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[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 107–119.
[9] J. Ramsey Michaels, review of Paul K. Jewett, *The Ordination of Women*, in *Christian Scholar's Review*, Vol. XI, No. 4 (1982), 381.
[10] George W. Knight III, *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. 10–11.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
[12] *Loc. cit.*
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[14] Foh, *op. cit.*, pp. 201–209.
[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 188–190.
[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 164–166.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[19] James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (London: Inter Varsity Press, 1981), pp. 18–19.
[20] Hurley defends the view that the "covering" mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians 11 was "of long hair" and not that of a veil (*ibid.*, pp. 168–171, 254–271).
[21] Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
[22] Russ Williams, "Truth. . . .and Consequences," *The Other Side*, No. 109 (October, 1980), 18.
[23] Richard and Joyce Boldrey, *Chauvinist or Feminist? Paul's View of Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 23.
[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 48–53.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 28.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 53.
[27] Donald G. Bloesch, *Is the Bible Sexist?* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1982), pp. 85–86.
[28] Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
[29] Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
[30] Anthony Thiselton, *The Two Horizons. New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Comp., 1980), pp. 10–17.
[31] J.H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publ. Comp., 1960), pp. 169–190.
[32] For a full discussion of the background to this suggestion, consult John R.W. Stott and Robert Coote, eds., *Down to Earth. Studies in Christianity and Culture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Comp., 1980), pp. 63–94, 316–318.
[33] Foh, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
[34] Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
[35] Compare Jacob Loewen, *Culture and Human Values: Christian Intervention in Anthropological Perspective* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1975), pp. 412–427.

ETHICS

Diversity and Injunction in New Testament Ethics

by Stephen Charles Mott

Ethical social stances far-reaching in their implications for contemporary life are presented in two recent works on New Testament ethics by Evangelical scholars. Their writings stimulate theoretical consideration of the place of synthesis and the significance of concrete moral injunction in New Testament ethics.

The Great Reversal (Eerdmans, 1984), the title of Allen Verhey's study refers to the transformation of values brought about by the Reign of God. "The present order, including its conventional rules of prestige and protocol, pomp and privilege, is called into question" (Verhey, p. 15).

Richard N. Longenecker no doubt would allow "great reversal" to describe the principle of the gospel which makes relevant, in the words of his title, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Eerdmans, 1984). The cultural mandate of the gospel, "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Gal. 3.28), "lays on Christians the obligation to measure every attitude and action toward others in terms of the impartiality and love God expressed in Jesus Christ, and to express such attitudes and actions as would break down barriers of prejudice and walls of inequality, without setting aside the distinctive characteristics of people" (Longenecker, p. 34).

Verhey does not present the great reversal as a component of a unified New Testament ethic. Masterfully using all the tools of New Testament historical research, yet (with Longenecker) respecting its authority and defending the integrity of its ethics against critics, he describes the ethics of the various literary layers and forms of the New Testament so thoroughly that his work should stand as *the* introduction to the ethics of the literary forms and sources of the New Testament. His task is to describe the ethics in their diversity. In this book he seeks to show exegetically that the diverse categories of his hermeneutical model are grounded in the diversity of ethical approaches within the New Testament. The impossibility of presenting from it "one massive, undifferentiated whole" seems to be an extreme which serves for him as an argument against seeking a substantial synthesis of the ethics.

Longenecker, on the other hand, is synthetic in his approach. The fact that the form and order of Galatians 3:28 is found in other passages and in association with baptism leads him to follow Hans Dieter Betz in seeing the phrase to be from a baptismal liturgy of the early church. It thus reflected a general position of the first century Christians. Longenecker shows how common this concern is in the New Testament and how it was put into practice with reference to Jew-Gentile relations, slavery, and women. If Verhey appears to reject synthesis, Longenecker seems not to include enough of the diversity in his. He has indeed chosen the most significant ethical theme of the New Testament, where status is the central social ethical concern; but his theme is not the whole of the New Testament's ethical proclamation. It is not true that the three pairs of Galatians 3:28 represent "all essential relationships of humanity" (Longenecker, p. 34). Ruler and subject, parent and child, rich and poor should not be reduced to any of the three, yet Scriptural ethics deals with them also. There also is too much ellipsis between the New Testament proclamation and the contemporary applications he posits.

