

BASIC CHRISTIAN ETHICS



BASIC CHRISTIAN ETHICS
A Syllabus for Group Study

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FOREWORD

The Division of College and University Work of the National Lutheran Council has always placed a strong emphasis upon instruction as an integral part of the Church's ministry in the academic world. Basic to the whole program of the Division has been the conviction that every possible opportunity should be provided for our students to grow in their understanding of the Christian faith and heritage as they make progress in their general educational development.

In the church-related colleges students are required to take one or more courses in "religion." Students attending public institutions of higher learning, however, are under no such requirements and, indeed, have little or no opportunity to take such courses. Furthermore, in church-related schools a serious attempt is made to teach all subjects within the framework of the Christian faith, whereas in public institutions a secular atmosphere usually characterizes the classroom.

Primarily to meet the needs of our young men and women in schools not related to the Church, the Division published, from 1947 to 1952, a series of ten booklets on Christian thought and the Christian life. These booklets have been widely used in informal study and discussion groups, and some are still available for distribution. In the fall of 1950 the Division Committee approved a plan to expand, as soon as feasible, its teaching ministry by providing opportunities for the study of the Christian faith on a more formal basis. During the academic year of 1951-52 experimental projects were conducted at several institutions. On December 12, 1951, the Committee voted to inaugurate the program in the fall of 1952, and to issue teaching materials.

This syllabus has been prepared by Professor George W. Forell, a member of the faculty of the School of Religion at the State University of Iowa. Professor Forell laid the groundwork for this program and wrote this manual in connection with the actual teaching of a non-credit course on an experimental basis at the University of Minnesota. His lectures are now available in book form under the title of Ethics of Decision, published by the Muhlenberg Press.

In order that this syllabus can be seen in relation to the total "core curriculum" plan the projected non-credit courses are listed below.

A. Bible

1. Introduction to the Old Testament
2. Introduction to the New Testament

B. Christian Thought

1. Basic Christian Doctrine
2. The Gospel and Contemporary Thought

C. Christian Action

1. Basic Christian Ethics
2. The Gospel and the Social Order

D. The History of the Church

1. Luther and the Reformation.
2. The Church in America

E. The Life of the Church

1. Worship
2. The Church and the World

Teaching aids for this program are being published in multilith form so that the text can be easily revised on the basis of usage. Suggestions and criticisms are solicited. Additional information concerning the educational work of the Division will be furnished upon request.

DONALD R. HEIGES
Executive Secretary

September 1, 1956

PREFACE

This is an outline of a course in Christian Ethics for college students. The objective of the study is to help those who take this course to come to a clearer understanding of the meaning of the Christian life in our age. For this reason the Christian life is presented against the background and within the context of various other contemporary efforts to understand the meaning of human existence.

An effort has been made, especially in the first part of the syllabus, to look at the possible alternatives to the Christian life. It is the basic assumption of this approach that every man, and especially every educated person, must find some guiding principle that will enable him to live a coherent life. This principle of integration may be found in any number of contemporary ideologies. In any case it will determine the ethics of the person who chooses it. The Christian faith makes one particular life possible. It represents an alternative to the other ideologies of our age. In the modern academic society, however, this Christian alternative is frequently not presented at all. In any case it is not presented as a serious alternative to "pragmatism", "naturalism", "relativism", or "positivism", but at best as some sentimental glue of society for those who cannot follow the "intricate reasoning" of the advocates of the other alternatives. Yet since Christianity has been to many people of all intelligence levels through many centuries the only true way of life, it deserves a fair hearing even in the modern university.

The primary source for the study of the meaning of the Christian life is the Bible. This outline assumes familiarity with the Bible and with Luther's Treatise on Good Works. Secondary sources in English are listed in the bibliography at the end of the syllabus. This bibliography should be consulted for the titles of the references given in each section where, in most cases, only authors are mentioned.

It is hoped that this outline will help to clarify the way of life which is rooted in the faith that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

GEORGE W. FORELL

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PART I. THE LIFE OF MAN UNDER THE LAW

A. Life as Decision - The Search for Value

References: Patterson, pp. 26-43; Wheelwright, pp. 3-23; Brunner, pp. 17-20; Niobuhr, pp. 3-34; Beauvoir, pp. 7-73.

