciary, the court system, impartial juries, etc.) that exercise a monopoly of power to enforce decisions using public means. In making judgments, these institutions carry out the will of the people. Justice is adjudicated within these publically-enacted institutions as a confrontation between plausible and communicable (that is to say, universally intelligible), and thus worthy, reasons both for and against. The dialectical procedure of “listen[ing] to both sides” is, theoretically, endless (“there’s always a ‘but...’”), yet it does end with a final decision.¹⁰² From this, Ricoeur extrapolates the first version of the formalism of justice: justice as a sign of force. Neither the circumstances of justice nor its

101. Ibid., 28.

102. Ibid.

means are those of love; justice argues, love does not; justice insists upon itself, love does not.

Ricoeur next considers the principles of justice that evaluate whether political institutions are just, and here his mind is preoccupied with Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* and the distribution theory of justice tradition to which it belongs.¹⁰³ Ricoeur's own ethics is broadly teleological; his morality, deontological.¹⁰⁴ Thus it should not be surprising that in this text we find Rawls paired with Aristotle, both of whom, despite their differences, articulate a conception of justice that trades on the concept of proportionality—that is, desert. Whereas Aristotle differentiates between mathematical and proportional equality in permitting inequalities correlate to social status or role, Rawls draws on proportionality to justify differences between persons only insofar as they benefit all parties, particularly the least well off. But both positions are fixed to uphold the disinterested character of justice in the form of treating all cases equally, while dealing practically with the reality of social inequality that corrodes the overall well-being of society. Thus, the second version of the formalism of justice, which regulates the practice of justice, is “*the ideal of an equitable distribution of rights and goods to everyone's*

103. See Ricoeur, 30-31.

104. In brief, Ricoeur holds that deontological precepts (*morals*) originate within a larger teleological structure outlining the good life (*ethics*). Yet while morality is encompassed by the ethical, the ethical only “come[s] to us” by way of passing through morality, as such: in order to achieve the good life *X*, I must follow moral precepts *Y* and *Z*. By subordinating duty to purpose, Ricoeur makes possible the evaluation of norms insofar as they lead to the fulfillment of the *telos*. Creative solutions to moral *aporia* legitimize a reevaluation of the norm according to the aim. See Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 7.1

benefit.”¹⁰⁵ The key difference between the Aristotelian tradition and liberal distribution tradition of which Rawls is the spokesman *par excellence*, is that the latter, lacking a presupposition toward fraternal cooperation as the best or “truest”¹⁰⁶ form of life at the basic level of the theory, must model justice as a regulation of the conflicting wills of the participants. In turn, society becomes a “space of confrontation between rivals” competing for scarce resources.¹⁰⁷ On this view, social cohesion is ensured by the protection of equal rights and the availability of opportunity (although it must be said that social cohesion is not a focus of the theory, at least insofar as it comes at the expense of the individual). For Rawls, the highest ideal of justice is the subordination of mutual dependence to mutual disinterest. Indeed, human interdependence—that is, the fact that we are irrevocably indebted to one another—is precisely what the Veil of Ignorance prevents us from seeing!¹⁰⁸ However, for Ricoeur it is only when justice recognizes the gifts we receive from others, and the obligations those engender within us, that authentic justice is made possible.

105. Ibid.

106. Ricoeur, *Oneself As Another*, 172 and 7.3

107. Ibid.

108. Ibid. In Rawls’ famous formulation of the “Original Situation,” an idealized setting for the deliberation of principles of justice, participants wear a “Veil of Ignorance” that removes from them all artifacts of self-knowledge. Because the participants are thus possessed only of enough general sociological and anthropological information to deliberate rationally, they do so without incentive for choosing principles that would be to their advantage. As a means of eliminating bias, therefore, the Veil of Ignorance ensures both the fairness (and thus for Rawls, justness) and the objectivity of principles resulting from the deliberation. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 118 ff.

For Ricoeur, love and justice confront one another because both make claims on individual and social practice, and he seeks to mediate this tension under the heading of the “economy of the gift.” To do this, he turns to the Sermon on the Plain in the Gospel of Luke, noting that we find Jesus there giving a “new commandment”—love your enemies—in close proximity, and in seeming juxtaposition to, his reiteration of the golden rule:

But I say to you that listen, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you. (Luke 6: 27-30).

What role does the golden rule play in this *protrepsis*, seemingly appended as it is to a set of verses extolling the requirements of love? In brief, Ricoeur’s answer is that the law of love, embodied in the “new commandment” of loving one’s enemies, is by itself normatively insufficient. To explain this, Ricoeur turns to the notion of the “economy of the gift,”¹⁰⁹ which names our given condition of radical dependence. The economy of the gift, of which love is the *hyperethical* expression, “touches every part of ethics.”¹¹⁰ It begins on one end with the symbolism of dependency contained in the act of creation, and ends at the other with the symbolism of the hope represented in the Parousia. The love of the enemy, as the “extreme form” of the love of neighbor, finds its link to the economy of the gift in the “hyperethical feeling of the dependence of the human

109. To appreciate how the economy of the gift functions within Ricoeur’s ethics generally, see John Wall, “The Economy of the Gift: Paul Ricoeur’s Significance for Theological Ethics” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 29:2 (Summer 2001), 235-60.

110. Ricoeur, 32.

creature,” which is also our link to law (which is a gift because it is bound to our liberation; n.b. Ex. 20:2) and justification (which is a gift because it is free pardon). In what sense is love *hyperethical*? As the most adequate ethical expression of that which transcends ethics—the economy of the gift—the love command points to the radical and unmerited gratuity of God, and thus may be in summation formulated with the expression, “*since it has been given you, give...*”.¹¹¹ When expressed this way, we can see that the gift is really a source of an obligation, and hence this principle of gratuity takes the form of an ethical command.

The logic of the law of love—the logic of the hyperethical, in other words—is a logic of superabundance, and with this logic Ricoeur places in dialogue the logic of equivalence, as expressed in the golden rule. The golden rule expresses justice, Ricoeur says, because of the equivalence indicated by the reciprocity, or reversibility, that the rule establishes between our acting and our being acted upon.¹¹² Ricoeur admits that the reconciliation of these two logics remains all but impossible if the latter is interpreted in the sense of the *lex talionis*, the law of retribution, and its corollary, the rule of reciprocity. Yet Jesus rebukes this cynical interpretation in the *Sermons*, that is, the interpretation which would express the obligation of justice in the utilitarian format of “I give so that you will give,” within the same *protrepsis*:

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you

111. Ibid, 33.

112. Ibid., 34.

hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. (Luke 6:32-34)

What love exposes, via the presence of the logic of superabundance, is that justice is a principle of generosity (for it, too, is grounded in the economy of the gift) rather than one of utility.¹¹³ The law of love, which in the ethical sphere produces only “paradoxical and extreme forms of behavior”¹¹⁴ (e.g., Lk. 6:27-30), does not abolish the law of justice, but reinterprets it in terms of generosity. The impossibility of instituting love—as a “hypermoral” principle predicated on non-equivalence—as a standard of distributive

113. Here is the great difference between Rawls and Ricoeur is laid bare: Rawls models justice pessimistically—the aim is not to seek the good (which is, for Ricoeur, following Aristotle, “that which is lacking in all things.” See *Oneself As Another*, 172) but to avoid the bad. Social contractarianism, the legacy of which Rawls’ *Theory of Justice* stands as the modern touchstone, has its origins in early modern individualism, where the primordial ethical “thing” is not a longing for brotherhood, but a *contract* which lays out the rights and duties of individuals. Because of the way Ricoeur models his position vis-à-vis Rawls, Olivier Abel calls him a “Latin Protestant.” He is “Latin” insofar that his foundational political idea, the Aristotelian notion of “wanting-to-live-together,” expresses a positive valuation of the pre-judicial role of political institutions. This same valuation animates Roman and thus Augustinian, and further Catholic political theology (and by extension also French political philosophy, typified by Rousseau). This disposition gets concretized not only in the supposition of the common good (Aristotelian and Catholic social ethics), but it is also present in Rousseau’s feeling that social goods deliver more happiness than do ones privately obtained. Yet Ricoeur is “Protestant” insofar as he sees the political deliberations that take place after this original valuation, deliberations aimed at establishing norms and laws, as evincing a distrust of natural man and his institutions. Here, the moral rules and laws that exemplify justice are for constraining action—the question asked of them is not “what produces happiness?,” but rather “what minimizes harm?” Abel traces this feeling to Calvin, who linked the presence of grace not to nature, but to the response of the human will. Abel comments that, “we therefore see that justice is not so much rediscovered together as it is invented, or constructed...“Latin Calvinism,” rather than looking for a “natural” model, reinterprets the ethical teleology in terms of an irreconcilable pluralism of goods and intentions.” See Olivier Abel, “The Political Ethics of Paul Ricoeur, Happiness and Justice: An Example of Latin Protestant Ethics”, paper delivered at a conference at Union Theological Seminary, New York, NY, 30 October, 1992; available at <http://olivierabel.fr/supplement/the-political-ethics-of-paul-ricoeur-happiness-and-justice.php>.

114. *Ibid.*, 35.

justice (however broadly distribution is conceived), or indeed the foundation of any universal moral maxim, reveals its need for justice. “If the hypermoral is not to turn into the non-moral—not to say the immoral; for example cowardice—it has to pass through the principle of morality, summed up in the golden rule and formalized by the rule of justice.”¹¹⁵ In other words, the principle of morality, expressed by the logic of equivalence, tempers love so that it cannot forget equivalence. And the converse is also true: in being confronted by love, justice “receives the capacity to raise itself above its perverse interpretations.”¹¹⁶ To recognize love’s role as a means of preventing justice from sagging into a dour utilitarianism is to interpret justice not primarily as a means for mediating conflicts between rival interests, but as a form of confession of mutual debt. Whereas the contrast between the two logics is never wholly suppressible, it does reveal that “justice is the necessary medium of love,” precisely because love, as hypermoral, enters the practical and ethical sphere under principle of morality—which is justice.¹¹⁷ The practical task that remains to love, once it has established not a gratuitous basis for justice is the incorporation, “step by step, [of a] a supplementary degree of compassion and generosity in all of our codes.”¹¹⁸

115. Ibid. Ricouer’s argument here nicely supplements Cole’s critique of Niebuhr and “dirty hands thinking”—love cannot be a justification for acts that do not pass even the lower moral bar of justice.

116. Ibid., 36.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid.

Critical Analysis

How has Ricoeur's position helped us think through questions related to our own thesis? I will incorporate much of what he says in the next chapter, but it may be helpful to state the basic discrepancy between our views at the outset: Ricoeur's account, much like Niebuhr's, makes no room for the concept of the distinction between the church and the world. Neither has developed and identifiable ecclesiology, and so fail to appreciate the idea, as Benedict does, that the world and the church are not coterminous, and that their separateness is defined by their mandates. This distinction does make a difference, of course, to the question of the relationship of love to justice for Christian ethics. While there is a not superficial resemblance between what Ricoeur calls the hypermoral/ethical dimension of love (as well as Niebuhr's "transhistorical" description of love), and what I will develop in the next chapter as "agapic justice," the key distinction that marks these theories apart from my own is that, for Niebuhr and Ricoeur, love's foreign basis necessarily renders it unstable, and thus its ethical adequacy is reserved to the inspiration of fleeting and extreme actions. For both authors, justice remains more basic than love as a substantive moral principle—despite love's primordially. Love's *principle* function in ethics is to serve justice, either by "judging" it and so revealing its relativity, or by "propping it up," so that it more adequately reflects the givenness of our human condition and our dependence on one another. It is true, of course, that the world could live without love. For reason alone convinces us that justice is possible. But the church, which announces the final rule of love, not only in a prophetic sense, but in its historical life, cannot live without love, for if it did, it would thereby fail to distinguish itself from the world, forfeit its mandate, and fail at its task.

Furthermore, Ricoeur identifies the “new commandment” with the command to love our enemies. And he is certainly correct, in my estimation, to have highlighted its ethical novelty, given both its hypermoral nature and its appearance in Jesus’ sermon immediately juxtaposed to the principle of justice (the golden rule), which it is meant to confront. But the biblically-astute reader may wonder why he chose *that* particular title for it. We feel we ought to lift Ricoeur onto our shoulders for pointing out what so many other commentators have not: that the golden rule is *not* the centerpiece of Jesus’ ethics. In point of fact, the golden rule is given by Jesus along with the *Shema Yisrael* as the center of the Law (Matt. 22:35-40; Mk. 12:28-34).¹¹⁹ This means that justice is not the centerpiece of Jesus’ ethics, either. But what is more, there is another candidate for the “new commandment,” and it is not only so because this is what John records Jesus himself calling it (13:34): “I give you *a new commandment* [*kainos entolé*] that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another”—but also because it really does represent a novel advance over the golden rule, an advance reflected, though not completed, in the command to love one’s enemies.

What *does* complete the advance beyond the terrestrial logic of justice is that to which we will turn at the outset of the next chapter. But here it will suffice to point out that it is unsurprising, given his lack of attention to ecclesiology, that Ricoeur’s primary interest with respect to love lies in the question of whether it is identifiable as a *principle* by which it can be rendered practically actionable. Because principles are universal by nature, the question of love’s normativity becomes one for him of whether the world can

119. See John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 119.

survive on love's gratuitous effects alone, which he believes, like Niebuhr (and we can safely surmise, I think, Benedict), it cannot. "What distribution of tasks of roles, or of advantages and obligations could be established," Ricoeur asks "in the spirit of distributive justice, if the maxim of lending while expecting nothing in return were set up as a universal rule?"¹²⁰ This recognition situates justice as morally basic; love, as the extra-terrestrial logic of non-equivalence, enters the ethical at the service of justice. It "reinterprets [justice] in terms of generosity," but "does not abolish" it.¹²¹ What the moral heroes St. Francis, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr.¹²² did in the name of love was always, in the last analysis, really in the service of justice, to draw it closer to the ideal of generosity.

Conclusion

Before proceeding, let us take a moment to identify some relevant points of commonality and divergence within these theories. First, each, in his way, has made a claim central to his position that love must play its part in politics by reminding justice that its role must extend beyond the mediation of individual desire. This reveals a common presupposition at the base of the theories (which could be stated very broadly as): the good life is not conceptualizable outside of relationship with others. In every case is a presupposition, then, *against* the strict formalism of classical liberal theory, and *for* what Ricoeur sums up as, "the bond of common mores and not that of constraining rules...the ethical primacy

120. Ibid., 35.

121. Ibid.

122. Ibid.

of living together over constraints related to the judicial system.”¹²³ Benedict’s contention that “modern man is wrongly convinced that he is the sole author of himself, his life and society”¹²⁴ sounds the same note as Ricoeur’s emphasis on the indispensable role the other plays in self-constitution, and, more broadly speaking, the role public institutions play in actualizing the benefits of living together in the life of the individual.¹²⁵ And, while Niebuhr would not share the charitable disposition of these two men toward social institutions as a rule, he nevertheless could say that “the ground of the community is where the individual is ethically realized.”¹²⁶

Second, Ricoeur’s formula of “justice [as] the necessary medium of love” parallels Benedict’s endorsement of Paul VI’s formula of “justice [as] the minimum measure of love,” at least insofar as there is always a “moreness” or gratuity about the logic of love than there is to the equivalent logic of justice. Even Niebuhr, who could broker no such correspondence between justice and love, and who could be credibly accused of advocating less-than-just acts in the name of love, ultimately holds that it is love that motivates us to seek justice in the first place.

Third, all three point to the revealed origin of *agape*, and to the terrestrial origin of justice as an extrapolate of reason by which competing claims to resources may be adjudicated to establish peace. Benedict argues that “[r]eason, by itself, is capable of

123. Ricoeur, *Oneself As Another*, 194.

124. *CIV*, 34

125. *Ibid.*, 7.2-7.3.

126. Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, v. 2:244

grasping the equality between men and of giving stability to their civic coexistence...”¹²⁷ and Ricoeur confirms as much in his meditations on the golden rule. For his part, Niebuhr preferred the language of “balance of power” among wills, and is thus less sanguine about establishing authentic justice, yet nevertheless allowed to reason the capacity to achieve balance, and so a greater degree of peaceful coexistence.