The careful and balanced descriptive work done by Verhey is a necessary preliminary for a later stage in New Testament ethics in which the ethicist is more clearly involved with the New Testament material. As seen in his descriptive work, few people have the combined mastery of the disciplines Verhey has to do that further step. But as it stands now, the value for normative ethics of his careful discrimination by sources is frequently not obvious. For example, what ethical difference is there between watchfulness because God's Reign is at hand in the time of Jesus or watchfulness because the Parousia is at hand in the time of the church?

Some synthetic work is needed. The contemporary disciple and ethicist need more than the separate ethics of a score of New Testament books and literary sources. A base is provided in Longenecker's cultural mandate and also Verhey's use of coherence with the eschatological power and purpose discerned in the resurrection of Christ as authorization for the right use of Scripture. Norman Gottwald has recently written that we need to "question both the intellectually dismembered Bible and the spiritually unified Bible that scholarship and church now respectively present us" (Introduction, to *"The Bible and Liberation"*, ed. Gottwald [Orbis, 1983²], p. 4). The spiritually unified Bible reflected our proper theological presupposition that the Bible is a revelation for hearers of all ages of the will of God for human conduct. There is a unity of divine purpose behind it. Scholarship rightly protested the arbitrary superimposition of external truth to the particularity of the documents. The first lesson that all of us had in biblical methodology was respect for its diversity, but resting in diversity can subtly be assumption of merely an historian's role and participation in the embourgeoisement of New Testament scholarship in the fear of asserting universal truth.

Much of the diversity of New Testament ethics is one of diverse situations rather than of diverse principle or ethical consciousness. The behavior called for in the lists of vices and virtues, for example, is no doubt demanded of all Christians and not problematic for any of the authors (cf. Wolfgang Schrage, "Korreferat zu 'Ethischer Pluralismus im Neuen Testament,'" *Evangelische Theologie* 35 [1975], 402-407). Generality can be discovered through tracing biblical categories themselves, such as Longenecker's inclusion theme or Verhey's great reversal, or the Reign of God. But using external categories of ethics or social sciences with critical awareness of their exegetical appropriateness will help disclose further shared perspectives. Our authors already have found benefit in using such external categories as the contrast of "force" to "personal appeal", "living the story", and "cultural mandate." The description of the

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great reversal quoted above has echoes of other contexts and historical struggles. More extensive and intentional use of contemporary studies of status would strengthen Longenecker's study. Neither author uses justice as a category. What concept of justice is assumed in the great reversal or in the inclusiveness in Christ? Verhey urges in application a consistency of Scripture with the secular concept of justice, yet this examination has not been done with attention to the Scriptures' own view, or views, of justice.

Verhey urges for interpretation dialogue between Scripture and natural morality. This is important, but first there must be a dialogue among the teachings within Scripture itself. There is indeed risk of distorting particular truth in achieving greater generality and summary for New Testament ethics, but that risk is already operative when one generalizes about the ethic within any one author or source.

Further, a generally agreed upon tenet of the communities from which the New Testament came was the fact that the Old Testament was their Scripture—even if they did not always have to insist upon it and even if they differed on the continued normativeness of ceremonial and separatistic materials. By neglecting this moral authority in the early church (e.g., 2 Tim. 3:16), both authors miss an available unifying factor. If we believe in a canon of sixty-six books, Longenecker is incomplete when he states it was twenty-seven books which were the authoritative expression of the Christian religion in the early church—then New Testament ethics must be informed by and inform a greater biblical ethics.

The hermeneutics of New Testament ethics is a central concern of both books. Longenecker presents with great cogency the problem encountered in many conservative constituencies: "It will not do simply to ask, Does the New Testament say anything explicit concerning this or that social issue? With the intent being to repeat that answer if it does and to remain silent if it doesn't" (Longenecker, p. 27). The excellent categories which Verhey used elsewhere to examine Walter Rauschenbusch's use of the Bible provide superior clarity in understanding the assumptions made by a given approach. One such assumption concerns what Scripture really is about. His own position is that the resurrection is central to its message. Movement from Scripture to moral claims today must be coherent with the transforming message "that God has already made his eschatological power and purpose felt in the resurrection" (Verhey, p. 183). Longenecker also holds that we must begin our ethical interpretation with "the gospel as proclaimed by the apostles and the principles derived therefrom" (Longenecker, p. 84). Verhey's categories are helpful in understanding Longenecker. Longenecker is not identifying a canon within the canon in his reference to "the Gospel." Rather, the assumption about the message of the New Testament identifies which principles belong to the newness of the message. They exist in tension with circumstantial regulations of order. I agree that recognizing this tension is essential for understanding New Testament ethics. In what Longenecker calls "a developmental hermeneutic," the way the proclamation and its principles were put into practice in the first century serves as signposts to guide us for our reapplication in our day.