- (1) Man's freedom is limited by the fact of his freedom. He is bound to be free. Whether he likes it or not he must live a life of constant unavoidable decisions.
- (2) Not to make a decision is also a decision.
- (3) Time is the chain on which man is fastened and which he cannot escape. It forces him into constant decisions.
- (4) The basic problem of ethics is the problem of the possibility of finding standards by which the value of man's decision can be measured.
- (5) In the evaluation of decisions motives are of decisive importance. The value of an action seems to depend at times entirely on the motives which brought it about.
- (6) The complex and elusive character of all human motives seems to make a purely "scientific" evaluation of standards impossible.
- (7) All standards which evaluate decision are based upon commitment. Man decides to accept something as the absolute good or his "god."
- (8) This initial choice which precedes all other choices may never become conscious, yet it will enter every other subsequent decision.
- (9) People who attempt to escape this initial choice by cultivating "neutrality" or "objectivity" make their own conception of "neutrality" or "objectivity" their "god."
- (10) The commitment underlying the Christian life which supplies the standard for the evaluation of all decisions is the commitment to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour, as the absolute standard of ethics.
- (11) The Christian answer to the search for a standard for decision and thus for a meaningful life is meaningless where the question concerning the source of all values has never been asked.
- (12) It is essential for Christians and non-Christians alike to probe into the problem of the standards for decision and to investigate the nature of their open or hidden commitment.

Questions

1. Why is neutrality in ethics so difficult?
2. Do people use the same standards for all their decisions or do they have various sets of standards?

3. Is it better to know what your basic commitment is or not?
4. How did you arrive at an answer to the previous question? How did YOU establish what is "better"?
5. Is a "scientific" ethics possible?

1. Pre-ethical Stages

Reference: Brunner, pp. 21-28.

- (1) Although the concepts "right" and "wrong" can be found among all people, there is some behavior which distinguishes between right and wrong which is nevertheless not, properly speaking, ethical.
- (2) In certain marginal areas of life it is possible to make decisions without any clear sense of the meaning of decision.

a. The Stage of Immediacy

- (1) Among certain people (e.g. the very young and the very old) actions seem not to be guided by any sort of premeditation or prudential concern. We call this level of action "the stage of immediacy" (Brunner).
- (2) All human beings act at certain times on the level of immediacy.
- (3) People who in all situations act on the level of immediacy are not, properly speaking, within the realm of ethics.
- (4) Any conscious effort to return to the level of immediacy must fail, since the very nature of the stage of immediacy demands unconscious action.
- (5) It is impossible to will oneself without a will or to decide to live without decision.
- (6) The attempts to return to the stage of immediacy by conscious effort are part of the escapism of our age. (Adults cannot become children; they can only become adults acting like children, which is something entirely different. Similarly, men cannot become animals; they can only become men acting like animals.)

b. The Stage of Custom

- (1) Decisions made not as a result of any personal consideration but merely in an attempt to conform to custom are not properly called ethical.
- (2) Customs are not in themselves either right or wrong.
- (3) The acceptance or rejection by others does not in any way validate or invalidate the commandments of custom.
- (4) The greatest danger of action based on custom lies in the fact that custom does not distinguish between the essential and the

peripheral.

- (5) Any deviation from custom meets with social disapproval, regardless of the nature of the offense.
- (6) Thus custom becomes eventually itself the source of right and wrong and is not seen as a means to sanction the right and preclude the wrong.
- (7) All men live at least partially within the pre-ethical stage of custom.
- (8) It is a dangerous, yet a prevalent practice, to confuse "religious custom" and the Christian life.
- (9) What is commonly called "the Christian life" is frequently merely the sociological pattern of the particular community (e.g. the sociological pattern of white, bourgeois, college-trained Americans).
- (10) A radical quest for "the Christian life" will have to take seriously Christ's revolutionary attitude toward the sociological patterns of the respectable groups of first century Palestine.

Questions

1. What is the difference between the ethical responsibility of a child and an adult?
2. Why do primitive people punish animals who have caused injury to a person and we not?
3. Which of your personal rules of behavior are plainly the result of custom?
4. What rules of behavior in twentieth century America are merely the result of custom?
5. Where do we confuse custom and "the Christian life"?

2. Prudential Ethics

- (1) Ethics as the intelligent effort to discover standards for decision begins when individuals start to reflect on their concepts of right and wrong.
- (2) An ethical system may be called "prudential" if it selects its basic standards by considering their consequences in the future.
- (3) Prudential ethics sees in all decisions means to an end. They are judged not in themselves but in view of the desired end.

a. Hedonism

References: Patterson, pp. 127-150; Wheelwright, pp. 63-93; Aristotle, pp. 44-129.

- (1) In hedonistic ethics the standard of value is pleasure.