Fourth (although we find Niebuhr to be an outlier here) is the depiction of faith and life as an experience of gift. Benedict derives directly from the Johannine corpus what Ricoeur uncovers as a figure of the creation and eschatological poles of the biblical narrative. Both thematize gift as a mechanism of hope, and an antidote to individualism and/or cynical utilitarianism. Just as for Ricoeur our laws require the supplementation of compassion, for Benedict,

[g]ratuitousness is present in our lives in many different forms, which often go unrecognized because of a purely consumerist and utilitarian view of life... Gift by its nature goes beyond merit, its rule is that of superabundance... [Therefore] economic, social and political development needs to make room for the *principle of gratuitousness* as an expression of fraternity.¹²⁸

Clearly, there are also fundamental differences between them that should not be elided. Ricoeur’s Aristotelian conception of political rationality as “for us” is far humbler than Benedict’s Platonic, universalistic view of Reason as vehicle of the Eternal Law. This difference helps to explain why the Pope holds to a very specific conception of the human *telos* and the philosopher postulates an irreducible plurality of goods that reason itself cannot adjudicate. While Ricoeur does share with Niebuhr, if not an overt preoccupation

127. *CIV*, 19

128. *CIV*, 34.

with the effect of sin on reason, the notion that political rationality mediates through law in the space between self-interest and self-sacrificial love, Ricoeur does not follow Niebuhr in writing sin into his theory in such a way as to preclude deliberation and corporate action towards the identification and accomplishment of real human goods.¹²⁹

All, however, share the Constantinian presumption: that, eschatologically-speaking, God's directing of history is ultimately also bound to our own objective contributions as citizens of the state toward the consummation of history in Jesus Christ, and, ethically-speaking, the infeasibility of an agapic politics. Niebuhr must regard any straightforward appeal to the Jesus of the Bible as naïve biblicism, not because those who do are not actually *right* about what Jesus was attempting to communicate, but that they were being faithful neither to the whole of the biblical symbology, which discloses the fact of sin, nor human experience itself. However, Niebuhr badly mischaracterizes the intent of Jesus' love ethic, which is, as I have attempted to show over the last two chapters, itself a politics. Benedict and Ricoeur too share Niebuhr's realism concerning the efficacy of love as the basis of a politics, but at least elect a vision of human sociality in which love

129. Although a frequent target of his, liberal presuppositions contributed decisively to Niebuhr's anthropology, and therefore his political theology. For Niebuhr, "Society is a perpetual state of war" because political consensus exists only as a "coerced unity" where "further conflicts are certainly created." See Niebuhr, *Moral Man, Immoral Society*, 19. For Niebuhr, the task of justice is to mediate the conflicts between warring individuals and parties to secure peace. McClay notes the obvious Hobbesian roots of Niebuhr's perspective. See Wilfred M. McClay's contribution to the discussion, "Obama's Favorite Theologian? A Short Course on Reinhold Niebuhr," Faith Angle Conference, Key West, FL, May 2009, available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/05/04/obamas-favorite-theologian-a-short-course-on-reinhold-niebuhr/>. In his essay "Niebuhr and Liberalism," Daniel Day Williams' exposes the irony of Niebuhr's position vis-à-vis liberalism, particularly his strict insistence on equality and freedom as intrinsic properties of justice. See Daniel Day Williams' "Niebuhr and Liberalism" in Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought, ed. Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall (1956; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 269-291.

plays the determinative role in fostering of brotherhood and authentic human development. Even so, on such a view justice nevertheless remains morally basic; not only is justice politically primary—all human interaction must be fundamentally structured by justice if it is to be morally good—but epistemologically, as well—justice is something derivable from our capacity to reason. Love comes from the outside in. We can and will know justice, our brightest lights have plumbed the depths and ascended the heights of erotic love, but *agape* is revealed, and thus foreign. In politics, love must serve justice, because justice is the aim of politics.

A final analysis exposes a consistency regarding these views of justice: each operates with a concept of desert which maps questions of justice onto those of distribution; each endorses a basically liberal conception of justice as a mechanism for establishing freedom and equality among individual members of a society; and each recognizes as a threat to human flourishing liberalism's inherent incentives to sociological and ethical individualization. Love, for these theorists, finds its political expression as remediation where the politics of self-interest is advanced in liberalism's name. But in the next chapter I will advance an alternative conception of justice, which I believe keeps with the exiousiological and non-Constantinian dimensions of the Christian communal *telos*. First, I will seek to develop a political justice for the ecclesial community deal with regard to the formal conditions that make it possible for the community's practices to produce their intended end of other-centered, serving love after the example of Jesus. In doing this, I will examine the work of political justice theorist Iris Marion Young, whose own contribution to contemporary liberal justice theory—particularly in relation to the distribution theory of justice—in my estimation makes significant advances over the

anthropological and sociological drawbacks of liberal theories of justice classically conceived that move her position in some important ways closer to the one advocated in this project. Most importantly, I will appropriate Young's formal definition of social justice for us in an ecclesial ethical idiom. I will supplement that with a second account of justice that normatizes interpersonal ethics, which I call *agapic justice*. In the final sections of the chapter, I will explore the relationship between apocalyptic and political justice under the heading "ecclesial justice."

CHAPTER FOUR

TWO KINDS OF JUSTICE: AGAPIC AND INSTITUTIONAL

Introduction

In the preceding pages, I have argued for a postliberal epistemology of modified correspondence in order to justify taking a narrational approach to a Christian, ecclesial theory of justice. I also sought to show how the biblical narrative is a narrative of liberation, whose overt concern for justice is contextualized within a vision for an alternative, counter-political model made possible by Christ's unmasking of the powers. Subsequently, I explored three well-known formulations of the love/justice problematic as a way of acknowledging the general contours of the debate as they are commonly understood within theology. Building on all of this, the task of this last chapter will be to define an ecclesial theory of justice.

By the term *ecclesial justice*, I mean to designate a binary theory of justice in which two ways of thinking about justice function together to abet the community's particular form of agapic counter-politics. One of these ways is a substantive account of justice based on the normativity of Jesus as presented in the gospels, and corroborated in the letters of Paul. I call this way *agapic justice*. Agapic justice is a critical justice. It is meant to confront the powers, to reveal their pretensions, and to scandalize those for whom the powers idolatrously define creaturely existence. As a reflection of God's grace, agapic justice is not conceptualizable apart from God's action in Christ on behalf of the world.

It is therefore an apocalyptic justice, insofar as it represents the eschatological interruption of standard models of exchange within normal human social intercourse that Jesus himself incarnated. Disfigured *as* justice by its encounter with agape, it retains its formal link to justice for the purpose of subverting forms of merit-based political justice. Agapic justice is thus oriented towards love, approaching it even asymptotically.

Yet the ecclesial community cannot subsist simply as cultural and political critique. It must live, and live in such a way as to be able to realize the agapic ends of the practices that constitute its agapic politics. And so there is a need to give an account of how Christians might live together rightly, in order for us to do those things together to which we have been called. Since it is only by means of such an account that the social practices of the community can be evaluated in light of the communal *telos*, I will articulate another account of justice that I will call—somewhat unimaginatively—*institutional justice*. This Christian institutional justice measures the extent to which the practices of the ecclesial community make possible the accomplishment of a communal life of faithfulness in the mode of Jesus Christ. Ecclesial justice as institutional justice finds its expression in broader philosophical discourse about justice in the formal description of what moral communities require to actualize the goods that give rise to, and are accomplished by means of, their own practices.

I will first turn to the question of institutional justice by means of an extended examination of the political philosophy of Iris Marion Young, whose definition of social justice I take as formally determinative for institutional justice within ecclesial justice. I will then turn to the definition of what I mean by “agapic justice,” proceeding via a comparative reading of the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard and a section of Paul’s

paraenesis in 2 Thess. 3, in which the apostle famously warns that, “anyone unwilling to work should not eat.” What emerges from this close reading of these texts is a dialectical form of justice addressing both the ethical agent-as-actor and the agent-as-patient under the aspect of need, rather than merit. In the final section, I will explore how these two aspects of justice are related within ecclesial justice.

Institutional Justice

In her *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Iris Marion Young offers the following definition of social justice: “justice is the measure of the degree to which a society contains and supports the institutional conditions necessary for the realization of [certain] values.”¹ These values are more or less formal, and can “be reduced to two very general ones: (1) developing and exercising one’s capacities and expressing one’s experience...and (2) participating in determining one’s action and the conditions of one’s action.”² The salient feature of her formulation of social justice is that justice does not appear among the social values themselves, but is rather that which secures the conditions that make the achievement of the values possible. For Young, insofar as these values constitute a vision of the good life, questions of justice, “do not merge with questions of the good life.” I wish to begin my discussion of institutional justice here, with her definition, because I think this formal articulation of justice is in fact definitive of what I mean by institutional justice within ecclesial justice.

1. Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 37.

2. *Ibid.*

What purpose does a close reading of Young serve? The incommensurabilities between our projects may seem *prima facie* to outweigh the utility of making her thesis a constituent element of the definition of ecclesial justice. The epistemological starting point that gives rise to the definition is miles away from that of this dissertation (the broad Kantian, universalist tradition vs. the life-world of the Christian community); so too is the moral vision that animates the project which the definition structures (liberalism and feminism v. Christian postliberalism), and the field to which it is addressed (liberal polities v. the ecclesial polity). Unlike me, Young conceives of the right as axiologically prior to the good, and unlike me, she assumes the self-evidence of her basic set of values. Indebted to the communicative ethical paradigm of Habermas and Heller, her definition of social justice is addressed to procedural issues (participation, deliberation, and decision making) within democracies. What does any of this have to do with an epistemic communitarian's vision of the church as a distinct polity created and sustained by the liberative apocalyptic action of God in Christ? Yet my thesis in this section concerning the nature of an ecclesial institutional justice explicitly trades on her definition, and without ado it is just this: institutional justice in ecclesial ethics is the measure of the degree to which the practices³ of the ecclesial community are judged to facilitate the communal *telos* of re-presenting to God the faithfulness made incarnate in the faithfulness of Christ, in which justice appears as a means by which agapic politics⁴ are brought into being.

Young's work is not just as good a place as any to start dialoging with the liberal tradition; in overcoming a number of limitations of the liberal tradition of which it is a part (thereby relieving us of the burden of having to treat with the entirety of that tradition), she moves herself closer to commitments regarding social and political justice⁵

3. I understand Young's "institutions"—a concept amended to "structural processes" in her later work—to be roughly analogous to the church's own set of power-reorienting practices that constitute ecclesial life.

4. I define "agapic politics" as the form of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. As will become clear later in this chapter, agapic politics is the product of agapic justice realized through ecclesial practice, and is indeed the point of the practices.

5. I understand "political justice" to be what norms the distribution of social goods by the state, and to be fundamentally merit-based.

that I believe Christians ought to share given the nature of creation and its Redeemer. The following sections constitute a non-exhaustive list of those commitments.

Critique of Distribution Theories of Justice

Young moves beyond the liberal preoccupation with distribution as the appropriate paradigm for justice theory. For Young, traditional liberal theorizing commits two distinct errors by beginning with the attempt to articulate timeless and universally-applicable principles of justice, rather than deriving them from the actual social context: first, abstraction from real life renders principles unable to evaluate in any adequate sense social institutions or practices as they actually exist;⁶ second, this type of theorizing conflates moral and scientific knowledge. Justice discourse, according to Young, is not motivated by curiosity or the desire to determine how something works, and so master it by subjecting it to our knowing. It is motivated instead by the response to persons who are suffering in a concrete setting. Moreover, for Young any theorizing about justice must remain wary of elevating the particular to the universal, or “recasting the given as necessary.”⁷ Young’s perspective is thus critical in this respect.⁸ By listening to the cries of the oppressed in democratic societies—cries that function as recognitions of latent normative social possibilities⁹—Young opens a creative space between society as it is, and an imaginable one free of oppression and domination. In theorizing social *injustice*, then,

6. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 4.

7. *Ibid.*, 5.

8. Young defines critical theory as “a normative reflection that is historically and social contextualized.” *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, 6.

Young attempts to reaffirm foundational liberal values, understood as a set of basic rights, by dislodging them from a framework that casts issues of justice as exclusively issues of distribution.¹⁰

Whereas income inequality and fair access to opportunity and political participation are for Young best adjudicated following the logic of distribution, she notes that structures and processes that produce distribution in democratic societies are rarely made subject to the claims of justice. In situating justice on an institutional rather than a distributive plane, she broadens the scope of justice to critique the social-institutional conditions (and not just the political-legal ones) that produce patterns of distribution in the first place,¹¹ as well as the fundamental sociological and anthropological assumptions about the people to which their theories are meant to apply. Where liberal theory has extended beyond distributable goods to other social goods, she charges that it has misrepresented their nature by hypostatizing them; social values, like rights, and processes, like decisionmaking, end up being treated as basically fungible with other

10. Ibid., 16. Distribution as a paradigm for theorizing justice has a legacy extending back to *The Republic*. Whereas liberal theory broke with the classic Platonic conception of desert as correlated to persons as they enact certain social roles, it retains desert by reassigning its correlate to persons as such, regardless of the roles they play. This in turn presupposes a vision of the human person as abstracted from the particularity of her roles, and indeed modern liberal theory maps justice onto questions of the properly moral distribution of social benefits and burdens in accordance with this denuded image of the individual as a bearer of pre-social rights. Notable among these benefits and burdens are wealth, income, and other material resources, although distribution usually extends to nonmaterial social goods like rights, opportunity, power, and self-respect.

11. Ibid., 22. Institutions, in the sense in which Young speaks about them, include the structures and practices of the state, the family, the workplace, and civil society, the rules and norms that guide them, and the language and symbols that mediate social interaction within them. Young's language of *institutions* thus reflects the scope of the Platonic/Aristotelian language of *politics*. See also Ibid., 17.

material goods. This creates conceptual confusion, and occludes solutions to the problems that gave rise to the theories in the first place—domination and oppression within society. For example, given that a right is an expression of a particular relationship, what does it mean to “possess” a right? What does it mean to possess one alongside, or even instead of, food vouchers?¹² For Young, developing theory that characterizes non-reducible social realities as functions of rules and relations rather than things means to situate justice on the level of the social institutions that structure human relationality. Indeed, doing so presents theorists and activists with the means to pose questions more adequate to the specific problems created within particular systems. By treating relevant issues like decisionmaking structures and procedures, division of labor, and culture as issues of justice as well, Young at once puts distribution in its place and exposes these as among the indispensable institutional conditions on which (as she quotes Plato as saying) any “well-ordered society” depends for its proper functioning.

12. Ibid. At this point, Young raises the example of opportunities. Often, distribution theory treats opportunities like separable goods to be granted or withheld, a perspective that is consistent with our everyday speech of “having opportunities.” Satisfying justice in relation to opportunities usually means extending them to a broader spectrum of the populace. However, Young argues that an opportunity is not a static good, but a state of affairs that combine the absence of insuperable obstacles with the presence of internal or external means to overcome those obstacles. In other words, an opportunity is a “condition of enablement, which usually involves a configuration of social rules and social relations, as well as an individual’s self-conception and skills.” As such, “Being enabled or constrained refers more directly...to the rules and practices that govern one’s action, the way other people treat one in the context of specific social relations, and the broader structural possibilities produced by the confluence of a multitude of actions and practices. It makes no sense to speak of opportunities as themselves things possessed. Evaluating social justice according to whether persons have opportunities, therefore, must involve evaluating not a distributive outcome but the social structures that enable or constrain the individuals in relevant situations.” Ibid., 26. Young relies on the definition of opportunity supplied by James Nickel in “Equal Opportunity in a Pluralistic Society,” in Ellen Frankel Paul, et al, eds., *Equal Opportunity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 110.

How does this reflect the concerns of an ecclesial institutional justice? Young's qualified rationalism allows for critical justice theory addressed to suffering within concrete social-institutional settings. Ecclesial justice—as institutional justice—must also address the social-institutions conditions of the community, with the aim of making possible an orthopraxis designed to abet the giving and receiving of love in the manner of Jesus. By incorporating non-distributable aspects of social and political life into her theory, consciously re-enlarging the scope of justice on the scale of Plato and Aristotle to capture the broad totality of social intercourse within the *polis*, Young mirrors the sense in which Torah proscribes and prescribes on myriad aspects of life, not simply those relating to distribution and participation. In light of the gospel imperatives to do justice as a redress for the manifold ways people experience suffering, any Christian account of justice must concern itself with more than distribution.

The Situated Self

Because distribution is concerned with what people have, how much they have, and how that amount compares to what others have as a means of determining what is just,¹³ it presupposes an anthropology that casts people as possessors, i.e, primarily as havers and consumers of social goods, rather than as active subjects who plan, act, and react relative to institutionalized relationships that constitute their social positioning.¹⁴ The individual, on this view, stands behind, or beyond, the available social goods, and her social intercourse is captured in the image of conflict and competition with her fellow citizens.

13. Ibid., 25.

14. Ibid., 25.

Here, social and political goods are seen as instruments for the actualization of individual desire, rather than as intrinsic goods.¹⁵ Because its social ontology prizes substance over relationality and having over doing, distributivism separates individuals from the to-be-parceled goods and thus conceives of them as social atoms who exist prior to the social relations and institutions that structure their lives.¹⁶ This generic ontology reduces the individual to a self-interested will and little else, which bears small resemblance to the dynamic, socially-constituted actor of real life.¹⁷ For social theory, Young argues, this had

15. Ibid., 228. Young asks us to consider what it means to assert that people “have,” for example, self-respect, or that self-respect is something that could be apportioned by a distributing authority. While basic and distributable goods do provide some of the background conditions for self-respect, having self-respect also involves many non-material conditions that cannot be distributed. The effects of social factors like racism, classism, and sexism on and within communities, for example, influence how people define themselves and how others regard them, how they spend their time, the amount of autonomy and decisionmaking power they possess, etc., which are all factors in determining one’s self-valuation. These are unlikely to be ameliorated by the equal (or even disproportionate) distribution of goods alone. Indeed, self-respect, surely a primary good for any liberal conception of justice, is not something that can be measured, parceled out of some stash, or detached from real persons as if it is a “separable attribute adhering to an otherwise unchanged humanity [viz., a static, generalizable human being].” Young understands self-respect as an “attitude toward [a person’s] entire life situation and life prospects, thus at least as much about culture as it is goods.” Ibid., 27. Thus, the fundamental distributivists image of the individual as firstly a static “haver” here, as in other places, falls down.

16. Ibid.

17. For Rawls, what makes us human is most fundamentally our capacity to choose, and revise if necessary, our conception of the good life. Rawls therefore attaches, as does Kant, absolute moral priority to human autonomy. Because a self must first exist to choose its principles of the good life, Rawls’ subject is prior to its ends. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 560-75; and Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, *Liberals & Communitarians*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 42-50. In his *Theory of Justice*, Rawls sets about defending the principles of justice as principles specifically designed to respect this conception of selfhood; for Rawls’ these principles demand a reversal of “the relation between the right and the good proposed by teleological doctrines and view the right as prior.” ((p. 560). In the liberal/communitarian debates of the 1980s and 1990s sparked by the publication of *A Theory of Justice*, battle lines were drawn at precisely this point, and the slogans “the priority of the right over the good” and “the priority of the good over the right” became popular shorthand for the fundamental difference between the two sides. Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, taking cues from

had profound negative consequences; she charges that while action theory tends to model adequately the individual as an actor moving within social relations, it illicitly abstracts from the temporal flow of everyday life, and so speaks only of the individual action of individual actors. For social justice theory, this means that insufficient attention gets paid to the institutional context of life,¹⁸ which results in justice appearing as the “minimal

Michael Sandel, assign the following meaning to the liberal slogan: “Society, being composed of a plurality of persons each with her own aims, interests and conception of the good, is best arranged when it is governed by principles that do not themselves presuppose any particular conception of the good; what justifies those principles is not that they contribute to maximizing social welfare or otherwise promote the good, but rather that they conform to the concept of right—a moral category which is given prior to that of the good and which is independent of it.” See Mulhall and Swift, 42.