In presenting such valuable criteria for discernment, the authors make statements about the concrete injunctions of Scripture which require close scrutiny to avoid misunderstanding their intent. They both repeatedly reject the presence of a code of conduct or a set of rules in the New Testament. Verhey states that it is inappropriate to ask ethical questions of the Bible at the moral-rule level. The concrete commands were not for all times and places. Our concrete decisions come rather, he holds, indirectly through guidance from what the New Testament provides regarding our ideals, loyalties and perceptions and fundamental dispositions and intentions. The initial impression that the commands of the New Testament are not prescriptive for present conduct is reinforced by a pattern in Verhey's book of posing a choice between a moral rule and a disposition. For example, he presents Jesus' statement on divorce as not a new moral rule but the formation of a disposition not to divorce even when the law allows it. Similarly, he states that the New Testament is not a systematic set of rules but rather the power of God transforming identities. In both types of cases we ask if there is not an excluded middle containing more objective moral obligation.

An initial impression regarding a weakness on concrete obligation is reinforced by the authors' presentation of the Law. Longenecker states that "Christians. . .have ceased to regard their relationship with God in terms of law at all," even as an expression of their relationship with God (Longenecker, p. 12). Verhey finds Mark the most ill-disposed to rules and most ambiguous about the Law. But his examples have to do with aspects of the law that tied God's people to a nationalistic base. It would seem that in the divorce question Jesus contrasted one part of the Law (creation) to another, rather than putting it aside. In the matter of inner versus external purity, Mark could well have considered the vice list as being from the Law, and the logic is that the root is important precisely because of the agreed upon importance of its fruit. Is the Law replaced as the norm any more in the loyalty to Jesus' words in Mark 8:38 ("whoever is ashamed of me and my words") than in his words as the foundation of life in Matthew 7:24 ("everyone who hears these words of mine")? Verhey argues for the Law being replaced in the former but not in the latter. Verhey significantly states that for Mark the commandment of God is "not identical with any manipulable code or casuistry, even one based on the law" (Verhey, p. 79, cf. p. 43 where the Torah is associated with casuistry). Both authors view any role of discernment or exception as evidence that the matter at hand is not law, whether it is Jesus' injunction regarding possessions in Luke or the use of Jesus' words in the Pauline church. They thus miss the paradigmatic nature of the Hebrew Law and other ancient Near Eastern laws. The Law is not identical with an exceptionless code. The hermeneutic that the two authors are advocating is much closer in nature to the Law than they indicate. Biblical law is not the same as Verhey's moral-rule level as exceptionless codes, yet it calls forth behavior more concrete and substantive than his alternatives. Yet in its paragdigmatic character it tends toward principles.

Verhey in fact approves appeals to the perspective and principles that stand behind the concrete admonitions of the New Testament. The concrete injunctions thus are bearers of ethical authority. What he and Longenecker resist is taking them as a timeless code that would command unthinking obedience. For Verhey, to examine them in light of broader purposes and with a view to their historical context is to function on the ethical rather than the moral level. His definition of the ethical level as identifying *which* rules are good (rather than what is the good *in* the rules) makes it more exclusionary in definition than it really is in function for him. The Chalcedonian image that Verhey suggests for the nature of Scripture would indicate that every Scriptural passage is both divine and human. Even of those injunctions addressed to a situation so distinct from ours that they cannot be directly applied, we must seek what was the divine word and ponder its meaning for us.

Verhey does seem to overestimate the difference between our situation and the first century. I would suggest, as one unifying factor, that primary groups are common to all of life and are molded only in part by special traditions. The sentiments and impulses that are related to them do not belong to any particular time, which is why the modern person can feel at home in the literature of the most remote and varied phases of life (cf. Charles H. Cooley, "Primary Groups," in *Theories of Society*, ed. Talcott Parsons et al. [Free, 1961], 1.316-18). Injunctions that govern primary group behavior will have more direct application in another culture than those which relate to more complex relations. Verhey's argument that we are not Matthew's community of "Jewish-Christians recently exiled from the synagogue" may or may not render that Gospel's rules inappropriate for us. But the burden of proof is to demonstrate that they are not.

My concern has been to indicate how further work may build upon the careful studies of Verhey and Longenecker and to caution against misunderstandings of their arguments. Because of their exegetical insight, their concern for context and for perspective and principles, the social reversal of the Gospel and its inclusiveness will be better appropriated in our time.