- (2) The goodness of an action depends on the amount of pleasure it is going to secure.
- (3) The vagueness and ambiguity of the term pleasure makes a clear definition of hedonism impossible.
- (4) Hedonists can be roughly divided into two main groups, Individualistic Hedonists (e.g. Epicurus, Omar Khayam) and Universalistic Hedonists (e.g. Locke, Bentham, J. S. Mill).
- (5) Individualistic hedonism claims that each individual person, in order to achieve a meaningful life, must pursue his own pleasure.
- (6) Though this does not exclude all services to others, such service is only justified insofar as serving others gives pleasure.
- (7) Such individualism sets every man against every other man and thus tends to atomize human society.
- (8) Historically, individualistic hedonism has been accompanied by an agnosticism which believes that life in order to be meaningful must receive its fulfillment in this life.
- (9) As a result, individualistic hedonists have advocated the avoidance of all entanglements in the affairs of men which might become sources of unhappiness (e.g. politics, family, etc.).
- (10) Because of the actual surplus of pain over pleasure in the average life, individualistic hedonism has frequently led to pessimism and suicide.
- (11) The basic slogan of universalistic hedonism is "the greatest good for the greatest number."
- (12) This system makes the pleasure of the majority the ethical criterion and is willing to sacrifice the individual's pleasure in the interest of the group.
- (13) The most serious problem confronting universalistic hedonism is the difficulty of discovering what in fact is "the greatest good for the greatest number."
- (14) Universalistic hedonism can easily be used to justify any policy as allegedly in the interest of "the greatest good for the greatest number."
- (15) The attempts by some hedonists (J. S. Mill) to improve hedonism by distinguishing between different "qualities" of pleasure, are in fact a surrender of the hedonistic claim that "pleasure" is the absolute standard of good and evil.
- (16) Any discussion of hedonism must recognize that even though "pleasure" may not be the most desirable standard for human action it is in fact the basis for many decisions.

- (17) Frequently Christianity has been working with a "supernatural hedonism" which has based all action on the desire for eternal pleasure and the escape from eternal pain.
- (18) The "baptized hedonism" of Christendom dothrones God and makes the individual's eternal happiness the true god of his life.
- (19) Christian hedonism tends to use God, the Church, and the neighbor as means to the end of its own happiness.
- (20) Religion can become the most subtle form of the pleasure-seeking life.

Questions

1. Can pain become pleasure?
2. What is the difference between individualistic and universalistic hedonism?
3. Why can every dictatorship defend itself with the claim of having achieved the greatest good for the greatest number?
4. If a deed results in pleasure does that prove that the desire for pleasure was its cause?
5. What religious practices are indications of religious hedonism?

b. Naturalism

References: Patterson, pp. 154-177; Wheelwright, pp. 94-122; Plato, Republic, Book I; Nietzsche, pp. 621-807; Huxley, pp. 7-28 and 129-145.

- (1) Naturalistic ethics believes that it has discovered in "nature" the most objective principle for the evaluation of decision.
- (2) The evolutionary concept of "the survival of the fittest" supplies naturalism with its concrete standard for ethics.
- (3) The concept "fit" is open to a multitude of interpretations but has been commonly understood by naturalist philosophers as referring to biological fitness.
- (4) Naturalistic ethics assumes in general that the evolutionary process is value-creating and directed toward the achievement of the good, whatever that might be. It is consciously or unconsciously optimistic.
- (5) Since nature, if left alone, is believed to produce and protect the fit, interference with nature on behalf of those whom she attempts to eliminate, is evil.
- (6) Naturalism looks askance upon all efforts to "coddle" the physically sick, racially inferior, and economically weak.
- (7) Though naturalism in ethics has been advocated at all times, (Thrasymachus, Machiavelli, Adam Smith, Spencer, Nietzsche,

Julian Huxley, etc.) attempts to put it in practice have not always met with approval.

- (8) Nazism, Communism, Laissez Faire Capitalism operate essentially with variations of the same naturalistic ethics.
- (9) Christendom has frequently adopted naturalistic ethics in order to further the selfish interests of its adherents.
- (10) Naturalism has a hold on Christendom wherever the revolutionary character of the Gospel is hidden, the status quo identified with the Kingdom of God, and sin either ignored or believed to be merely a personal shortcoming rather than an impenetrable wall between God and man.

Questions

1. How would the standards of the medical profession be affected by the adoption of "ethical naturalism"?
2. Nietzsche considered Christianity "slave morality"; how is this to be understood?
3. Discuss the ethical differences and similarities in Communism, Nazism, and Laissez Faire Capitalism.
4. What makes the ideals of American democracy, as, e.g., expressed in the Declaration of Independence, objectionable from the point of view of ethical naturalism?
5. Why do YOU accept or reject naturalism in ethics? Give reasons.

c. Relativism

References: Patterson, pp. 47-71; Wheelwright, pp. 36-52.