Rawls amended his theory significantly in the wake of the communitarian critique, especially those of Sandel, MacIntyre, Walzer, and Charles Taylor. But the self of *Political Liberalism* (1993; nb. published after Young’s *Justice and the Politics of Difference*), now functions in the theory in a way even further removed from Young’s conception of the self. Whereas Rawls’ self now does reflect both the unchosen givenness and free association that structures everyday life as a totality, in the mode of its communitarian counterpart, it nevertheless appears under the auspices of justice only in its role as a *citizen* of a democratic polity. In other words, the scope of what matters to justice theory about persons has now narrowed to that aspect by which they participate in their society’s political life (narrowly defined by that which is subject to distribution). The question of why it does so has to do with Rawls’ re-casting of social/political justice as accountable to standards of public *reasonableness*, rather than universal reason (itself a move toward the communitarian view of reason). In *Political Liberalism*, the self no longer grounds the theory in the way that it had done so, that is, sociologically. It now does so morally, meaning that what Rawls regards as relevant about the self to question of justice just are those fundamental moral values about the self that are related to citizenship: namely, that citizens are free and equal bearers of rights, and that they require public political institutions that they can all freely endorse regardless of their individually-held views of the good. Public political doctrine now no longer pretends to the heights universal reason, but must be held accountable to the standards of public reasonableness, i.e., standards to which all citizens would rationally assent *qua* citizens—not *qua* people as such, given all that authentic personhood entails. Therefore, Rawls is happy to concede much to his communitarian critics, as long as these fundamental moral truths about the self are what are allowed to dictate the shape and functions of political institutional—that is, civic—life. See John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 29-34; and Mulhall and Swift, 191-205.

18. Young, 28. Young’s critique mirrors MacIntyre’s critique in *After Virtue* of the practice of isolating human behavior from its context for the purpose of philosophical scientific analysis. For MacIntyre, it is impossible to characterize behavior independent of the intentions of

regulation of action among...self-defining individuals.”¹⁹ Structuralist and functionalist theories, on the other hand, have had a great deal to say about the nature of large-scale institutional patterns, but have tended to reduce these patterns of behavior to static theories and overlook individual action. In justice theory, this has left the individual with no room to choose to associate with institutions or bring them under normative judgment.²⁰ Contra the antecedently-individuated self of Rawls and many of her fellow liberal theorists, however, Young argues that

[w]e act with knowledge of existing institutions, rules, and structural consequences of a multiplicity of actions, and those structures are enacted and reproduced through the confluence of our actions. Social theory should conceptualize action as a producer and reproducer of structures, which only exist in action; social action, on the other hand, has those structures and relationships as background, medium, or purpose.²¹

the agent who carries it out, and intention is something that relates directly to the setting in which behaviors are enacted. The setting, in turn, is the context that makes intention intelligible to the agents themselves and others. Since settings, which include practices and institutions for MacIntyre, have histories that make them intelligible to agents acting within them, making sense of any action—determining its causality in other words—requires knowledge of the histories of various settings that come together in contextualizing an action, as well as the agent’s own historical beliefs about those histories and her relationship to them. Given all of this, MacIntyre remarks, “There is no such thing as ‘behavior’ to be identified prior to and independently of intentions, beliefs, and settings.” MacIntyre goes on to argue on this basis that “[j]ust as a history is not a sequence of actions, but the concept of an action is that of a moment in an actual or possible history abstracted for some purpose from that history, so the characters in a history are not a collection of persons, but the concept of a person is that of a character abstracted from a history.” For MacIntyre then, only a narrational account of the self adequately characterizes human actions, since only narrative encapsulates the totality of human belief and intention in relation to the historical settings in which one finds oneself. See *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 207-08, 217.

19. Ibid., 21.

20. Ibid., 27.

21. Ibid., 29.

Displacing the distributive paradigm with a broader, process-oriented view of the social matrix which centers on power, decisionmaking structures, and culture reveals a new image of the human being—that of a socially-embedded “doer and actor.”²² Unlike the “haver” image, this new image bears in the manner of its communitarian counterpart the marks of the social/political processes by which it was formed, and retains the capacity to form and reform those process.²³ What this imaginative shift allows for is the promotion of many values relevant to social justice that extend beyond fairness in distribution. These include:

learning and using satisfying and expansive skills in socially recognized settings; participating in forming and running institutions, and receiving recognition for such participation; playing and communicating with others, and expressing our experience, feelings, and perspective on social life in contexts where others can listen.²⁴

It is only by conceiving of justice on an social-institutional plane, then, that it becomes possible to bring the above values under the aegis of justice, and reflexively, to make institutional conditions subject to the normative valuation of the individuals.

How do these observations reflect the concerns of an ecclesial justice? To view the self as irredeemably particular, socially-constituted, and socially-embedded is to expose the same relevant features of selfhood as does the postliberal anthropological and sociological perspective which utilizes a cultural-linguistic description of persons as

22. Ibid., 37.

23. Against many communitarians, however, Young insists that this must remain an image and not a robust account of human nature, lest it exclude alternative ways of expressing humanness. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

formed ineluctably of their contexts. Substantive principles of justice produced with real subjects in mind will bear the contours of their context—in our case, the form of communal life called the church. Moreover, in refusing to reduce social-political identity to a set of abstract, universalized characteristics, Young rightly commits herself to the importance of the particularity of the individual in his dynamic, choosing, and associating totality. Since any Christian account of justice must regard as a basic feature of the social-institutional organization of the church (as *polis*) the free commitment of the individual to a life of faithfulness to God in the mode of Christ, it too cannot abstract from the real person without risking serious distortion of the point and purpose of Christian religious life. Furthermore, by utilizing a realistic anthropology at the heart of the theory, ecclesial institutional justice can attend to the mediations between members of the ecclesial community and their concrete contexts—a necessary corrective to political-legal concepts of justice that cannot adequately handle social mediations.

Group Identity

One common way of expressing interest in upholding something like the table of values outlined above is to aver that people “should be treated as individuals, not as members of groups.”²⁵ This idea promotes individual self-actualization by casting group traits as incidental and oppressive. But seeking to uphold the importance of group identity to *political* theory, Young rejects this view for the following reasons: first, abstracting persons from their group-identity to treat them in the spirit of fairness elides the reality of social groups, and impose on society an individualist social ontology that is in reality only

25. Ibid., 47.

a reflection of a particular, and imperialist, preference for autonomous individualism in the mode of Enlightenment rationalism.²⁶ Second, it does not account for the fact that groups comprise individuals insofar as “a person’s particular sense of history, affinity, and separateness, even the person’s mode of reasoning, evaluating, and expressing feeling, are constituted partly by her or his group affinities.”²⁷ The error in ignoring group identity lies in the presumption that the individual is ontologically prior to the social in such a way that the subject’s own consciousness exists “outside of and prior to language and the context of social interaction which the subject enters.”²⁸ Yet in order for justice theory to trade on an adequate social ontology it must attend to social groups. Young defines a social group as

a collective of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices, or way of life. Members of a group have a specific affinity with one another because of their similar experience or way of life, which prompts them to associate with one another more than with those not identified with the group, or in a different way. Groups are an expression of social relations; a group exists only in relation to at least one other group. Group identification arises...in the encounter and interaction between social collectivities that experience some differences in their way of life and forms of association, even if they also regard themselves as belonging to the same society.²⁹

26. It is the sense in which purveyors of the individualist perspective do not see themselves as participating in oppression. But in seeking to treat all individuals equally, they recognize neither themselves as members of the privileged group nor the structural injustices that result from the systematic reproduction of large-scale economic, political, and cultural institutions that reify the oppression of minority groups. According to Young, “the conscious actions of many individuals daily contribute to maintaining and reproducing oppression, but those people are usually simply doing their jobs or living their lives, and do not understand themselves as agents of oppression.” *Ibid.*, 41-42.

27. *Ibid.*, 45.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*, 43. Political theory has tended to model groups incorrectly, according to Young. Generally they are treated as aggregates (“arbitrary classifications of persons according to

For Young, self-understanding is constructed as a reaction to the social position in which one finds oneself.³⁰ Although groups do not exist without individuals, she maintains that the group remains ontologically prior to the individual, a position she shares with the communitarian vision of the self. Justice theory, she argues, must take account of groups because group relations within society are the primary loci for oppression and domination. For this reason, these categories—which she defines respectively as a loss of the opportunity for self-actualization and alienation—become the primary categories by which she analyzes social injustice.³¹

How do these considerations on social groups reflect the concerns of an ecclesial justice? Young seeks to recognize and affirm group identity in such a way as to link justice to the shareability of in-group goals, as well as to the identity formation that goes on within particular communities. Plainly, Christians form a group, and Christianity claims

[certain shared] attributes”) or associations (“formally organized institutions, such as a club, corporation, church, college or union...defined by specific practices and forms of association”), but both of these categories remain basically individualist. Neither addresses adequately the sense of personal identity that is produced and reproduced as a function of social relations between group members. By “church” [above], I take Young to mean the individual ecclesial communities to which individual Christians belong, not Christianity as such; among her list of social groups is “religious groups.” Ibid, 43-45.

30. Ibid., 46. Young thus likens group identity to what Heidegger describes as the “thrown” character of life; the social groups to which we are accounted are always already associated with certain attributes, stereotypes, and norms that we navigate in the process of ego formation.

31. By “oppression,” Young refers to the “systematic institutional processes which prevent some people from learning or using satisfying and expansive skills in socially recognized settings, or institutionalized social processes which inhibit people’s ability to play and communicate with others or to express their feelings and perspectives on social life in contexts where others can listen.” By the interrelated concept “domination,” Young means the “institutional conditions which inhibit or prevent people from participating in determining their actions or the conditions of their actions.” Ibid., 38

of its adherents pride of place in shaping its members' identities and world-views. For a theory of justice to be *Christian* in any meaningful sense, it must treat with the way the particularities of Christianity drive the character formation of the faithful vis-à-vis ecclesial *telos*. It thus has an interest in supporting conversation about justice in the wider philosophical sphere that recognizes the indispensability of groups and group identity. But such analysis is also crucially important to an ecclesial theory of justice because taking social and cultural group differentiation within the church seriously precludes the possibility of reifying, via, perhaps, bald appeal to the unity of all believers in the new creation, a particular enculturated form of Christianity as *the* form. Young is concerned about the same dynamic happening in society at large, and it forms, as we have seen, a crucial piece of her critique of Enlightenment rationalism.

The Five Faces of Oppression

Recognizing that oppression and domination, as defined above, take different forms within society, Young delineates five subcategories:

Exploitation

Young defines exploitation as the forced transference of the results of the labor of one social group to another.³² Young expands the Marxist understanding of exploitation as an economic phenomenon by which labor power accrues to the capitalist in the form of profit, denying workers the ability to exercise their capacities in a way that abets their own actualization, to include other social injustices that cannot be reduced to issues of class

32. Ibid., 49.

conflict, for example, racism and sexism.³³ She therefore re-presents exploitation as a *transfer of energies* from oppressed to oppressor, energies that would have been otherwise expended by the exploited to their own benefit. For Young, the injustice of exploitation is realized in social processes that shape institutions that constrain the majority while allowing a few to accumulate much. Therefore, justice demands the reorganization of institutions and decisionmaking practices in ways that equalize the division of labor among peoples.³⁴

Marginalization

Marginal populations—racial and ethnic minorities, the permanently under- or unemployed, the mentally or physically disabled, the elderly, and children—are social groups deemed useless by the labor market, and are therefore excluded from meaningful participation in social life. From the perspective of a culture that prioritizes individual autonomy, their dependency is considered a weakness or fault.³⁵ Deprived of meaningful social participation through institutions of cultural and practical importance, they accordingly experience marginalization as boredom, uselessness, and a diminished sense of self-respect.³⁶ For Young, justice demands the availability of some socially productive

33. Young observes that in our society, menial work—serving, maintenance, etc.—which offers little in the way of social recognition, upward mobility, or the possibility for individual creative expression, largely remains the province of black and Latino workers, whose labor functions both to bolster the economic status of whites and to confer onto them the dignity of being served.

34. *Ibid.*, 53.

35. *Ibid.*, 54-5.

36. *Ibid.*, 55.

activity outside of the labor system proper made available through public funding or self-employed collectives.³⁷

Powerlessness

Powerlessness names the condition of lacking control over one's life. Young maps Marxist social theory onto contemporary class divisions to expose social and cultural differentiations between members of the professional and non-professional classes. Found at the bottom end of the labor pool, powerless persons largely do not make decisions, develop their capacities, and receive recognition for their work, which is largely banal and affords little opportunity for development. Unlike professionals, the powerless take orders, but cannot give them; they afford respect, but rarely receive it. Powerless persons often find that to receive respect they must emulate the speech, dress, and mannerisms of the professional class (namely white males), and repress their own social and cultural markers and bodily *habitus* to the degree they are able.³⁸ Because powerlessness is a product of the division of labor, Young argues that justice demands the reorganization of the labor system to equitably divide up the tasks of planning and executing.³⁹

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., 57-8. Young borrows the notion of *habitus* from Bourdieu. She describes it as “internalized bodily comportments and reactions...by which people unconsciously announce themselves in relation to one another. [They have] many mundane manifestations—from voice to gesture to preference in drinks.” See Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 61; and Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

39. Ibid., 58.

Cultural Imperialism

Whereas powerlessness, marginalization, exploitation relate chiefly to the labor market, cultural imperialism names the broader form of assimilation pressure exerted over every aspect of the life of oppressed persons. For Young, cultural imperialism consists in “the universalization of a dominant group’s experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm,” which functions to “project their own experience as representative of humanity as such.”⁴⁰ Outsiders to the dominant group find themselves cast as “the Other.” Their particular experiences are recognized by the dominant group as different, and so inferior.⁴¹ This effects what Young calls “paradoxical oppression.” Minorities are “marked out by stereotypes and at the same time rendered invisible.”⁴² By defining the essence of out-group members from the outside, cultural imperialism forces nonmembers to repress their particular group identity and adopt the cultural norms of the dominant group in order to flourish. Unlike in-group members who are free to be individuals, outsiders find themselves “positioned and placed by a network of dominant meanings they experience as arising from elsewhere, from those with whom they do not identify, and who do not identify with them.”⁴³

40. Ibid., 59.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., 60. This produces what W.E.B. DuBois called a “double consciousness,” or the experience of having internalized ones’ inadequacies according to the norms of the dominant group, while at the same time desiring recognition for oneself as an active, capable subject. See *The Souls of Black Folk*, orig. pub. 1903 (New York: New American Library, 1969), 45.

Young charges that this phenomenon is expressed normatively as an “ideal of impartiality,” which figures moral deliberation as a process of stepping back from life’s particularities to adopt a “god’s eye view” of the situation in order to monologically retrieve rational first principles and apply them impartially to the situation as any other agent would. “Normative reason,” Young states, “is defined as impartial, and reason defines the unity of the moral subject, both in the sense that it knows the universal principles of morality and in the sense that it is what all moral subjects have in common in the same way.”⁴⁴ What result is the “reduc[tion of] the plurality of moral subjects to

44. Ibid., 100. The logic of Western cultural imperialism is rooted in the attempt to negate difference through the application of impartial reason. Whereas pre-modern discourse between rival cultural and religious epistemologies took the form of assertion and counter-assertion of truth on bases internal to those epistemologies, the Enlightenment turned to reason as an external basis by which to adjudicate such competing truth claims. This amounted to nothing less than a revolution in scientific and moral methodology, a revolution predicated above all on a *confidence* in reason to provide an objective means of arriving at truth, without reference to religious or cultural tradition. Rationality, as the decisive human characteristic, was meant to release the individual from his “self-incurred tutelage” to traditional authority so that he may arrive at the Truth on his own (hence Kant’s motto for the Enlightenment: *Sapere aude!*—“Have the courage to use your own understanding!”) But despite a postmodern counterrevolution that has exposed the historicity—and thus, particularity—of the scientific, moral, and political premise of objective rationality, this confidence continues to fund western modes of social and political thought to which it is heir. The history of western expansion from the early colonial period to our contemporary era of economic globalization testifies to the perduring commitment of Westerners to view their own way of life as intrinsically superior, not so much because it is their own (although this of course plays its part), but because it is True. By this standard, the Other bears the burden of proving her own way of life according to its standards. Again, the ascription of “otherness” is not solely due to simple difference, but rather to the failure to meet the criteria of reasonableness. Reason, thus understood, provides the basis for our cultural and political normativity—a normativity not incidentally shot through with the biases of the fathers of the Enlightenment. For her part, Young clearly has a more positive relationship with the Enlightenment than I do. At the opening of ch. 6 in *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, she retells the story of the Enlightenment in brief, noting especially its own internal contradictions, while at the same time denigrating the culture out of which it emerged.

one subjectivity,”⁴⁵ and this produces dichotomies that consign persons, creating otherness. Difference is dissolved in the name of objectivity, but this dissolution is itself ironically both irrational and unjust. It is irrational because we do not possess the ability to abstract ourselves from our situation to evaluate it objectively, as if the rational first principles we would seek bring to bear could circumscribe the totality of the moral field.⁴⁶ And it is unjust because of its effects. Cultural imperialism names the forced acquiescence to a particular way of life, and in the case of the West, this means a way of life that approaches difference as suboptimal.⁴⁷ Politically, society forfeits the benefits of a diverse public, benefits that include the production of heterogeneous cultural forms springing from the co-mingling of different sectors of the populace.⁴⁸ Thus, for Young, “justice demands political space be made to accommodate, rather than to repress, differences between groups.”⁴⁹ But crucially important here, too, is that the ideal of a universalist

45. Ibid.

46. Young turns briefly to Adorno and Derrida here, but crucially to the philosopher of mind Thomas Nagel, to refute this possibility. For Nagel, the totality of the phenomenal field includes the experience of the subject of that field. Because that experience must necessarily be unique to the subject, and because individual experience is simply non-reductive, there is no way for a general theory to describe everything about a particular situation, or for general principles to be applied in a way that does not leave remainders. Ibid., 102-3. The Nagel citation is to Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 26-7, 63.