- (1) The difficulty of establishing an intelligible ethical standard, acceptable to everybody, leads ethical relativists to claim that all ethical standards are meaningless.
- (2) The position of ethical relativism has been stated more than two thousand years ago by the Greek sophist Protagoras in the sentence: "Man is the measure of all things."
- (3) "Man" in the relativistic slogan is the individual, not humanity.
- (4) There are as many valid ethics as there are individuals and there is no way of rating one against the other.
- (5) Ethical relativism assumes that all value judgments deal with matters that cannot be scientifically established and are, therefore, meaningless.
- (6) Ethical relativism is an essential feature of much of contemporary Philosophy, History, Sociology, and Psychology.
- (7) It emphasizes "objectivity", "tolerance", and "openmindedness."

- (8) The only dogma of this system is the dogma that there is no dogma; the only absolute truth is the absolute truth that there is no absolute truth.
- (9) Christendom is involved in ethical relativism through theological relativism, or the claim that all beliefs are of equal value. As long as man believes honestly it does not matter what he believes.
- (10) The only heterodoxy known to religious relativism is orthodoxy. The latter is considered intolerant, un-American, and ungentlemanly.

Questions

1. Give examples of ethical relativism from your readings in Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology, and History.
2. Can tolerance possibly become a vice? How?
3. "Every sincere faith is good!" Discuss.
4. Give examples of theological relativism from the religious life of America.
5. Discuss religious relativism in relation to the problem of Christian missions.

3. Aesthetic Ethics

References: Patterson, pp. 180-202; Wheelwright, pp. 169-193; Aristotle; Plato; Beauvoir, pp. 74-159; Russell.

- (1) While prudential ethics attempts to make life meaningful through the anticipated pleasant results of prudential action, aesthetic ethics attempts to make life meaningful now, even though it may be ultimately meaningless.
- (2) It is an effort to face the ultimate hopelessness of the human situation and enjoy it.
- (3) Bertrand Russell expresses this attitude defiantly as follows: "for man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish ere yet the blow falls the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day."
- (4) The sense life has, is the sense we are willing to give it.
- (5) This is aesthetic ethics because man's senses and emotions are used to give meaning to life and to transform meaninglessness into beauty.
- (6) The artist, the poet can make the horrible aesthetically inspiring (e.g. Greek tragedy).
- (7) The aesthetic transformation of the horror of decision into the contemplation of beauty can be observed also in Christendom.

- (8) Christianity is threatened if Christians attempt to escape the discipleship of the crucified Christ and flee into the contemplation of the "beautiful Saviour."

a. The Ethics of Self-realization

- (1) The ethics of self-realization is aesthetic ethics concerned with "Being." Here the good is that which helps to bring about the most complete development of the personality.
- (2) The "Self" is not only the body but also the mind and includes our friends and associates and all the events and things in our environment.
- (3) "The promotion of one's highest interest as an individual through the proper organization of the impulses, desires, capacities, and other elements of his nature is what is meant by the realization of the individual self" (Patterson, p. 217).
- (4) When an individual adjusts his own life, and as far as possible the life of society, to the ultimate goal of the universe, he realizes his universal self.
- (5) It is man's ethical task to enlarge and integrate his self with the universal self.
- (6) The goal is the development of personality and this means a more inclusive personality which exists in harmony with all other personalities.
- (7) The question concerning the ultimate meaning of life and personality is not raised.
- (8) The ethics of self-realization can be found within Christendom among all those who deny or ignore the absolute validity of Christianity and only use it to attain peace of mind, or peace of soul, or to learn "how to stop worrying and start living."

b. The Ethics of Existentialism

- (1) The ethics of existentialism is aesthetic ethics concerned with action. Here the good is that which helps to assert human freedom over everything that tries to thwart it.
- (2) Action has no ultimate meaning, because life has no ultimate meaning.
- (3) "Man fulfills himself withing the transitory or not at all." (Simone de Beauvoir).
- (4) Decision and action asserting human freedom are self-justifying. To act is right, to vegetate is wrong.
- (5) There is no goal in life except the life as it is lived now.

- (6) The ethics of existentialism can be found within Christendom wherever the absolute validity of the Christian Gospel is denied and Christianity is used as a mere instrument for social action.

Questions

1. What is it that makes a Greek tragedy worthwhile reading?
2. Why do people "enjoy" a play, motion picture, or book that does not have a happy end?
3. Mention some book or play of this type which you have read and analyze your reaction.
4. What could be meant by "the aesthetic transformation of the Cross"? Explain.
5. Is it always good to be well-adjusted to the environment?
6. Were St. Paul, Martin Luther, John Knox, John Wesley well-adjusted?
7. Does Christianity guarantee "Peace of Mind"?
8. "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." What does that mean?
9. Explain the encouragement which people get from "activity for activity's sake."
10. In what way are Americans particularly given to "activism"? Explain with examples.

4. Idealistic Ethics

References: Brunner, pp. 34-43; Plato; Nygren, pp. 118-157.

- (1) Idealistic ethics seeks its standard for right and wrong not in man or nature, not in personality or action, but in an IDEAL outside of man and nature to which man must conform.
- (2) It believes that such an ideal can be discovered and become then the absolute standard of human life.

a. Intuitionism

References: Patterson, pp. 75-99; Wheelwright, pp. 123-146.

- (1) Intuitionism believes that all men have an "intuitive" knowledge of right and wrong as part of their make-up.
- (2) This "moral sense" is comparable to the sense of sight or hearing and is generally located in the conscience.
- (3) Some thinkers have attempted to articulate the intuitive rules of ethics. Henry Sidgwick, for example, speaks of three maxims:
 1. Maxim of Benevolence: "I ought not to prefer my own lesser good to the greater good of another."
 2. Maxim of Prudence: "A smaller present good is not to be preferred to a greater future good."

3. Maxim of Justice: "What I judge to be right must, unless I am in error, be judged to be right by all rational beings who judge truly of the matter."
- (4) The vague terminology of the intuitionists and the variable sensitivity of the conscience has made intuition an unreliable source of absolute standards of right and wrong.
- (5) However, even if absolute standards may not be available to intuition, this does not necessarily mean that such standards do not exist.
- (6) Intuitionism can be found in Christendom where people make their ethical decisions not in imitation of Christ and on the basis of God's Word, but following their own intuitive insights.

Questions

1. Is man by nature "benevolent", "prudent", and "just"? Discuss.
2. What indications are there that all men have a "moral sense"?
3. Give examples of the variableness of conscience even among Christians.
4. Is an action always right if done with a clear conscience?
5. Is there any method for testing the validity of the insights gained through the conscience?

b. Rationalistic Ethics

References: Patterson, pp. 100-126; Wheelwright, pp. 147-168.

- (1) Rationalism claims that the basic standards for right and wrong can be found through the exact use of reason.
- (2) One of the most famous statements of this position is Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason.
- (3) Reason reveals a sense of duty which is at the basis of all ethical action.
- (4) Though there is frequently a difference between what we like to do and what we ought to do, we will often do what we ought to do rather than what we like to do.
- (5) It is upon this "sense of ought" which reason can discover that Kant bases his famous "Categorical Imperative." (Act in such a manner that the rules governing your action could become the universal law of nature.)
- (6) Rationalism assumes ethical standards to be generally true when they seem reasonable to the particular philosopher. Thus it assumes rather than establishes them. It does not allow for people who are perfectly willing to make murder or theft the universal law of nature.
- (7) Rationalism has influenced Christian Ethics whenever the absolute demands of Christ have been watered down and made acceptable to

human reason.

- (8) The unique message of Christianity has frequently been undermined by those who attempted to make the stumbling blocks (e.g. love of enemies) acceptable to human reason.

Questions

1. Does the "categorical imperative" establish an ethical standard or depend upon a previously established ethical standard?
2. Could the "categorical imperative" sometimes demand an action that is clearly wrong?
3. Is the good always the reasonable?
4. Which of your standards are "rational" or "intuitional"? Explain.
5. Under what conditions do you think it is right to lie?

5. Formalism and Teleology

- (1) All ethical systems can be divided into those that are formalistic and those that are teleological.
- (2) Formalistic ethics emphasizes the importance of the intention or motive. A good action is an action which is the result of a good motive.
- (3) Teleological ethics emphasizes the importance of the result. A good action is an action which has a good result.
- (4) Though the distinction between these two approaches to the evaluation of life is important, most men use both approaches simultaneously.

Questions

1. Is Christianity formalistic or teleological? Explain.
2. Which approach to right and wrong do the laws of our land use?
3. What are the advantages of formalism over the teleological approach?
4. What are the advantages of the teleological over the formalistic approach?
5. Do YOU prefer the formalistic or the teleological approach to Ethics? Give your reasons.

B. Life as Decision - the Religious Search for Value

References: Patterson, pp. 482-501; Wheelwright, pp. 194-220; Nygren, pp. 118-157; Brunner, pp. 29-33; Augustine, Books II-X; Nietzsche, pp. 615f.; Köberle, pp. 1-18.