47. Ibid., 110-1; 117. Young traces the development of the politics of impartiality to the ideal of the civic public as articulated by Rousseau and Hegel. Republicanism, which is predicated on a view of the public as the expression of rational universal principles seeking the common welfare, trades on a public/private dichotomy that consigns affectation, particularity, and matters of the body to the non-public domestic sphere. Because reason and universalism are themselves defined against these “non-rational” aspects of human being, those who come to symbolize these are excluded from participation in public life—classically women, the poor and minorities.

48. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 108.

49. Ibid., 61.

public occludes the heterogeneity in all of us. It relies on an anthropology that promotes an atomized view of the self as homogeneous and self-making by obscuring the truth of our own heterogeneous constitution and the debt to others produced thereby for making us who we are. Hence, for Young,

The dissolution of cultural imperialism...requires a cultural revolution which also entails a revolution in subjectivity. Rather than seeking a wholeness of the self, we who are the subjects of this plural and complex society should affirm the otherness within ourselves, acknowledging that as subjects we are heterogeneous and multiple in our affiliations and desires. Social movement practices of consciousness raising, I note, offer beginning models of methods of revolutionizing the subject.⁵⁰

How might these reflection bear on an ecclesial justice? In any concrete situation, Christianity's axiological priority is for the poor, marginalized, or oppressed. If cultural imperialism has a proxy in ecclesial practice it exists in the failure to hear marginalized voices that might challenge the dominant understanding of church practice and doctrines in relation to the shared original story. If the manner by which the church makes known Jesus' victory over the powers is the visible sociality of the new creation—that is, a sociality predicated on the coming together of different types of peoples into a new kind of *polis*—then justice must safeguard an ecclesiology of diversity-in-unity. Critical attention must therefore always be applied to calls for Christian unity—not because the metaphysical bonds of the Body of Christ are not real, nor because unity is not a more fundamental reality than is diversity within the ecclesial *polis*. It is because appeals to unity risk reducing aspects of Christian life and practice non-essential to the basic

50. Ibid., 124.

orthodoxy and orthopraxis of the church, and elevating others whose basis is not properly theological, but cultural or biological.

Violence

The final form of oppression is violence, which for Young includes physical violence done to persons or property, as well as incidents of harassment, intimidation, or ridicule carried out solely for the purpose of degrading, humiliating, or stigmatizing members of minority groups.⁵¹ Although acts of violence are basically discrete in nature, Young argues their relevance to social justice theory on the basis of the social contexts that give rise to them—contexts wherein the degrading and inhumane treatment of stigmatized members of the moral community is accepted, if not deemed inevitable. Violence against Others thus has a systemic dimension; it exists as a social practice (i.e., “a social given that everyone knows happens and will happen again... [that is] rule-bound...and often premeditated...”) identifiable by the harassment of individual members of particular target minority groups within the population simply because they are members of that group.⁵² Insofar as violence is a product of frictious group relations, justice for Young demands the alleviation of social realities that fail to permit the recognition of the equal moral worth of all persons and the full social participation of oppressed groups.

We take it as a matter of course that no physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or degradation can ever legitimately be justified within the proclamation that Jesus is the Lord of the Powers; in fact, witness against visible and unmediated

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., 62.

violence of this kind,⁵³ as the most explicit manifestation of the powers, is perhaps the primary target of the church's counter-politics. From our theological perspective, we note that Young has in the non-theological language of the Five Faces of Oppression offered a compelling account of the effects of the instantiation of the powers in and through social practices and institutions. Since any Christian account of justice must be cognizant of both the necessity and the corruption of the powers, it must give an account of how the organization of the community can evade the trap of domination and oppression in order to realize the tasks to which God has set it. To have accomplished this is to have met the demands of ecclesial justice.

Finally, Young's formulation of justice is predicated on the conviction that social-institutional justice is not a shared end of society. This is because a substantive account of justice would for her run the risk of proscribing alternative ways of expressing humanness. Instead, justice makes these expressions possible. I conceive of ecclesial institutional justice having this same form, but for a different reason: the end of the church's practices is the bringing to bear of God's love as revealed in the apocalyptic action of Christ, in order that we may love and experience love. Ecclesial justice is not this end, but the means by which it is made possible.

53. The basis for state-sponsored violence within Christian proclamation lies within the mandate of the state (see Chapter Two). The church supports this facet of God's governance of earthly affairs because of the necessity of force in maintaining order, even as the church itself practices peacemaking before the state. Young is not here discussing this kind of violence, but rather violence that becomes systematized through social practices given rise by frictionous group relations. This type is, again, not justifiable by the mandates.

City Life

Young's attacks in *Politics of Difference* on the Enlightenment's mistaken view of reason and its inherent prejudices, and liberalism's concomitant subscription to an impoverished vision of the self as antecedently individuated, are mirrored in the communitarian critique of liberalism. Yet Young nevertheless rejects communitarianism as the only possible response to the failures of liberalism, finding significant problems with it in its own right. What fault does she find? Young argues that both liberalism as classically conceived and communitarianism are premised on exclusion. Each, in its own way, seeks homogeneity: liberalism reduces differences between subjects to normatize a generalized subject and then extrapolate from it attendant rights and duties that obtain to everyone equally, as we have seen. Communitarianism, in her telling, reduces difference in the name of uniting around a common culture and attendant set of values. Neither, for her, values difference, and both function to suppress it. Thus, they are premised on an injustice: the reduction of irreducible subjective plurality to a unified whole, which, in turn, promotes a host of social inequalities.

As an alternative to both, Young posits in *Politics of Difference* the image of "city life," that is, "a form of social relations...defin[ed] as the being together of strangers."⁵⁴ In cities, Young notes, people experienced shared spaces as places where they belong, but which do not define them; they share common problems and common interests, but "do not create a community of shared ends, or mutual identification and reciprocity."⁵⁵ Cities,

54. *Ibid.*, 237.

55. *Ibid.*, 237-8.

for Young, possess four chief virtues: (1) they possess a high degree of social differentiation, and citizens recognize difference as a fact that must be dealt with; (2) they contain neighborhoods, where people encounter other kinds of people in the course of any number of social activities; (3) cities are “erotic” spaces which attract people with the chance to grow through experiencing new and exciting things. They are thus the “obverse of communit[ies],” where people receive affirmation from seeing themselves reflected in others; (4) cities have public spaces, in which all citizens are free to talk and listen, and in which issues of common concern can be voiced and deliberated. Because life in the city has these features, neither the Enlightenment call for a universal public, nor a communitarian call for a unified whole is adequate. The model of city life calls for a “politics of difference...[which] lays down institutional and ideological means for recognizing and affirming diverse social groups by giving political representation to these groups, and celebrating their distinctive characteristics and cultures.”

Young’s Responsibility for Justice

Five years after Young’s untimely death in 2006 came the posthumous publication of her unfinished book *Responsibility for Justice*.⁵⁶ This book takes up the basic outlook of *Politics of Difference* in a number of ways, with its specific task being to contextualize Young’s view of responsibility within an increasingly globalized “system of interdependent processes of cooperation and competition through which we seek benefits and aim to realize projects.”⁵⁷ In it, she outlines a social connection model of

56. The unfinished text of this book which was retrieved from Young’s personal computer and sparsely edited for publication by her husband, David Alexander.

57. Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 105.

responsibility that challenges the regnant view of responsibility as that which individuals do as a matter of good citizenship and self-control.⁵⁸ Against this, she defines a responsible person as one who “tries to deliberate about options before acting, makes choices that seem to be the best for all affected, and worries about how the consequences of his or her actions may adversely affect others’.”⁵⁹ Hence, *Responsibility for Justice* finds Young at once fighting a rearguard action against conservatives clinging to an individualist model of responsibility as well as pushing forward to define responsibility within a convoluted global matrix of accepted rules and practices that obscures effects, such that they “cannot be traced to directly to any contributors to the process.”⁶⁰ She thus carries forward a prominent theme in *Politics of Difference*, that of the agent who is unaware of how he reproduces injustice in the course of doing normal, everyday things.

In my view, the most exciting aspect of Young’s last work, and the one that dovetails most satisfactorily with my thesis, is her conceptualization of social structures as social processes. Young agrees with John Rawls’ claim that the subject of justice is the “basic structure” of society. Yet unlike Rawls (a distributivist), who isolated a certain

58. The specific target of Young’s critique is the political science of Charles Murray and Lawrence Mead, whose work in social theory contributed significantly to the policies adopted as part of the landmark 1996 overhaul of the welfare system under President Bill Clinton. As representatives of the individualist view of responsibility, for Young they hold to three problematic assumptions: (a) they posit the false dichotomy that poverty is rooted either in unjust structures or personal choices, but not both; (b) they believe that the poor can change their station through effort alone, and thus presume the background conditions of their actions are not themselves unjust; (c) they focus exclusively on the impact of choices made by the poor, thereby implicitly assuming that “everyone else properly discharges their responsibilities and that the poor in particular act in deviant ways that unfairly force others to incur costs.” *Ibid.*, 4.

59. Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 25.

60. *Ibid.*, 100.

subset of social institutions as subject to justice, Young characteristically widens the scope of the inquiry beyond institutions to solve a lingering dilemma in Rawls' theory; Rawls conceived of a double normative standard—one for the “basic structure” of society (which is the subject of justice) and another for the individual actions of agents within the system. Yet he never resolved exactly how these two levels relate. As such, he lacked a clear account of how individuals contribute to justice through their own actions. Young—from her unique perspective as a self-identified citizen-theorist—bypasses this problem by recasting Rawls' institutions as *structural processes*. Processes, she says, begin as social constructs, but appear to people as givens, as objects that enable or block their opportunities depending on their social position. Ideally, individuals draw on the power made available by these processes to realize their ends, but oftentimes not every agent in the system can—even those in “fair” systems in which the processes themselves are openly committed to equality. As the “accumulated outcomes of the actions of the masses of individuals enacting their own projects,” processes produce effects not intended by any of the participants.⁶¹ And these effects have negative consequences for actors within the system, especially those who represent peoples not part of the origination of the process. The negative effects are, as products of social structures, properly social injustices. For Young, “[s]ocial structures...involve, or become visible in a certain *way of looking* at the whole society, one that sees patterns in relations among people and the positions they occupy relative to one another.”⁶² Institutions shape and govern social processes, but are

61. Ibid., 62-63.

62. Ibid., 70.

not themselves coterminous with the processes they structure. We do not point to a certain subset of social institutions as the “most basic” in society and subject them to the normative claims of justice. All mediated social interaction reproduces patterns that, from a certain meta-perspective, are revealed to structure the whole sociality. By viewing society like this, both the action of individual agents as well as structure can be brought under the normative evaluation of justice.

However, the action of the individuals and the action of the system are non-reducible to one another. Systemic injustice is not simply the sum of individual moral violations (as Robert Nozick held), nor do just arrangements guarantee just outcomes from personal interactions. Young uses the following example to illustrate this point: a single, working mother, wishing for a manageable lifestyle, seeks to rent an apartment near her workplace. But the landlord with whom she meets rejects her application on the basis of his views on marriage and working women. From one perspective, what makes this outcome unjust is the activation against the young woman of common prejudices about single and/or working mothers. But from another view, it is no less the case that her predicament results from large-scale labor market processes that crowd nonprofessional women into a small number of low-paying jobs available only in a certain section of town.⁶³ This second form of injustice is not the result of individual bad behavior, and in fact, the young woman may very well not even notice it operating. Yet it is no less a contributing factor to her plight, and no less a social injustice. For individual responsibility then, this means

63. Ibid., 71.

[w]e should evaluate our actions from two different irreducible points of view; the interactional and the institutional. We should judge our own actions and those of others according to how we treat the persons we deal with directly... We should also ask whether and how we contribute by our actions to structural processes that produce vulnerabilities to deprivation and combination for some people who find themselves in certain positions with limited options compared to others.⁶⁴

For justice theory, it means that two types of normative principles of justice are required—one to mediate individual interactivity, and one to mediate the social practices that become visible when individual actions (and here we could safely insert intentional communal action as well, I believe) are seen for their contribution to large-scale social processes that structure society. This dual-principle model reflects also the shape of ecclesial justice, as will become evident in what follows.

Structural Processes as Powerful Practices

We recall from Yoder's description of structure and power in chapter two⁶⁵ that the patterned structures that define our social existence are more than the sum of those persons operating within them, and that this "more" is the animate power (for example, the forces responsible for crowding low paying jobs into a certain area of town). As corrupted, powers produce and reproduce unjust effects as a matter of course. It may be difficult to find a more adequate non-theological description of this phenomenon than what Young provides us. For her, "processes produce effects not intended by any of the participants." When read as powers, processes appear in continuity with their depiction

64. Ibid., 73.

65. Yoder defines "structure" as "the patterns or regularities that transcend or precede or condition the individual phenomena we can immediately perceive." Structures produce certain effects, which Yoder identifies as "power," that is, "some kind of capacity to make things happen." See Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 138.

in the bible, and this makes it easier to see how the practices of our contemporary faithfulness to the example of Jesus as depicted in the gospels might be structured as a witness against their injustice. Relatedly, Young holds that because they are not a visible “part” of society, seeing these structures requires the exercise of educated discernment. One must know how to look to see them. This is consistent with an exiobiological—or “powers-cognizant”—approach to political theology. But before we go any farther in discussing the relationship of church practices to unjust structural processes, we must first get some clarity as to what is meant by “practices,” and how they are related to the powers. In what follows, I dedicate some pages to Alasdair MacIntyre’s concept of a *practice* and James McClendon’s piggybacking concept of a *powerful practice*. In so doing, I hope to make clear the connection between Young’s idea of structural processes, the practices of the church, and the powers against which they are set.

MacIntyre’s Concept of a Practice

In discussing the relationship of virtue to the social setting in *After Virtue*, MacIntyre introduces the concept of a practice, which he defines (somewhat ponderously) as

any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.⁶⁶

66. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. Notre Dame University Press, 1984, p. 187.

As cooperative forms of human activity that arise and are sustained in order to obtain some valued social good or goods,⁶⁷ practices have their origin in the imaginative construal of how best to accomplish these goods. MacIntyre distinguishes between “internal goods” (later in his career: “goods of excellence”) and “external goods” (later: “goods of effectiveness”) to a practice. Internal goods are the point of the practice, can be achieved only through enacting the practice itself, and are sought for their own sake. External goods, on the other hand, are those goods which may accrue as a result of a practice, but which have no organic—or *internal*—relation to the practice as such. Take the practice of basketball, for example: the fulfilment of seeing one’s skills and those of one’s teammates improve through competition, the enjoyment of a game well played, and the comradery of accomplishing a shared goal in the way the rules of basketball make possible, are among the goods internal to the practice of basketball, and the sake for which the game is played. Becoming famous or rich as a result of playing are goods external to basketball, because there are alternative ways to accomplish these, even ways that exist outside of engaging in some particular practice at all. MacIntyre further notes that, “it is characteristic of...external goods that when achieved they are always some individual’s property and possession...and the more someone has of them, the less there is for other people.” At the same time, “it is characteristic of [internal goods] that their achievement is a good for the whole community who participate in the practice”⁶⁸

67. Ibid., 190-91.

68. Ibid.

Practices are constituted by rules, and it is by following the rules that structure each practice that participants learn what it is to achieve the “standards of excellence” that define the successful accomplishment of the practice’s ends. These standards of excellence, and rules that give rise to them, are time-tested—they have been proven effective from a teleological standpoint for the community over time as the most effective means of realizing the characteristic goods of the practice. What appears to MacIntyre in defining practices in this way is the concept of a moral *tradition*, which is just the enactment of a practice (or set of practices) through history, from the perspective of which the growth and decline of the practice can be measured according those standards of excellence internal to the practice itself. Here, growth in a practice is marked by the way innovative participation in the practice allows practitioners to realize the goods internal to the practices in new, creative, and more abundant ways—ways that address the needs of contemporary social and political challenges.⁶⁹ Through the category of tradition, MacIntyre expresses the fundamentally narrational form of the moral life. The collection of practices that constitute a politics is historically enacted, and thus moral evaluation is always a process of looking back to past practice and bringing forward to the present for evaluation and usage in the contemporary setting. As such, he depicts a tradition as a kind of argument of enacted practical rationality about how best to achieve the goods the community of the tradition considers worthy, an argument that is “extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and

69. Ibid, 190-196. The decline of a practice, MacIntyre says, is marked by the obverse ability to realize its goods in new and/or better ways, or the historically obsolete character of the goods realized.

redefined.”⁷⁰ But there is another, albeit related, sense in which the narrative nature of the moral life plays a determinative role in MacIntyre’s theory, and that has to do with virtue.

MacIntyre defines a virtue as “an acquired human quality the possession and the exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such good.”⁷¹ In defining virtue this way, he situates the proper moral context of the virtues as within practices (and not, he says, as for Homer in social roles, or, as for Ben Franklin, in the achievement of external goods like money, property, or social esteem, for example). Because practices-cum-traditions(-cum-arguments) are historical, and thus to be narratively understood, would-be practitioners must accept the authority of the rules of the practice as well as its standards of excellence as they receive them as constitutive of what it means to partake in a particular practice. In turn, they must understand themselves as subordinate to those who know its rules and have achieved its standards of excellence. That virtues are *acquired* qualities presupposes a historical view of moral agency, and an attendant narrational view of the self; the novice practitioner does not initially possess the virtues required to realize the standards of excellence that mark the successful achievement of the internal goods of the practice, but can acquire them over time. To do so, she must become obedient to the rules and to those who help and guide her as she approaches excellence.⁷²

70. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice, Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 12.

71. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 191.

72. For MacIntyre, “The unity of a virtue in someone’s life is intelligible only as a characteristic of a unitary life, a life that can be conceived and evaluated as a whole...the unity [of

Without virtue, she cannot achieve goods internal to practices, and therefore forfeits the ability to realize the human *telos* particular to the moral tradition in which she participates.

Institutions enter MacIntyre's analysis here as those structures that make possible the extension of practices through time, not only by formalizing rules and standards of excellence, but by supplying practitioners with the external goods necessary to ensure the continuance of the practice. Universities, for example, house the practices of the creation and handing on of knowledge by regularizing research methodology and pedagogy, and by making the funding and facilities required by those practices available to its members. But because institutions are primarily concerned with the realization of goods *external* to the practices of higher education, they characteristically lack the virtues required to sustain the actualization of the goods internal to education which is their ultimate purpose. As such, they often fall victim to engaging in activities to achieve external goods for their own sake. The vice the Greeks called *pleonexia*, which MacIntyre translates as "acquisitiveness"⁷³—that is, the disposition to engage in getting more simply for the sake of getting more, is the chief source of corruption of practices. MacIntyre thus draws a

the self] resides in the unity a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end." *Ibid.*, 205.

73. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 111-12. MacIntyre critiques the common translation of *pleonexia* into English as "greed" (a tradition that begins with Hobbes), since greed indicates gathering in more than one's share. "Acquisitiveness," on the other hand, connotes more adequately the disposition to accumulate for its own sake.

dark line between practices, as good, and institutions that house them, as necessary evils.⁷⁴

McClendon's Powerful Practices

If this dichotomy has a familiar ring to it, it should, for the sense in which social structures are both necessary and yet corrupted parallels the exioustiological dynamism of earthly life sketched by Yoder. Reading between these two thinkers, James McClendon fruitfully incorporates MacIntyre's theory of practices into an exioustiological framework to develop a notion of the church as a set of alternative "powerful practices." But in doing so he puts to question MacIntyre's stark characterization of practices/good, intuitions/bad. For McClendon,

[I]f the words [*practices* and *institutions*] are so defined, it might appear as natural to identify institutions alone with the New Testament's ominous principalities and powers. But my suspicion is that the "institutions versus practices" distinction is not a viable one (instead some practices, for example, hospital operation, *are* institutionalized; they are given by law or custom a formal status that fixes their place in the social structure), and thus *the principalities and powers are none other than the social structures we may also identify as (MacIntyrian) practices* [italics in the original].⁷⁵

In McClendon's telling, then, it is not so much that institutions are not corruptors of practices (he agrees with MacIntyre that they can corrupt), but that because the distinction between the two is ultimately unsustainable, we must look at practices themselves as the location through which the fallenness of the cosmos is expressed in social activity. In McClendon's hands, then, MacIntyre's theory becomes a way of

74. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 181.

75. James McClendon, *Systematic Theology, V. 1: Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 173.

understanding “church” as a collection of practices rooted in the powers that are meant to redeem the powers. Indeed, in describing ecclesial praxis as “powerful,” McClendon stresses that the exercise of the communal discipleship of the Body of Christ is an expression of the powers, yet a power transfigured by Christ and therefore able to faithfully witness a kind of politics that bears the shape that God intended for human sociality.

Noticeable in McClendon’s description of Christian practices is an anti-cultic and anti-mystical bias. For McClendon, characteristically Christian practices arise as part of God’s creation, are sustained by the presence of the Holy Spirit, and are given meaning by virtue of their eschatological trajectory, but they are visible and mundane, not esoteric. His astonishing reading of the Ten Commandments, which for McClendon presage the way Jesus will redefine the practice of covenant faithfulness, evinces this. According to McClendon, the Ten Commandments should not be conceived as universal moral principles, but rather provisions internal to communal practices designed for the Israelites to “enter into a peoplehood” of priests.⁷⁶ They presuppose, rather than set out, existing social practices of the community, practices that are embedded in, and given meaning by, the liberation narrative in which they form a salient part.⁷⁷

The seventh commandment, for example, does not say “Practice marriage!” Rather, it, along with commandment nine, provides directionality for a cultural practice already in place (marriage). Likewise, do eight and ten presuppose the practice of private

76. *Ibid.*, 178.

77. *Ibid.*, 179.

property ownership, and nine some practice for mediating disputes. Commandment four provides for what McClendon designates as the practice of “kinship,” that is, a familial system that makes fathers and other relatives visible, and which evokes the virtues and goods internal to this practice—goods such as parental honor and filial obedience.⁷⁸ This commandment then does not mark off Hebrew society from those which practiced no visible form of kinship, but rather from those which cast off or neglected older members of the community once they ceased to be useful. Commandments one through three disclose, by delimitation, the means by which the Hebrews were to conduct themselves with regard to the practice of worship. Like all God’s human creatures, the Hebrews shared the innate spirituality that inevitably comes to be articulated through the social practices of some religion. These three commandments, like the others, provided rules to practice toward the realization of internal goods accomplishable through no other means—in this case, those of right worship of YHWH—but they are not for McClendon to be understood as whole-cloth constitutive of Hebraic religiousness. Rather, they give form and directionality to the raw material already there, namely the desire for God that was previously channeled through a pastiche of religious practices borrowed from other Semitic peoples. (For example, McClendon argues that the prohibition against taking the Lord’s name in vain probably originally forbade the common practice of invoking a deity’s name in connection with magic.). Finally, McClendon notes that many Christians today are surprised to learn that the sixth commandment initially only forbade the unsanctioned killing of fellow Hebrews, rather than murder in general. But he argues that

78. *Ibid.*, 180.

just as this seemingly limited scope of reference actually broadened the previous prohibitions beyond family and tribe to protect all members of the Israelite community, it did so in connection with the “widest and most inclusive of the practices available to Israel, the practice of constituting a people.”⁷⁹ Christians and Jews today who broaden this injunction still further to include all people in order to build a universal community “are not wrong. But is it important that we see how that wider application grows from the original practice.”⁸⁰

What McClendon has shown through this exercise in the Torah is that our own communal practices are not somehow disconnected from nature or culture. Indeed, for him, God is “the Creator of all the powerful practices,” insofar as they have their origin in the needs, drives and capacities of his creatures.⁸¹ But these practices “arose already subject to abuse or corruption. (We meet again the doctrine of the “powers”)⁸² The rules governing Judeo-Christian practices, then, acknowledge the *power* of the practices themselves. Through these rules, *God shows us how to live in the powerful practices*

79. Ibid., 181.

80. Ibid. The extension of the command to cover all people can be understood in MacIntyrian terms as the growth of a practice, i.e., its rules evolve to accomplish goods and concomitant new standards of excellence considered more adequate to the community’s evolving sense of self-understanding and purpose.

81. Ibid., 183. That the “kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:6)—and by extension, the church—do not engage in all the possible practices of which God is the author is for McClendon answerable by reference to the narrative in which the community lives, that is to say, the role the community plays in the on-going of story of God’s liberation of creation from the throes of the powers.

82. Ibid., 183-4.

without being tyrannized by them. Or, in other words, God provides us with the necessary knowledge to keep the practices from becoming like gods for us themselves.

Self-Critique as Ecclesial Institutional Justice

But this leaves us with the question of how the Law, if it was given by God as a corrective to the corruption inherent to human practices, became subject itself to that corruption. Again we must return to the narrative in which the practices are embedded, a narrative of liberation. The Law set Israel in right relation to, that is, dependent on God, the liberator, who through Israel would come to be known by the nations. But it was never meant to be a substitute for that relationship, nor was obedience to it meant to eclipse Israel's self-understanding as God's envoy to humanity at large. Indeed in that same way that ecclesial practice can itself aberrantly become its own end, so too could the Law become (for the Apostle Paul, crucially) a source of arrogance, moral smugness, and above all, pride (Rom. 2:17). In short, it had become a powerful idol. And McClendon picks up a trajectory of self-critique of this phenomenon in the scriptures whose origins lay with the Law's critique of the organic socio-religious practices of other peoples appropriated up by the Hebrews. He sees that thread continue through to the prophetic critique of foreign gods and idols, to the Gospels' critique of the structures of the Jewish state and its religious establishment, through to Paul's critique of the Torah. And it is in the pages of Matthew's gospel that McClendon identifies this critical perspective being applied to the church's practices themselves.⁸³

83. Ibid., 175, 218. One can also see this critical spirit at work in Paul's letters, particularly his admonition against the misuse use of the practice of Christian freedom (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:12, 10:23).

The church is a counter-politics made up of counter-powerful practices, but the practices can become corrupted and therefore cease to reflect God's purposes for them—specifically, evincing that Jesus is Lord of the Powers and that a new way of redeemed life is made possible through them. Insofar as they can and do fail in that task, their failure consists in failing to expose the external foe that the New Testament ominously calls the “principalities and powers” of the world.⁸⁴ But the “internal foe” McClendon narrates bears ultimate responsibility for this failure. The problem lies not with the given practices, but with the practitioners. Matthew's Syrian community

would perhaps find themselves, like their Gospel proxies, understanding but failing to act (25:45), succumbing to the seduction of wealth (13:22), despising other brothers and sisters (18:10), becoming status-seekers (23:8-12), unwilling to forgive (18:21-35), nourishing inward, evil thoughts (15:19)... Their very ‘powerful practice’ of community formation, in other words, might transform them into Matthew's (stereotypical) Pharisees.⁸⁵

How did the Matthean community resist the corruption of the practices? The answer is twofold. First, they knew that the powers still lurked, dethroned though they may have been in Christ's resurrection, and that redeemed life nevertheless does not mean a life free from sin. They knew, therefore, that they could call on the grace of the risen Lord, who had forgiven and empowered them to forgive one another through a process of mutual confession and reconciliation (18:15-22, 6:12). Second, they relied on the freedom as followers of Jesus to practice their mission creatively. In explaining this, McClendon returns to MacIntyre's notion of how practices grow through time. McClendon points to the fact that the Matthean community took neither the Essene nor

84. *Ibid.*, 233.

85. *Ibid.*, 234.

the later monastic form; rather, it “deliberately remained part of the wider world, both on Jewish and on Gentile soil.”⁸⁶ It added its own specific practices (baptism, Eucharistic meal, mutual confession and forgiveness) to the overlapping, mutually-informing matrix of powerful practices of the wider world. As these other practices impinged on them in varying ways, their witness to them correspondingly took on a variety of forms,⁸⁷ and the extent to which they engaged them in the process of witness (a process McClendon calls “discipling,” or “forming lives in accordance with the gospel story”) required discrimination and flexibility. Only through discrimination could the community ascertain the degree to which the politics and claims of a practice were functions of the creative and redemptive power of Christ, and the degree to which they were corruptions of that power;⁸⁸ not every power is corrupted to the same degree or in the same way. So whereas communal discernment would support “conscientious withdrawal from the practice of warfare,” that withdrawal “may be coupled with conscientious engagement in practices of peacemaking or education, economics, or the arts.”⁸⁹ And only because they practiced a certain kind of “flexibility”—a flexibility not incidentally reflected in Jesus’ own characteristic reinterpretation of the Law (e.g., the “you have heard it said...but I tell you...” formula of Matthew’s Jesus)—were they able to revise the rules to practice in ways consistent with the tradition of discipling that was handed on to them, while at the same

86. *Ibid.*, 233.

87. *Ibid.*, 231.

88. *Ibid.*, 218.

89. *Ibid.*, 231.

time remaining relevant to the powerful practices they sought to redeem. Through careful, communal discernment, the community knew which practices to avoid and which to embrace, and in the case of the later, how to embrace them to keep those practices from corrupting the community by becoming ends in themselves. McClendon here quotes Yoder approvingly: “The community will not ask whether to enter or to escape the realm of power, but what kinds of power are in conformity with the victory of the lamb.”⁹⁰

The Church as a City

The preceding excursus on practice and power has hopefully made clear the direction the argument must now go to establish the thesis that institutional justice in the church measures how the powerful ecclesial practices announce the end of the powers’ reign. But before we complete the picture of this justice, I would like to touch again on Young’s normative vision of “city life,” particularly its potential usage for modeling the church’s social positioning vis-à-vis the powers. In doing so, I hope to bring out in greater relief some of ecclesial and moral epistemological considerations central to the ecclesial justice perspective.

Since Augustine’s magisterial tome appeared in the early fifth century, the church has often been conceived as a city. I have myself in this dissertation made use of the common Christian communitarian conceptualization of the church as a *polis*, chiefly as a means to distance myself from liberal political and theological presuppositions, being committed epistemically to a robust account of the good (represented by the Jesus of the

90. The quote is from John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 245-6.

Gospels). Neo-Aristotelian moral philosophers and theologians have convinced me that ethics must take a teleological shape for coherence, and that the moral life is intrinsically narrational. Hauerwas convinced me that the church must take up space in the world, that is, be regarded as a political body alongside other bodies. The church-as-*polis* perspective encapsulates these concepts.

At the same time, I have also come to see that the *polis* traditionally conceived in communitarian thinking is not altogether true to Paul's vision of the *ecclesia*. While the model is fruitful for Christian epistemological reflection, it breaks down as a political model. It is true that the church is a community oriented around a common set of practices aimed at achieving a particular end which defines the relationship of the people within the community, namely, the realization of an agapic politics modeled after the faithfulness of Jesus. But these relationships are not strictly *immediate*—or co-present⁹¹—as they appear in the communitarian ideal. This is the case in at least three ways: first, Paul himself a priori assumes a non-reducible intersubjectivity as an aspect of creation after the Fall. Despite acknowledging the presence of the Holy Spirit as a mediating agent within the community of the new creation, Paul tells his Corinthian community that, noetically speaking, no one has unfettered access to the world, themselves, or others.

We return again to Paul's great paean to love, where we find:

as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. (1 Cor. 13:8-12)⁹²

91. This term is Derrida's. Young calls this vision a "Rousseauist dream," in which "we are transparent to one another, purely copresent in time and space, close enough to touch, and nothing comes between us to obstruct our vision of one another." These kinds of relations have a "purity and security" that mediated ones do not. See Young, *Politics of Difference*, 233. Derrida discusses copresence in, Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1976), 137-39.

92. See also Rom. 1:21, "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened."

For our purpose, the passage turns on Paul's phrase in v. 12, rendered so famously in the KJV as, "for now we see through a glass, darkly." Paul's expression ἐν αἰνίγματι (*ainigma*, translated in the NRSV as "dimly" above) means an obscure saying, enigma, or riddle. And here he is clearly borrowing from Numbers 12:8, where God speaks of the privileged status of Moses among the Hebrews ("With him I speak face to face—clearly, not in riddles [הִדַּבֵּר, αἰνιγμάτων in the LXX]; and he beholds the form of the Lord.") The "enigma" of the human experience is, as narrated by Paul, conditioned by the effects of the defeated-but-still-operant powers. Granted, this tension between the obligation to love and serve one another and the inability to construct final social and emotional bonds is not a stumbling block for Paul. It is rather just another reason to seek the grace made available to us by Christ through the Holy Spirit. But the church is not a community of copresence in the noetic sense.

Second, relationships between members of the community are mediated by various kinds of physical and cultural distances. In Chapter Two, we saw how Paul's mind is already occupied with the question of the strange nature of the assembly of believers, called out from every walk of life, into one political body of the new creation. This new *polis* is here and there, in this town and neighborhood and that, in the upper and educated class in this city and the poor of that one, among the Jews in Rome and the gentiles in Judea. Geographically speaking, if not culturally and linguistically as well, the community is largely *not* present to itself.

Third, relationships within the community are mediated by participation in the unity of Christ, which is made available to the community through the Holy Spirit. This participation is transformative (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17), yet never absorbs or overwhelms

individual subjectivity. Indeed, the maintaining of individual identity is the essential *missiological* aspect of justification. In *The Original Revolution*, Yoder makes the historical observation that the Christian community is the first social organism in history for which membership is predicated on something other than social status, kinship, race, place of birth, economic rank, or previous religiosity.⁹³ This is presaged, he says, by the Hebrew's astonishing prizing of the rights of travelers, foreigners, and resident aliens,⁹⁴ but only in the *ekklesia* does the world meet such an admixture of peoples as a basic constitution.⁹⁵ The "new creation" that just is the political body created in the wake of the resurrection is premised on the bringing together into one body social groups the world regards as irreconcilable. Such a community defies the communitarian description precisely because it is the embodiment of difference.

Furthermore, the vision of the church I have articulated here is non-Constantinian, and there is no need for a non-Constantinian political theology to call for the upheaval of our current system in favor of a radically decentralized political model

93. Yoder, *The Original Revolution: Essays on Christian Pacifism* (orig. pub. 1971; Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003), 28.

94. *Ibid.*, 103. See also Paul Martens, *The Heterodox Yoder* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 60-63.