- (1) The religious search for value starts with the acceptance of God as the standard for all decision.
- (2) It is, however, important to remember that many religions do not treat "divinity" and "morality" as identical (e.g. Greeks, Romans).

- (3) Even if it is granted that God is good and that He supplies the standard for right and wrong, the question remains, how can man make this divine goodness real in his life.
- (4) The religious answer to the question "What must man do to live the good life?" can be divided into three parts:
 1. The ultimate religious meaning of life is found through the discipline of the will (LEGALISM).
 2. The ultimate religious meaning of life is found through the exercises of the soul (MYSTICISM).
 3. The ultimate religious meaning of life can be found through the use of the intellect (RATIONALISM).

1. Legalism

- (1) The legalist believes that the Will of God has been expressed in the form of commandments or laws which man can and must fulfill.
- (2) The good life is the life according to these laws. Evil is to break these laws.
- (3) Legalists attempt to define these divine laws as accurately as possible and to protect them with additional laws which are supposed to guarantee obedience to the original laws.
- (4) The ethical problem of legalism is not "What is right?" but how to obey the laws which are known to be right.
- (5) Legalism tends to formalize the ethical life and substitutes obedience to a code for a personal concern for righteousness.
- (6) Though the Judaism of Jesus' time supplies an excellent example of religious legalism in action, the same type of legalism can be found in all major religions.
- (7) In the history of the Christian Church, legalism soon became the dominating force and changed the "Gospel" into a new "Law."
- (8) Christendom eventually developed a legal system of right and wrong which made it possible to classify each action according to a fixed code (virtues and vices, venial and mortal sins, etc.).
- (9) Though the Reformation was a revolt against the legalistic concept of Christianity, the churches of the Reformation were soon involved in a similar kind of legalism.
- (10) Wherever obedience to rules is the criterion of the Christian life, we deal with legalism, the attempt to find the ultimate religious significance of life through the will.

2. Mysticism

- (1) Mystics believe that man can find the ultimate meaning of life by

uniting his soul with the DIVINE.

- (2) Religion and religious value belong essentially in the realm of "feeling" (Schleiermacher: Religion as the absolute feeling of dependence).
- (3) The essential features of religious mysticism are: a. The identification of God and the Soul; b. The suggestion of a method which men can use to enable them to ascend to God.
- (4) Man becomes good by shaking off the shackles of this earth and uniting his soul with the Divine.
- (5) Mysticism suggests withdrawal from the world of sense by means of definite method.
- (6) Though details differ, the mystical method commonly includes ascetic practices and rituals (yet, occasionally also grossly sensual orgies).
- (7) Though mysticism has reached its fullest development in the East (India), there is also a Christian mysticism that shares its basic characteristics.
- (8) In Christendom, mysticism has tended to divorce Christian ethics from the problems of society.
- (9) Because of its tendency toward social irresponsibility, mystical Christianity has been a welcome tool in the hands of those who try to make religion the "opiate of the people."
- (10) The popular contemporary Christian mysticism of the enthusiastic cults has all the weaknesses of historic mysticism without the profound spiritual exaltation of the great Christian and Hindu mystics (Meister Eckhart, Acharya Sankara).

3. Rationalism

- (1) Rationalists believe that "the Good" or "God" can be reached by rational thought, logic, and the dialectical process.
- (2) Rationalism's insistence on logic and the exact use of the intellect has made rationalism more exclusive than other efforts to attain divine goodness.
- (3) It is typical for rationalism to conceive of evil as ignorance (Socrates).
- (4) God is the supreme intellect, the reason of the universe, and His existence can be logically demonstrated.
- (5) Virtue can be taught.
- (6) Though rationalism has been the particular contribution of the Greek genius, it has deeply influenced Christian theology.

- (7) Christian scholasticism emphasizes that God can be known through reason (e.g., Aquinas' proofs for the existence of God).
- (8) Rationalism within the theology of the Reformation emphasizes the propositional character of the Christian faith.
- (9) When the good and the intellectually correct are considered identical, Christian discipleship is reduced to intellectual assent to statements about Christ.
- (10) Rationalism identifies orthodoxy with the Christian life.

4. Summary

- (1) Though Legalism, Mysticism, and Rationalism can be distinguished for the sake of classification, they generally appear in combination.
- (2) The mode of man's approach to God may differ according to his character and the mood of his age, but all three modes are human efforts to reach God.
- (3) In the religious search for value, God is very real, but it is man who attempts to reach the Divine by his own human methods.
- (4) Religion is man's effort to attain God and the good life. During this process he remains "the master of his fate and captain of his soul."