95. Bruce Hansen has approached Paul's doctrine of Christian unity through "ethnic theory" with interesting results. He uses this theory to show how Paul's discourse on the nature of the ecclesial bond is a discourse of kinship, and that Paul casts the church as a new ethnic group: "[Christians] have common ancestors (Abraham, the patriarchs, God the Father, even Paul) and a common homeland ('in Christ', 'the Kingdom of God', 'new creation') from which their identity derives." These warrant "Paul's exhortation of appropriate behaviors and boundaries...[and]...in turn reinforce the collective identity and solidarity in a recursive process..." Ethnic theory, for Hansen, allows us to appreciate how "social identity, ethos, and boundaries are mutually reinforcing." See Bruce Hansen, *'All of You Are One': The Social Vision of Galatians 3.28, 1 Cor. 12.13 and Col. 3.11* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 32-33.

based on the premise that only isolated *poleis* can deliver the good life to their citizens (as MacIntyre, for example, seems to claim). With few notable exceptions, the church has not separated itself from the world. Indeed, the church must visibly practice its apocalyptic counter-politics wherever it is in order to confront the powers. Eschatologically speaking, the church's divine mandate rests on and requires the successful accomplishment of the mandate of the state. As we saw at the end of Chapter Two, non-Constantinian political theology denies to the church the means by which the state maintains order as a figure of its eschatological hope in God's triumph over evil. And so in this sense, too, the communitarian label does not quite stick.

Young's chief critique of communitarianism is that it excludes. Although her own project is a critique of liberalism, it is an internal critique, and she defends a basic set of self-evident rights focused on procedural issues of equal participation in deliberation and decisionmaking. For Young, "[p]olitics must be conceived as a relationship of strangers who do not understand one another in a subjective and immediate sense, relating across time and distance."⁹⁶ She therefore regards communitarianism as avoiding rather than purifying politics.⁹⁷ In developing the image of "city life," Young's primary ethical

96. Ibid, 234. Her assertion is unsupported, but relates to her critique of the small community political model.

97. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 233. Ironically, Hauerwas holds that it is liberalism's avoidance of questions of common goods that makes *its* politics impossible. Following the political theorist Sheldon Wolin, he argues that "liberal political theory too often legitimates the substitution of organizational manipulation for genuine politics." As such, modern Western liberal societies must subsist—albeit unconsciously—on the habits and virtues of their citizenry which go unaccounted in liberal theory and which are undermined by liberal practice. See Stanley Hauerwas, "Postscript: A Response to Jeff Stout's *Democracy and Tradition*" in *Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 227. See also Robert J. Dean, *For the Life of the World: Jesus Christ and the Church in the Theologies of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Stanley Hauerwas* (Eugene, OR:

concern is to safeguard and promote diversity, that is, a plurality of ends (thus justice cannot attend to ends). When politics become about reifying a particular vision of the good, she argues, those who do not share that vision, or do not have the traits recognized by society as reflective of the good, are denied the ability to participate in the process of political decisionmaking, and thus denied agency over their own lives. Certainly, the church has an interest in upholding such a model of political justice, or at least something like it. Indeed, I have tried to show that Young's normative claims about difference are in crucial respects consistent with fundamental Christian social values. And liberal governance has also proven doubly effective in limiting internecine violence between rival groups within society and guaranteeing the free expression of faith, facts perhaps too easily taken for granted by the Enlightenment's discontents (again, not every governing power is corrupted in the same way or to the same degree). Yet, the church seeks not a plurality of ends, nor can its politics settle for being a "relationship of strangers."

What kind of a city therefore is the church? Perhaps, taking Young's metaphor to heart, it is rather more like one of the neighborhoods within her city than a city itself. It is a visible political reality to be sure, but one incorporated (as Augustine saw) within the political matrix of larger city that makes its life possible, not separated unto its own.⁹⁸ It is

Pickwick, 2016), 194-5; and my comments on MacIntyre's objection to liberalism below. Elsewhere, Hauerwas argues that "The democratic state... is an order of freedom and of peace rather than an order of truth and virtue necessary for the recognition of common goods. Accordingly, defenders of liberal democracies seek to establish institutions that make possible the achievement of relative justice without people themselves being just." Stanley Hauerwas, "Can Democracy be Christian? Reflections on How To (Not) Be a Political Theologian," available at <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2014/06/24/4032239.htm> (accessed 19 October, 2016).

98. Yet as Wilken points out, Augustine also saw that, "the customs and practices of society can be embraced as long as they do not misshape the souls of the faithful or detract them from their ultimate goal of fellowship with God and with one another." See Robert Louis Wilken,

distinguishable by the form of its politics, yet it is populated by different groups of people. Its unity is therefore a unity of diversity, insofar as its identity is established by the common practices of discipleship, rather than the markers that constitute the identity politics of the powers. In other words, here neighbors express their unity by laying the claims upon each other that Jesus lays upon those who confess his name.⁹⁹ Those claims, governed by rules to practice, take form within the context of the wider city, with the neighbors directing their agapic activity toward the alleviation of the injustice produced by the corrupted powers, in order to redeem the powers. As time goes on, those practices adapt to the conditions of the wider city as it changes. Prayerful discernment helps the citizens see how to engage the powers through their own powerful practices, and the characteristic flexibility of the practices allow them to be reformed to meet new challenges while remaining rooted in the historical tradition. In the cities of other societies, in other political systems, the ecclesial “neighborhood” enacts this same politics.

Summary

Approaching Young’s definition of social justice from an antifoundationalist and Christian teleological perspective has allowed us to describe ecclesial institutional justice through the form of that definition by taking account of how her notion of social processes (“institutional conditions” in her original thesis) reflects the biblical witness about the principalities and powers of the world. Through MacIntyre’s account of the

The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 203.

99. Yoder discusses this same idea in the context of disagreements over the meaning of the practices. See John Howard Yoder, *The Ecumenical Movement and the Faithful Church*, Pamphlet Series no. 3 (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1958), 35.

practices, we were able to show how actions are made intelligible and linked to social goods—the “values” of Young’s definition—by adhering to rules and standards of excellence that are rooted in traditions. Adding McClendon’s notion of powerful practices accomplished two necessary tasks simultaneously: first, it exposed MacIntyre’s strict dichotomy between institutions and practices as untenable, thereby paving the way to connect individual actions to social processes by thinking in terms of social practices and their practitioners. Second, it connected the notion of a practice to that of a power in the biblical sense of the term. The individual’s (or intentional community’s) action within a moral practice rooted in Christ’s own faithfulness to God can thus be conceived as action for social justice insofar as it constitutes the exercise of power over against the corrupted powers of the world that structure our social-political existence, as a means of redeeming those powers. At the same time, McClendon allowed us to perceive just how that witness goes awry. The church’s own practices, meant to redeem the powers, become powers themselves insofar as practitioners become subject to the corrupting power of sin, and (not unrelatedly) lose sight of the way Jesus himself reinterpreted the practices to serve agapic ends in ways adequate to shifting social contexts and to God’s ultimate purpose for the community.

Ecclesial justice as institutional justice, while not strictly speaking an end of the community itself, becomes analytically made possible through the observation of the basic teleological nature of Christian communal discipleship. The *telos* of that community—the end of discipleship, in other words—is the realization of an agapic politics after the account of Jesus in the gospels. Indeed, we can say that, as the measure of the degree to which the powerful practices of the ecclesial community facilitate an agapic

politics, the demands of ecclesial institutional justice are met as the communal representation of Christ's own loving faithfulness to God vis-à-vis the principalities and powers of the world is realized.

In the next section, I would like to revisit these practitioners—the citizens of the Christian neighborhood, in the above example—both under the aspect of the question of how their own discreet actions for justice contribute to justice overall, and the aspect of how, as disciples of Jesus, they bring to bear in their immediate relationships Jesus' own apocalyptic brand of justice. Our discussion to this point has remained largely one of form. Now let us turn to the matter.

Agapic Justice

In the last chapter, we observed how Ricoeur positioned us to appreciate the ethical advance of the “new commandment” to love one's enemies over the golden rule. I suggested then that this advance is represented by, but is not completed in, that principle alone. What completes the advance?

If the pattern of behavior that defines communal practice is the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, then we must understand enemy love within the broader context of the “new commandment” as it is determined in John's gospel: that is, to *love one another as I have loved you*. The ethical significance of the incarnate God does not lie simply in his pointing to the loving act; love is not normative. Jesus is normative.¹⁰⁰ This is why the pattern of

100. In an essay entitled “The Politics of Justice: Why Justice is a Bad Idea for Christians,” which in several respects launched this entire project, Stanley Hauerwas comments on the insufficiency of love as a normative principal for Christian ethics since, “[l]ove is...vague, particularly in terms of its concrete social implications.” See his article, “The Politics of Justice: Why Justice is a Bad Idea for Christians” in *After Christendom: How the Church is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation are Bad Ideas* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 45-68; quote is on pg. 56. In discussing Wolfhart Pannenberg's critique of Gustavo Gutierrez, Hauerwas

obedience of his followers takes the form of his represented faithfulness, which is a faithfulness that goes to the cross. When Christians seek to know what love looks like, how it is to be practiced concretely in the here and now in order to expose the reign of the powers, we look to the witness of Jesus, who loved his enemies to the point of death. This cross-carrying love of the messiah who goes to the cross faithfully despite the injustice of his sentence is made evident also in the mercy of God, whose offer of salvation stands in juxtaposition to the justness of our own condemnation (cf. Rom. 3:23). There is no sense in the gospels that another ethical standard is more basic to the community than other-centered love, nor that Jesus' vision of *dikaioisune*¹⁰¹ has normative priority over his

quotes approvingly Pannenberg's remark that "it is only in connection with a concept of justice that love is concrete in a social situation," but then goes on to argue that all such attempts to create a theory of social justice in Christian ethics have only ended up "reinforcing state power, or more accurately, reifying a particular form of state power that Christians should rightly challenge" (pg. 58). What I wish to submit in this dissertation is that it is precisely in paying attention to the practices made available in, and developed in response to, the pattern of faithfulness to God exemplified by Jesus, that we may learn how to make faithful just and loving acts concrete in the social situation in ways that do not reinforce Constantinian forms of politics. In other words, Hauerwas elides the distinction between social justice (what I have called "institutional justice") and political justice, or the justice of the state. As such, he is forced to set aside the question of justice altogether. The Pannenberg quote is from Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Christian Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 65.

101. The philological debate over the precise meaning of this term is, as far as I am able to tell, a stalemate. Derivates of the "*dik-*" family of Greek words are usually translated into English as correlate forms of the word "righteous," except the verbal form which has no equivalent in English (i.e., "to righteous"), which is translated "to justify". Some biblical theologians, who feel this family of words can be adequately rendered as "justice" in rough equivalence to our own meanings of the term, proceed to make connections to the broader discourse about justice through this language; others, however, find that argument too straightforward to be likely, and so look elsewhere for clues about Jesus' relevance to justice. In either case, the philological argument alone will not finally render a verdict only context can settle (if at all). For example, the author of the Gospel of Matthew calls Joseph a "righteous/just" man, but the proper context for understanding its meaning is the contemporary Pharisaic practice of Torah observance in the intertestamental period. Jesus, who represents a new kind of Torah observance, blesses those who hunger for righteousness/justice (Matt. 5:6) But this righteousness is precisely a form of faithful adherence to the ethical paradigm Jesus himself incarnates, not to

agape. To recognize the Constantinian ramifications of our natural impulse to accede to the meritocratic logic of justice is to be free to imagine a justice disfigured by its encounter with *agape*. I therefore envision the relationship between love and justice inversely from Niebuhr and Ricoeur: within the church, justice must serve love, because loving the way Jesus loved is the form the politics of the church must take now if the world is to know the shape to which it is called ultimately.¹⁰²

How is agapic justice therefore justice? We need not affix as a permanent feature of agapic justice the sense in which justice is always done by love (the “minimum measure” of Benedict’s analysis), nor the sense in which love must always refute the claims of justice. Rather both of these senses play a role in agapic justice. To see why, let us turn to the following examples from the New Testament: the first, a parable of Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew; the second, a sample of Paul’s moral exhortation to the Christian community at Thessalonica.

Justice Done By Love

In Matthew 20:1-16, we read:

For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. And about five o’clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one has

some general principle of justice. It is my view that this puzzle leads us inexorably, as it were, back to the new commandment (John 13:34).

102. John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992), ix.

hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard is, for many readers of the Bible, among the most frustratingly counter-intuitive of Jesus’ parables. On the surface, the vineyard owner’s actions seem manifestly unfair to the hardest-working members of the labor detail. But it is, for Mennonite theologian Ted Grimsrud, precisely the intent of the parable to provoke our frustration. Interpreting it, Grimsrud argues:

Jesus suggests here that justice has not to do with strict fairness but also includes a kind of generosity that goes beyond what is expected—without short-changing the original commitments. He challenges those who would question of justice of such generosity: “Are you envious because I am generous?” (20:15).¹⁰³

There would not be a story worth telling if the vineyard owner had, following a standard, merit-based justice, paid out to the late-comers a lesser sum of money. No one could question his justness had he done that. But Jesus does not here advance this kind of political justice.

103. Ted Grimsrud, *Healing Justice (and Theology): An Agenda for Restoring Wholeness* (unpublished manuscript), available at <http://peacetheology.net/restorative-justice/6-jesus-and-justice/> (accessed 25 October, 2016).

In the parable itself, the contractual justness of the normal arrangement (“the usual daily wage”¹⁰⁴) is flouted at the dramatic climax of the parable by the landowner’s generosity to those laborers who have worked only the last hour of the day, and it is to this act to which the connection to the Kingdom of God is drawn.¹⁰⁵ Ben Witherington comments that by paying the laborers at the end of the workday, the vineyard owner has met the Torah requirement (Deut. 24:14-15 and Lev. 19:13) intended to ensure that his workers could supply provisions for their families’ meals the following morning. Following Gryglewicz, Witherington notes that in Jesus’ era, working conditions and compensation were left entirely to the discretion of the employer, as long as he meet the legal requirements of the Torah. Given the extreme unemployment rates among Jewish working poor, laborers were often desperate and would take whatever work they could find, even if it was only for a fraction of a workday. Whatever their needs may have been, they were essentially left to the capriciousness of the employer.¹⁰⁶

104. A *denarius*—the principle silver coin of the Roman Empire at the time of Augustus and the normal daily wage of a laborer or soldier.

105. Probably the first modern interpretation of this parable as being about the political economy, rather than a soteriological doctrine about death bed confessions, is that of the English art critic and social theorist John Ruskin, who published his analysis of the economic model underlying the parable as the book *Unto This Last* in 1862. Fifty-two years later, Ruskin’s book fell into the hands of Mahatma Gandhi, for whom Ruskin’s interpretation became the basis for his immediate personal conversion to a way of life he would eventually systematize as *satyagraha*. On Ruskin’s—and by extension, this parable’s—influence on Gandhi, see Elizabeth T. McLaughlin, *Ruskin and Gandhi* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1974), esp. 15-22.

106. Ben Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 198. See also Felix Gryglewicz, “Gospel of the Overworked Laborers,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 19 (1957): 190-98.

In order to combat the imbalance perpetuated by the justice of the marketplace, Jesus advances a justice that is more than merely just; a justice that draws closer to love. This loving justice focused on the well-being of the other in a concrete situation.¹⁰⁷ It is an agapic justice, redolent as it is with the radically free, creative self-giving that characterizes the Kingdom of God. It is not, crucially, based on merit, but rather care for the suffering other; concern for the other remains therefore at its heart. But this is not the only dynamic we find present in the New Testament's dealings with the question of the nature of justice.

Justice Undone By Love

Now let us look at the example of 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10. In this short *paraenesis*, Paul is exhorting his readers to follow his example of hard work:

For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. This was not because we do not have that right [exousia] but in order to give you an example [tupos] to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat.

There is a strong temptation to interpret this passage as if Paul's intention is to mean something like, "if you want something, work for it yourself—don't expect anyone to give

107. Niebuhr errs when he equates "perfect justice"—defined as the total absence of conflict between parties—with love. A perfect justice, which for Niebuhr would entail a perfect distribution, could theoretically just as easily produce a society of mutual disinterest than one characterized by the relational content of love. See Karen Lebacqz, *Six Theories of Justice* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 85-90.

you anything,” and indeed this is the interpretation famously given it both by Captain John Smith to the starving colonists of Jamestown, Virginia¹⁰⁸ and Vladimir Lenin, who regarded it as a necessary principal of the first phase of the socialist evolution.¹⁰⁹ But Peter Leithart exposes a second layer of meaning that bears directly on our thesis about the nature of agapic justice. Concerning this passage, Leithart writes:

Paul had the right to ask for food and shelter. He brought spiritual gifts, and could have expected material gifts in return. He deliberately gave up his rights for pedagogical reasons, so that his conduct could serve as a “model” (*tupos*) for the Thessalonians to imitate (*memeomai*). As elsewhere in Paul, the implication is: In the Spirit, Paul mimics the Son who mimics the Father, and the believers among whom Paul ministers who share the same Spirit imitate Paul. The typology flows from the Triune God to the apostle to the churches. Paul wants the Thessalonians to give up their *exousia*, live with discipline, and work for their bread.¹¹⁰

Although there are several ethical lessons to be drawn from this passage (one of which is simply *do not be lazy*), by far the most significant is that on which Leithart lands: “following Jesus means renouncing rights.”¹¹¹ This unsettling notion undoubtedly requires qualification, as Leithart admits; our notions of rights today, as entitlements inherent to our person, is unlike anything we find in the ancient world, or indeed at any point before the seventeenth century. Moreover, any attempt to link biblical and modern

108. John Thompson, *The Journals of Captain John Smith: A Jamestown Biography* (Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2007), 139.

109. V.I. Lenin, *State and Revolution*, ed. Todd Chretien (orig. pub. 1917; Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 132. Article Twelve of the 1936 Soviet Constitution reads, “In the U.S.S.R. work is a duty and a matter of honor for every able-bodied citizen, in accordance with the principle: ‘He who does not work, neither shall he eat.’”