Questions

1. Is a "religious" world-view always "ethical"?
2. Give examples of primarily legalistic religions.
3. What do YOU consider the chief attraction and the main weakness of Legalism?
4. Name the seven cardinal virtues and the seven deadly sins.
5. Can you discover legalism in contemporary Protestant Christianity? Discuss.
6. What do YOU consider the chief attraction and the main weakness of mysticism?
7. What are the essential features of all mysticism?
8. How does mysticism divorce the Christian Faith from the social problems of the day?
9. Give examples of mysticism among the contemporary cults in America.
10. What do YOU consider the chief attraction and the main weakness of rationalism?
11. Are evil and ignorance identical? Substantiate your answer.
12. Can virtue be taught?
13. Is it possible to prove the existence of God?
14. Give examples of rationalism in present-day Christianity.
15. Which of the three ways to God, Legalism, Mysticism, Rationalism is most attractive to you? Why?

C. The Life of Man and the Judgment of God

References: Köberle, pp. 19-47; Brunner, pp. 44-52; Niebuhr, pp. 65-99; Ramsey, pp. 1-24 and 249-325; Augustine, Books XIII, XIV; Calvin, pp. 265-366; Luther, Large Catechism; C. S. Lewis, pp. 44-49.

- (1) Christian ethics, properly speaking, is a description of the human situation as we know it through the revelation in Jesus Christ.
- (2) While it is possible to discuss the human situation from man's point of view, philosophically and religiously, Christian ethics asks, "What is man in the judgment of God?"
- (3) This question assumes that God has revealed Himself in His Word and is present in His Church.

1. The Image of God

- (1) The Bible asserts that man is created in the image of God, thus ascribing to man a uniqueness which distinguishes him profoundly from all other creatures.
- (2) It is this unique relationship to God which makes man man.
- (3) In order to understand man we must understand him in his relationship to God.
- (4) Our efforts so far to understand man philosophically and religiously have been fruitless because, starting with man, man cannot be understood.
- (5) The special characteristic of man as over against the rest of creation is that man is "on speaking terms" with God.
- (6) However, the human ability to hear God and to answer God is real only in so far as it is used.
- (7) Man can decide not to be man; he can refuse to listen to God or talk with Him.
- (8) Historical man is not truly man because he has made and is making the wrong decision in his relationship to God and thus has destroyed the image of God.

2. Sin, Original Sin, and Sins

- (1) Man, created in the image of God but attempting to assert his greatness apart from God, sins.
- (2) Man's decision to revolt against God is aided by daemonic powers who encourage man in his unbelief.
- (3) Man's revolt, however, was and is his own decision, and establishes a pattern which enslaves man and makes it impossible for him to escape.

- (4) Human sin is "such a deep and evil corruption of nature that no reason understands it, but that it must be believed from the revelation of the Scriptures" (Luther).
- (5) It is sin which is responsible for death, it is the "sickness unto death" (Kierkegaard).
- (6) Sin is as universal as death; mankind is collectively involved in sin and in death.
- (7) Since sin is revolt against God it is more than a "deficiency" (Non-being, Plato; Ignorance, Socrates) but the self-assertion of man against God.
- (8) Sin is described as the human attempt to usurp the place of God, in the Old Testament (e.g., Genesis 3 and Genesis 11) and in the New Testament (e.g., Matthew 21:33 and Luke 15:11).
- (9) Man's escape from God is in fact man's escape from himself since he is truly man only in fellowship with God.
- (10) The attempt to escape God is at the root of all the evils of human existence (e.g. reason without God becomes irrationality, freedom without God becomes slavery, etc.).
- (11) Not in man's lusts but particularly in his highest faculties and aspirations is sin most effective.
- (12) There is no aspect of human effort that is not corrupted by sin.
- (13) Man's basic sin—psychologically speaking—is pride, the arrogant effort to defy God and make his personality the center of everything.
- (14) Pride separates us from God and from our fellowmen.
- (15) Pride is the sin to which religious and moral people are most susceptible and which perverts our noblest efforts.
- (16) Though not all actions are equally bad, no action of a human being living in separation from God is ever good.
- (17) Since sin has effectively destroyed the "image of God" in man, what remains is a mere remnant which places man in an especially ambiguous and contradictory position.
- (18) While pride is man's basic sin, psychologically speaking, unbelief is man's basic sin theologically speaking.
- (19) Because man does not believe and trust in God he cannot live a meaningful life.
- (20) As long as unbelief rules men's hearts the Christian life is impossible.