110. Peter J. Leithart, “Type vs. Rights” in *First Things*, 14 July, 2015; available at <https://www.firstthings.com/blogs/leithart/2015/07/type-v-rights> (accessed 25 October, 2016).

111. *Ibid.*

notions of rights would have to go beyond exegesis into contemporary debates about the substance of rights and how they are to be justified. But it may be helpful to think of “rights” here in the context of our previous discussion of power—*exousia*, which is the word the Apostle uses in the passage that is translated as “rights.”

Paul here unquestionably advances a logic of self-reliance, which at first blush seems out of step with the agapic pretensions of the apostolic community. But his reasoning is, in fact, a natural correlate to the church’s sociopolitical model, a model the Thessalonians had clearly yet to fully grasp. Paul does not advocate what we in today’s terms might call a “political theology of self-reliance” because only a *do not be lazy* mentality makes survival in a fallen world possible (though it would be undoubtedly helpful). Rather, he does so because it is appropriate to the character of a disciple of Jesus. Paul has charged the members of the community with taking care of one another, after the model of kenotic love made concrete in Jesus Christ. He could legitimately expect, therefore, to be offered hospitality. But to set an example for them, he chooses instead to forego their hospitality, and in doing so, forego the exercise of his *exousia* to receive that which was legitimately due to him. In denying what was rightly his to obtain, he imitated the great type of not pressing one’s own power, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited (Phil. 2:6).¹¹²

Reading Matt. 20:1-16 and 2 Thess. 3:7-10 Together

What is common to both of the above passages—why bring these in particular into our discussion? Each deals with legitimate expectation concerning desert. The workers in the

112. Ibid.

parable hired at first light feel as though they deserve to be paid more than the latecomers because they did, in fact, do more work; Paul is within his rights to expect to receive hospitality as befits both the contribution of his manifold spiritual gifts to the community and the dignity of his station as chief apostle. The “shock value” of both of these passages derives from the upending of what legitimate expectation desert—that is to say, merit-justice—spells out in each case. In one instance, it is done but surpassed; in the other, it is flouted. So it is with agapic justice, the justice transformed by agapic love, whose basis rests not on desert, but rather on the care Christ bestows upon those who suffer.

Yet there remains a relevant difference between these two passages still, and in this difference emerges a dialectic central to the idea of agapic justice. The moral thrust of the parable addresses the agent. The vantage point is the vineyard owner’s, whose own justice subverts the expectations of the workers, modeling what justice is like in the Kingdom of God. Paul’s exhortation, on the other hand, addresses the patient—he who would receive that which is specified by merit refuses it. By refusing what is by rights his, he avoids overburdening the hospitality of the agent. As such, the agent becomes freer to serve yet others, simultaneously achieving her own good thereby. The combined effect of these passages could therefore be summarized as such: I treat others with a surpassing justice, without pressing my rights to get what is mine. But if the first standard is no easy task, surely the second must be impossible, for who can continually overlook that which they justly deserve and survive?

We must remember that in the Bible the moral command never comes to the agent as such, but rather to the agent who is a member of the community.¹¹³ Thus in any moment of decision the Christian asks herself, “What should I do as a member of this community”? Indeed, it is only because of the *koinōnia* which results from *loving one another as I have loved you* that the accomplishment of the second standard becomes possible. The communal model of mutual love and service allows me to make your concerns paramount to mine, because my concerns are of paramount importance to you. I can be free to practice a love that “seeketh not her own”¹¹⁴ because I trust that you are doing the same. Stated this way, another summary becomes possible: I do whatever I can to lift the burden from you, who are called to care for me. This is the context in which Paul uttered *anyone who is unwilling to work should not eat*.

Now let us return to the parable with all of this in mind. Following Ben Witherington’s insights on the condition of the Judean labor market, it becomes possible, I think, to conclude that the aim of the vineyard owner’s brand of justice is to give the latecomers enough to supply their basic needs, even though they did not earn it through their labor. The landowner makes himself into the instrument that offsets the economic justice of the marketplace that in this instance imperils the labor pool at large. That his actions set the rest of the workers to grumbling is a clear signal that this agapic-oriented

113. See Ch. 2, n. 67 or this dissertation.

114. This familiar rendering of Paul’s “οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς οὐ” (1 Cor. 13:5; literally, “it does not seek its own things”) is from the KJV. The NRSV has: “it does not insist on its own way.” Niebuhr conceived of mutual love as a lower form of love—as self-sacrificing love tainted by natural selfishness. I argue here for an understanding of mutual love that retains its other-centered character.

kind of justice has worked—he has subverted their reasonable expectation that the latecomers receive a proportionally smaller share of the wages. What might Paul have to say to these grumblers, who act so much like those Thessalonians for whom he felt he had to set an example? We can imagine him saying something like this: “No injustice has been done to you men. You have been given what you require to meet your needs, yet you still complain. And you do so because you expect from others what the world has taught you to expect. Rather, you must follow the example of the Lord, as I do.”

This reciprocal course of action forms a radical political theology meant to strike at the heart of the powers, which metastasize in the parable as a justice configured by desert. Paul admonishes the Thessalonians not to enforce their rights as they are spelled out in the wider political sphere—a point he will forcefully advance later against his irascible Corinthian community: “To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?”¹¹⁵ Both of his arguments are aimed at laying bear the origin of the moral logic as grounded in the powers. But his charges have failed to understand the apocalyptic nature of redeemed life in the community, and how now everything has changed. Will these Christians be agents of the new creation or conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2)?

We have here described a radicalized, intra-communal ethic of trust and mutual love that doubles as the Christian community’s particular way of scandalizing political justice, which I have called agapic justice. The intent of agapic justice is to expose the way the normal logic of merit-based political justice, as an *exousia*, tends to mitigate against

115. 1 Cor. 6:7

human flourishing, while ensuring that the suffering of the concrete addressee is addressed. Configured to the sociality of the Kingdom of God, agapic justice reflects God's own apocalyptic gift of Jesus Christ for the cosmos. Indeed, because Jesus has made justification possible by means of his own faithfulness to God, Christians are freed from having to think about justice in terms of a reciprocity between giving and receiving. In the context of the agapic politics of the church, all are justified, and are therefore worthy to receive according to their need. Likewise are we freed to follow Jesus (and Paul's) own example of not pressing our rights to receive what is ours, because we know that our own interests are the subject of concern of our neighbors.

Ecclesial Justice

How does agapic justice function in relation to institutional justice, under the heading of "Ecclesial Justice"? That the ecclesial community knows that social processes are powers subject to corruption means it knows them concomitantly to be the sources of social injustice. Therefore, to accomplish justice in my interpersonal interactions, I must discern the form that my own practice (expression of power) to achieve a social good (agapic love) must take to make visible a counter-political response (the faithfulness of Christ) in the face of injustice (the reign of "the powers"). Agapic justice works as it leads those with whom I interact beyond the familiar, if not instinctual, kind of social relation characterized by claims of desert rooted in self-interest, toward an agapic form of life. As an address to me as an *agent*, agapic justice questions whether I have acted in a concrete situation with a justice that is more than justice—with a justice that substitutes need for merit. Have I discerned how I can enable alleviate the suffering I perceive in others around me? Everyone is justified in Jesus Christ, and therefore needs not to "earn" my

justice—have I fulfilled my obligation to love my neighbor in such a way as to restore that which they lack to achieve the good? As an address to me as a *patient*, agapic justice questions whether I have forgotten to confess the debt I owe to others, and whether, by seeking to enforce my own rights—even when they are legitimately mine to enforce—I have made it more difficult for those around me to offer themselves in the service of others. Have I refused what is by rights mine according to my capabilities to refuse?¹¹⁶ In these ways, ecclesial justice brings under normative evaluation interpersonal ethics. Moreover, when by my own acting and responding through agapic justice is fulfilled, and so those with whom I interact are able to more perfectly fulfil their own agapic end in the context of the ecclesial practice—I have contributed to the political task of the church, for the world now is able to witness the way power can be reoriented to support human flourishing, rather than to oppress. Agapic and institutional justice are connected in the sense in ecclesial justice.

These ways of conceiving justice are connected another way. Learning how to see how to scandalize political justice by means of agapic justice requires moral development within the context of the community that reads scripture as one of its characteristic practices, and where the excellences of agapic justice are visibly realized in the context of Christian discipleship. If moral identity is narratively structured, if achieving the goods internal to the practices of discipleship require training in the virtues, then agapic justice requires an institutional context to support such formation. Without church

116. The essence of agapic *love* indeed consists just in this refusal—and it is this refusal that makes agapic justice properly *agapic*. The effect of agapic love is a justice (a patiential justice) that allows the community to more ably serve the needs of the poor, marginalized, and oppressed. Love is *patient*.

communities capable fostering an agapic moral imagination, individual Christians are unlikely to see beyond the vision of human sociality as the arena of competitive self-actualization.

In a related vein, individual Christians must be positioned by their communities in such a way as to be able to perform practices constituting agapic politics. From an institutional perspective, this means providing individuals the means to overlook their own interests. To possess the ability to practice justice *agapically*—that is, to be able to overlook one’s own claims regarding what political justice spells out—requires not only the sociality of mutual love be realized on a face-to-face level, but also the institutional support of a community placing its resources at the disposal members toward the representation of Christ’s own faithfulness.

In light of this, we can test the justness of an action through practice by asking whether the practice allows for the accomplishment of the social good for which it was instituted—namely, the particular way it evinces what power is really for, as God intended. If, upon subsequent evaluation, “it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28), then the demands of ecclesial justice have been met. When, however, we observe that our practice has *not* challenged the reign of the powers, if as a power it has in fact joined in on that reign—and the Bible foresees how even the community’s practices will succumb to being corrupted—then we can properly speak of an injustice. The community that is captivated by wealth or its privileged social position, or is structured so as to suppress the potentially prophetic voice of some of its members, for example, commits injustice precisely because it forfeits the ability expose the operant powers by juxtaposing to it another, better way to live. Likewise, the community beset by members

bent of having their own rights recognized, who have not learned to think and act in concert with the logic of the new creation, and so prevent their fellow members from themselves actualizing the Christian *telos*, suffers injustice. From the perspective of agapic justice, then, injustice in the community exists in the context of the sociology of mutual love. If I deny the deference I owe to others such that they cannot engage in the powerful practices, then the offense I have committed toward them can rightly be called an injustice.

Over the course of this dissertation I have attempted to theorize a Christian justice in an ecclesial ethical context that has historically avoided such conversations. It is my contention that the two dialogs are not incompatible. While agapic love must have final axiological priority in Christian ethics, love is inseparable from justice. It is my hope that these reflections will contribute meaningfully to the conversation within the wider discipline of Christian ethics about the nature and role of justice within the life of the church.

CONCLUSION

THE CRISIS AT THE HOLY SEPULCHRE AS A TEST CASE FOR ECCLESIAL JUSTICE

Injustice at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

We spoke at the very outset of this study about the crisis between the six residential monastic communities of the Church of Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. I have chosen to investigate that problem further here in light of our conclusions about ecclesial justice. I am aware that this crisis is not among the most urgent problems of justice facing the contemporary church; surely, more pressing issues can be called readily to mind by anyone familiar with the politics of the broader church. I have chosen to do so rather because I believe that the unique contours of the social problems at the Holy Sepulchre are so readily visible, which makes the crisis a fitting test subject for elucidating how the theory might be deployed in practice. Three of these parameters seem immediately apparent.

First, although the identity of each of the resident communities is intimately tied to the cultures they represent, they are nevertheless communities whose members are consciously committed to a shared narrative, a shared early history, and a shared collection of basic practices. Specifically theological differences have, in fact, played very little direct part historically in the disputes. Rather, imperial politics, prejudices, mutual

skepticism¹, and the disturbing tendency of all sides to harbor resentment of injustices long past have here or there all played the decisive role. Thus, this more basic constituting feature of their identities (n.b., it is more basic because the members of the communities have accepted it as so as a condition of their baptism), as shared, must be the grounds for justice. An ecclesial theory of justice built on these grounds would itself have three significant identifying characteristics: (a) it would recognize the challenge that love, as the ordinating value of all Christian values, represents to normative justice, and provide an adequate understanding of their interrelation; (b) it would be non-Constantinian at least so far as it would be unburdened by the questions related to the necessity of the use of violence or deference to the civil authorities, questions bound up with, and indispensable to, the administration of states; and (c) it would be built upon the specific goods that arise from sustained reflection on the original Christian story, and thus would not feature as a premise of the theory neutrality toward ends.

Second, the Holy Sepulchre's monks inhabit a shared space. Because of their physical proximity, parties must regularly interact with one another, and even

1. Shortly after the siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem by Palestinian militants in 2002, the writer Victoria Clark conducted a number of interviews with Jerusalemites about their attitudes towards members of other religions. As a very representative sample, one Greek Orthodox laywomen said of the crisis, "It is clear that the Catholics are using it for their own purposes. The Franciscans don't control as much of the Church of the Nativity as the Orthodox, so they let the Palestinian gunmen into the church to make trouble. The Franciscans let the gunmen in because they, the friars, want to see the place destroyed by the Israeli tanks. When everything has been smashed up, the pope or some rich Catholics will offer to build a new church. Then, of course, the Franciscans will make sure that they have all of the rights and control over that." Clark replied, "Do you believe that? Does Father Kiprianos [the parish priest] really think that the climax of the intifada has been engineered by the Catholics to spite the Orthodox?" "Of course," she responded. See Victoria Clark, *Holy Fire: The Battle for Christ's Tomb* (London: McMillan, 2005), 21. Clark's travelogue is full of similar stories about laity and clergy alike.

occasionally come together to discuss specific problems in the common spaces of the church. Puns aside, the situation in the edifice is concrete, rather than theoretical; its history is traceable, and actions are more easily linked to effects.

Third, the Holy Sepulchre has a unique purpose, or *telos*, within global Christianity, and participates in the *telos* of the wider church in a particular and inimitable way. Because normative ethics must take a purposive shape to be coherent, recognizing how the Holy Sepulchre contributes in its way to the overall mission of the church itself helps us to understand justice in the concrete situation of the Sepulchre, and by extension the wider church.

Let us now take a look at the dysfunctional society living at Christ's tomb.

A Brief History of the Holy Sepulchre

The Holy Sepulchre is the only church in the world where can be found Herodian, Hadrianic, Constantinian, Byzantine, Crusader, neo-Byzantine, and modern architectural elements at once.² The *mélange* reveals the long presence of the mother church in the Holy City, which began its life as a massive rotunda raised over the traditional spot of Jesus' entombment, whose foundations rested on the remains of Hadrian's demolished Temple of Venus. This edifice was enclosed by a colonnade along with a traditional Roman basilica built by Constantine on the traditional site of Golgotha, and it was here in 326 that Constantine's mother Helen discovered the purported relic of the True Cross. We know from the pilgrim Egeria's travelogue that already by the late Fourth Century, the holy shine had become a popular destination for Christian pilgrims. While her

2. Cohen, 4.

detailed reporting on the various holy observances at the Sepulchre and elsewhere in the Holy Land have been indispensable to church historians tracing the development of liturgical rites, significantly she reports positively on the relationship between the various ethnicities of Christians who came together there for communal worship (it is too early, of course, to speak of various Christian “traditions,” but Egeria is clear that amicable and coordinated cooperation between linguistic and cultural groups was the norm.)³

Constantine’s complex was heavily damaged by fire in 614 during the Sassanid siege that wrested the city from Christian control. It was repaired two decades later by Christians working under Muslim protection after the city was conquered by Umar ibn al-Khattab in 638, but it then suffered a host of fires and earthquakes in the intervening three centuries before being razed to the foundations by the Fatimid caliph Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah in 1009. During those years, Eastern and Western Christianity drifted apart culturally and liturgically (the Armenian Orthodox church refused to accept the Christological pronouncements of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, and today joins the Coptic, Ethiopian, and Syriac Orthodox churches in accepting a miaphysite Christology), before notoriously excommunicating one another in 1054 after a series of diplomatic blunders. But even so, ecumenical relations between the Christian sects at this time were

3. For example, she notes that “[T]he bishop, although he knows Syriac, yet always speaks Greek, and never Syriac, there is always a priest standing by who, when the bishop speaks Greek, interprets into Syriac, that all may understand what is being taught. And because all the lessons that are read in the church must be read in Greek, he always stands by and interprets them into Syriac, for the people’s sake, that they may always be edified. Moreover, the Latins here, who understand neither Syriac nor Greek, in order that they be not disappointed, have (all things) explained to them, for there are other brothers and sisters knowing both Greek and Latin, who translate into Latin for them.”

generally positive in the Holy Land, abetted perhaps by the presence of a common imperial enemy and the relatively liberal travel privileges they were extended.

However, news of the Sepulchre's desecration shocked Christendom, and was a major impetus for Urban II to call the First Crusade in 1095. After 1099, the victorious Latin crusaders established the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and expelled the remaining Greek Orthodox prelature. They built an expansive Romanesque church partially on the foundations of what remained of the earlier building, now bringing Golgotha and Christ's tomb under one roof. Much of the contemporary church dates from this time. In 1291, the short-lived crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Mamelukes, the Latin Patriarchate was abolished, and control over Christian holy places again *de facto* passed back to the Greeks in the absence of a Catholic aristocracy. The remaining Franciscans, now disinherited, nevertheless continued to press their "historical" claims to these places, and managed to convince the Mameluke Sultan of their rightful custody in 1333.⁴ Despite the rocky course of the next 400 years, which included being briefly expelled from the holy places by the Ottomans in the mid-sixteenth century, the Franciscans retained sole custody of the holy places, including the Holy Sepulchre.

This all changed again during the Easter services of 1757, when a partisan riot erupted in the Holy Sepulcher amongst the assembly. The Greeks blamed the Franciscans

4. The legal rights of Franciscan ownership were established in a treaty between the King of Naples, Robert d'Anjou and the Mameluke sultan of Egypt in 1333. It was later ratified by the pope in 1342. See M. Roncaglia, "The Sons of St. Francis in the Holy Land: Official Entrance of the Franciscans as custodians of the basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem," *Franciscan Studies* 10 (1950): 257-85.

for inciting it,⁵ and without inquiry the Sultan in Constantinople issued a punitive *firman* (royal mandate) granting disproportionate rights to the holy places to the Greeks, especially within the Holy Sepulcher. The provisions of that *firman* by in large remain in place to this day, and the Franciscans still contest it. But the real motive behind its issue had nothing to do with rightfully settling the claims of the sects at all; indeed, it represented part of an appeasement strategy by the Ottoman Empire toward an increasingly aggressive Russian government, which was placing considerable diplomatic pressure on the Sultanate to cede rights to the Eastern Orthodox in the hopes that it might obtain a greater political foothold in Palestine and even some rights for the Russian Orthodox Church in the holy places. The riot provided the perfect opportunity to do so.⁶

After a fire gutted much of the Rotunda in 1808, the Greeks exploited their patronage to rebuild the dome and the Edicule in a Greek rather than Latin fashion, change signage in the church from Latin to Greek, and remove all evidence of the tombs of the Latin Kings of Jerusalem. With the political interests of the Western powers in the holy land becoming increasingly contradictory by mid-century, Pius IX moved to establish a stable Catholic ecclesial presence there by appointing in a Latin Patriarch in

5. Franciscan sources naturally tell the tale differently. The current version of the website of the province of friars in the Holy Land reads, “[at Easter 1757] a new kind of ruse was used...led by the Greek clergy, the Orthodox populace attacked the Franciscans in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre and created havoc. Following this vandalism they accused the Friars of all kind of intrigues.” See “The Question of the Holy Places,” available at <http://198.62.75.1/www1/ofm/cust/TSstatus.html> (accessed 27 September 2016).

6. Anthony O’Mahony, “The Latins of the East: The Vatican, Jerusalem and the Palestinian Christians,” in *The Christian Communities of Jerusalem and the Holy Land*, ed. Anthony O’Mahony (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 100.

Jerusalem for the first time since the thirteenth century.⁷ At the same time, Europe's Catholic countries began to press Constantinople for recognition of French "sovereign authority" in the Holy Land, including at the holy places, to which the politically weakened Sultan Abdülmecid, acceded.⁸ In response, the Russians threatened to cut off diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire. The Sultan then appointed a committee of legal experts to study the question, which in 1852 ruled *against* Catholic claims and recommended the upholding of the original *firman* of 1757. Within a year, the dispute exploded into the Crimean War. When the French Ambassador protested the Sultan's edict, the grand vizier, Rajib Pasha responded, "These places belong to the Sultan and he gives them to whomever he pleases. It may well be that they were always in the hands of the Franks, but today his highness wants them to belong to the Greeks."⁹ The war ended at the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1856, which incorporated an updated *firman* which read, "the actual status quo will be maintained and the Jerusalem shrines, whether owned in common or exclusively by the Greek, Latin, and Armenian communities, will all remain forever in their present state," therefore ratifying it as international law.¹⁰ For the next hundred years, during which time control over the Holy Land was volleyed back and

7. Hanna Kildane, *Modern Christianity in the Holy Land*, trans. George Musleh (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2010), 292.

8. Trevor Royle, *Crimea: The Great Crimean War, 1854-1856* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 19.

9. Cohen, *Saving the Sepulchre*, 7.

10. *Ibid.*, 8.

forth between foreign powers, the *Status Quo*, as it is now called, was repeatedly signed into international treaties, establishing unambiguously its legal precedent.

Although the conditions of the *Status Quo* resemble a cease-fire “on the ground,” the Sultan’s purpose for it at the time was not to prevent local conflict between the communities, but rather to prevent a wider international conflict.¹¹ The British, who took control of Palestine after World War I, were uniquely unfit to decide matters of conflict under the jurisdiction of the *Status Quo* because of the basic differences between Western and Islamic conceptions of property ownership. The *Status Quo* is rooted in sharia law, which regards religious buildings of any kind not as private property (*mulk*), but as property that belongs directly to God (*waqf*). Those who reside in them have certain rights of possession, but they cannot sell them, give them away, or otherwise dispose of them as they wish. As such, administrator after administrator in the Mandate government found himself unable to make a ruling under British common law because he could never ascertain who owned what within the church (For his part, the Sultan could always legislate by edict privileges to this or that group, but even he could never cede to anyone ownership, strictly speaking.)¹²

To complicate matters, the *Status Quo* provides no means for repairing contested areas of the church. To this day, many visitors, expecting perhaps another St. Peter’s or Hagia Sophia, are disappointed by the rampant decay of the ancient edifice, the ungainly manner in which procession between its shrines must take place (it has but one door and

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., 7.

no fire exit), the general dank and dark condition of the interior, the filthy state of its public restrooms, and the permanent presence of unsightly scaffolding and other makeshift forms of support (the Edicule itself has remained encased in a framework of iron girders initially installed by British engineers seventy years ago to temporarily stabilize its crumbling exterior). The reason for all of this lies in two facets of the ancient Turkish property laws to which the *Status Quo* is beholden: first, the owner of the covering of a building possesses whatever is underneath it (this is why it took seventy years of bargaining between the communities to enact simple repairs to the dome over Christ's tomb after it was weakened severely by a 1927 earthquake.) Second, payment for repairs to any structure indicates ownership. Although it is quite clear to the communities that the common areas of the church are in an extreme state of disrepair, none will support any repairs except in the case of the imminent collapse of the church or the direct imposition of governing authorities.¹³ Wealthy would-be donors, foreign governments, and each of the major communities themselves have all at one time or another pledged the required money to make every needed renovation, but the opposition of the other resident communities never fails to block their implementation.

At the center of all of this is the document itself—the *Status Quo*—whose rulings and regulations on seemingly every brick and nail in the building reflect not the careful adjudication of competing historical claims on the possession and right of usage of the holy places, but an attempt to avoid the Crimean War! Each of the six communities, especially the major ones—the Catholics, Greek Orthodox, and Armenians—regard the

13. *Ibid.*, 11.

document as an unjust encroachment on their rightful historical claims to property in the Church. The irony of its continuing enforcement is that the more resentment it generates among the communities, the more rigorously they hold to its provisions. Raymond Cohen, the documenter *par excellence* of the long dispute, calls this “thin end of the wedge” thinking, according to which “any unopposed breach” of the rules would be considered an invitation to a “cascade of violations.”¹⁴ By rigidly adhering to the *Status Quo*, the communities defend those bits of the Sepulchre which have been granted to them allowed them under unjust pretenses, and save face by maintaining formal claims on the property of others. The situation is “delicate and complex,” said Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theofilos III of Jerusalem in 2011. “It is like a ruined house. Don’t take out a stone, because it might fall down.”¹⁵

Since the collapse of the Ottomanian Sultinate, there has been no absolute authority to which the communities can appeal to change the *Status Quo*. The subsequent British Mandate and Jordanian governments largely failed to regularize the (frequently engaged) appeals process,¹⁶ only acting reluctantly to force compliance with the *Status Quo* where violations were too obvious to ignore. Today, the Israeli government officially considers itself a mere mediator between the communities, rather than an interpretive

14. *Ibid.*, 237-38.

15. Matti Friedman, “One Door and No Fire Exit at the Holy Sepulcher Church,” Associated Press, 20 April 2011.

16. The British faced the additional burden of coping with the suspicion shared by all the communities that, as a Protestant country, its ulterior motivation with respect to the Holy Sepulchre was the establishment of a permanent Anglican residence. See Cohen, 31.

authority.¹⁷ This position represents an improvement over the old one at least insofar as autonomy lies now with the communities themselves, even if aggressive posturing and the occasional outbursts of physical violence are the norm more so than fraternal cooperation. What rouses men of peace to such intractability and violence? As Cohen explains,

One reason is institutional: the monastic orders present in the Holy Sepulchre have borne responsibility since time immemorial for defending the sacrosanct rights of their parent churches in the sanctuary. They are prepared to resort to extreme, premeditated measures to do so. A second reason is individual: the perception that rights are threatened arouses the monks to fury. In a righteous rage, otherwise pious men are capable of violent acts.¹⁸

Interestingly, Cohen puts his finger on what was revealed about social injustice in the last chapter via Young's theory of social processes, namely that it always has institutional-conditional and individual-dispositional aspects. The context of the monk's day-to-day interactivity has been determined by centuries of enmity between the monks themselves and the larger cultures they represent. As the legal embodiment of that political dysfunction, the *Status Quo* dominates the social environment, inciting the monks to vigilant protection of their rights and the nursing of old grievances, rather than the cultivation of authentic fraternal charity before the watching world. The document is the chief source of institutional injustice as well, insofar as it frustrates the realization of the church's own ends. How can a church contest the powers after so obviously succumbing

17. Israel has, however, not always been consistent in its approach. In a famous incident in 1979, the Israeli government secretly intervened in a dispute over the ownership of a hallway off the side of the church between the Copts and Ethiopian Orthodox. Without notifying the Copts, Israeli police officers changed the locks on the doors...

18. *Ibid.*, 10.

to their reign? In what follows, we will seek to connect our insights into ecclesial justice to the individual and social aspects of the problem at the Sepulchre.

Ecclesial Justice at the Holy Sepulchre

Agapic justice addresses the individual in the concrete situation, both as agent and patient. Its goal is the realization of a social setting characterized by agapic love, and it works by scandalizing normal expectations about what justice demands. Of course, as long as the *Status Quo* remains in effect, there can be no true justice in the holy places. But the document does afford a kind of stability because of its clear pronouncements about what belongs to whom. Therefore, situations in which direct or implicit appeals to it are made seem the most obvious referent for the implementation of agapic justice.

The story of the Sepulcher's querulous monks is normally told as a story of patency, where appeals to the civil authorities for punitive intervention or the occasional incident of vigilante violence are justified by claims of victimization. When an Armenian bishop intentionally kicked over a Coptic lectern, sending the Bible skittering across the floor and rival monks to one another's throats, he justified himself by pointing out that the lectern's foot was protruding two inches over the threshold of the Copt's chapel into the ambulatory where Armenians were exercising their processional rights.¹⁹ If we can bring ourselves to set aside just how astounding can be the pettifogging among even the highest-ranking of the resident prelates, we might notice that while this *prima facie* seems classically like a case of grievance suffered (however minor), there remains an agential dimension to it nevertheless; someone consciously seeking to realize Jesus' own brand of

19. Cohen, 212-13.

justice might inquire into the justness of allowing the Coptic community possession of only a single, nine square-foot chapel at the back of the church—one so small, in fact, that something as unobtrusive as a lectern cannot fit within it. While it is not for me to spell out, as if casuistically, a specific course of action to the bishop, as a follower of Jesus and thus an agent for agapic justice his response ought to have been conditioned by the recognition of the initial injustice done to the Copts.

The practice of justice must start somewhere, in some context. There is no moment during which the playing field is level; there is no mythical scratch to start from, certainly not at the Holy Sepulchre. Agapic justice calls the Christian moral agent to first discern the need of the marginalized other in the situation, and ask how she can act toward addressing that need beyond following a strict kind of proportional justice—if at the Holy Sepulchre the *Status Quo* is that ground, then the bishop's justice ought to have been directed toward the alleviation of the Coptic sequestration, which the *Status Quo* spells out. Short of that, we could at least expect him to *step over the lectionary*. Of course, there are two sides to this coin, and certainly in the offending bishop's eyes, he was the one suffering offence—his action was simply just retribution. Yet the fact of the offense does not let him off the hook of *agapic* justice. In this moment he is called, as a patient, to give up his entitlement claims—that which Paul called *exousia*—and absorb the injustice in his person (again, perhaps by stepping over the lectionary). What effect might the simple act of not pressing his claims in that moment, despite the known entitlements set out to him in the *Status Quo*, have on his Coptic brothers? Are not the seeds of true *metanoia* to be found in these very kinds of actions? Unfortunately, in actual fact, the

bishop was chased up a nearby staircase and back to his residence by Coptic monks wielding pickaxes. Another opportunity for justice gone by the board.

If we take a wider view of the troubles, we find a church dying for a martyr. The eschatological interruption of the cycle of violence never comes, the apocalyptic sociality of mutual love and service that Paul expected of his communities never gets off the ground. The blithe indifference to the apostle's own words forbidding appeals to secular authorities to solve intercommunal disputes (1 Cor. 6) might stagger us until we recognize the extent to which the identities of the communities themselves are tied to their national or cultural political identities. Yet the Pauline model of politics I outlined in Chapter Four recognizes that it is through the church that the world comes to see that it is the world (1 Cor. 2:6), and it comes to this understanding by witnessing the kind of politics made possible when the good of the self passes through the good of the other.

Only a politics comprised of powerful practices that make evident God's love can overcome the idolatrous powers that seek to delimit and define creaturely existence. Those practices are the basis on which the Holy Sepulchre's society must realize in its own life the ends proper to both the Holy Sepulchre itself and to the wider ecclesia. Political justice in ecclesial justice, it will be remembered, measures the degree to which the powerful practices of the community successfully embody the faithfulness of Christ to God vis-à-vis the fallen powers. Questions we might ask concerning the state of political justice in the church include, "Are lives being conformed to the Gospel?" "Does this practice uphold the distinctiveness of the church's divine purpose?" "Does this practice re-orient power in such a way as to give abundant life to all?" "How does this practice make manifest mutual love?" If we do not get satisfactory answers to these questions, then

we know that something has gone wrong in the church—that a proper injustice has occurred within it.

Despite its title, Cohen's *Saving the Holy Sepulchre*, is not a hopeful story. Indeed, Cohen is frank that the success of the protracted process by which the rotunda dome was finally repaired resulted from the balancing of conflicting wills—wills eager to avoid having their own allotments of the Sepulchre imperiled in the event of a structural crisis in the common areas of the church. He cites a Franciscan cleric who was involved in the negotiations, who said, “[i]t is not love that is at work here; it is a question of common interest...we are aware of each other's right 95 percent of the time [but I would like to see us] go the full distance.”²⁰ Although cultivating a robust respect for the rights afforded to others is not an unworthy goal given the Holy Sepulchre's past, it is in itself woefully short of the goal of ecclesial justice. Certainly, that kind of strict reciprocity fails the test of agapic justice, since its purpose is to scandalize the kind of *quid pro quo* model of exchange at work in the reconstruction process. Political justice likewise brings under condemnation this *détente* because it fails to adequately meet the demands of the broader ecclesial *telos*, and that of the Sepulchre in particular. How so?

First, the structures mediating communal interaction within the Sepulchre do not produce agapic *κοινωνία*, because in their present state they cannot. The politics made possible thereby is not of the redeemed kind, but rather reflect the powers' tendency to frustrate human community by separating persons and groups in opposition to one another. Thus, our “community of churches” cannot challenge the reign of the powers,

20. Cohen, 240.

and thereby realize the ecclesial *telos*. Even if the communities *could* achieve a perfect record of observance of the *Status Quo*, we would still be far from the apostolic ideal, since the underlying context would remain hopelessly (and arbitrarily) skewed toward Greek Orthodox interests, and thus unjust. If the *Status Quo* were by Israeli fiat suddenly abolished and an entirely equitable solution on which all parties could agree were handed down on stone tablets, we would be but a little closer to that ideal. Even in such a scenario, it is easily imaginable that the communities would live their lives entirely indifferent to one another, content to perform their own rites in their own chapels and shrines, and free never to have to engage one another. Perfect justice is not commensurate with love.

Second, the Holy Sepulchre enjoys a unique *telos* within the broader context of that of the ecumenical church. Generally speaking, the church functions to commemorate the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and to afford pilgrims and other visitors the opportunity to enjoy the goods made uniquely available through the encounter with the places those events took place, goods that we recognize as belonging to the wider practice of pilgrimage. In the language of practices, we might say that the resident communities are charged with engaging the practice of hospitality (to pilgrims). Yet the church is in no condition to properly fulfill this task. Notwithstanding the work completed on the dome, the remaining structural issues, combined with the constant noise and chaos of tour groups squabbling for access to the shrines, diminish the possibility of that visitors will achieve the goods for which the church exists. As a current guide book puts it, “[t]hose

hoping to enjoy a period of quiet contemplation or worship will be sorely disappointed.”²¹

That the church houses six communities representing a variety of Christian practice testifies to a further aspect of its *telos*—that of witnessing to the unity-in-diversity made possible in Christ that just is the embodied form of justification announced by Paul. If this, the constituting feature of the ecclesial community and a primary good of its mission, is not identifiable by those witnessing the community’s life, then the church has failed to live up to the threshold of political justice. If no member of the community is willing to interrupt the cycle of retribution in order to begin a cycle of mutual love, thereby instigating the process of reform within the church in ways that make realizable its *telos*, then ecclesial justice cannot be achieved.

I do not presume here to offer a robust solution to the political problem at the Holy Sepulchre—that would far exceed the bounds of what this conclusion can accomplish. But I do think that by determining the injustice of the situation through the lens of the Christian communal *telos* as I have defined it, and the concept of justice that I have developed, in this dissertation, the way forward at the Sepulchre will become clearer.

In the same way, but on a broader scale, I hope that these reflections will help Christians understand what justice means for the church, and why it is indispensable for

21. *Lonely Planet*, “Church of the Holy Sepulchre,” available at <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/israel-and-the-palestinian-territories/jerusalem/sights/religious/church-holy-sepulchre#ixzz4MiKGCLNK> (accessed 10 October 2016). The cacophony that awaits visitors to the Sepulchre is often contrasted to the peace and serenity that awaits pilgrims to the Dome of the Rock, located on the Temple Mount.

helping us to live together rightly so that we might be able to accomplish to those tasks to which God has set his people.

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