3. The Result of Sin

- (1) The basic disease of sin causes many outward symptoms, e.g., the so-called capital vices: vainglory, envy, anger, covetousness, sloth, gluttony, lust.
- (2) As the result of sin the life of man is a gigantic self-contradiction.
- (3) Created in the image of God, man has become a horrible caricature.
- (4) Created to reveal God's Love, man instead reveals God's wrath.
- (5) Created to have life, man discovers that the wages of sin is death.
- (6) Though only Christians understand the basis and nature of the human predicament, all men, Christians and non-Christians alike, are equally involved in it.

Questions

1. What does the term "revelation" mean?
2. On what basis can man speak about "man in the judgment of God"?
3. Does our secular culture consider man uniquely different from all other creatures on this earth? Discuss.
4. What does it mean that man is "on speaking terms with God"?
5. The Bible knows "daemonic powers." Is there any reason to maintain such a concept in the twentieth century?
6. Are there any modern examples of man's effort to usurp the place of God?
7. In what way does rationalistic atheism make the universe irrational?
8. In what manner does freedom without God become slavery (discuss e.g. deterministic behaviorism)?
9. Do you recall any conscious action of yours which you would consider perfect? Explain.
10. Why would it be possible to say that man's relationship to God is in a sense worse than that of the animal?

D. The Life of Man and the Law of God

References: Brunner, pp. 114-157; C. S. Lewis, pp. 1-29; Calvin, Vol. I, pp. 396-457; Bennett, pp. 116-124; Kierkegaard, Works of Love; Luther, Large Catechism.

- (1) If man were left to his own devices, sin would utterly destroy him and his world.
- (2) The reason for the relative order of man's world is the fact of the Divine Natural Law.
- (3) Applying to mankind in general, the divine natural law is a device of God's patience giving mankind time to repent.
- (4) In this sense it is a means of preserving the world from utter chaos until the climactic end of history in the Final Coming of Christ.

1. The Nature of Law

- (1) God's natural law is part of the structure of the universe. We do not have to discover it in order to make it real. It exists apart from our awareness or unawareness of it.
- (2) The divine natural law is not a legal code but a description of the facts of life as they confront man.
- (3) Consistent breaking of the law breaks not the law but the lawbreaker. (E.g., consistent dishonesty in the use of language makes a person effectively dumb.)
- (4) Though the law exists and is effective, man perceives it only confusedly as the result of his corruption by sin.
- (5) All men know about the law, and everywhere certain basic human relationships are governed by law.
- (6) In spite of the obvious and considerable differences in the positive law of the various peoples of the world, a certain basic pattern is easily discoverable.
- (7) Everywhere law orders the relationship of the generations, establishes the value of life, regulates sex, and sets standards for honesty and property.
- (8) Law exists, and the positive laws of mankind are more or less adequate attempts to come to terms with the law as it confronts man in the very structure of the world.

2. The Proper Use of the Law

- (1) Christianly speaking, the proper or theological use of the law is its use to reveal man's predicament under the judgment of God.
- (2) Thus Melancthon can say in the Apology to the Augsburg Confession: "The Law always accuses us."
- (3) While legalism believes that the law can be used by man to justify himself before God, the New Testament sees the law as a means to reveal man's hopeless situation in the presence of God.
- (4) The primary task of the law is entirely negative. It destroys all human excuses before God (Romans 1:20).
- (5) By showing us the hopelessness of our situation and our inability to save ourselves, the law can prepare us for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. The Political Use of the Law

- (1) The secondary function of the law is to keep the world in a semblance of order until the Day of Jesus Christ.
- (2) Through the divine natural law God has established certain orders, like marriage and family, society and government, which make human life possible in spite of the self-destructive power of sin.

- (3) Though God has not established one particular form of social organization, He has given in His law rules for all forms of social organization.
- (4) This basic law underlies the just positive laws of all people.
- (5) Even the "political" use of the law always reveals the basic and primary theological character of all law, "The law always accuses us."

4. Modern Man and the Law of God

- (1) While the divine law, however vaguely discerned, has been a very real force in the life of mankind in the past, modern man believes that he is able to ignore this law.
- (2) Many modern men do not only defy the law but deny its very existence.
- (3) Modern man has tried to escape the law not only by denying its existence, but also by claiming to be so determined by forces beyond his control (heredity and environment) as to be completely free from all responsibility.
- (4) Modern man's escape from the law has been a failure. Facts cannot be changed by denying their existence. Modern realistic literature shows that modern man is basically in the same predicament as his Hebrew, Greek ancestors (David, Oedipus, etc.).
- (5) Modern man may have escaped the "concept" of sin, but he is caught, like all other men before him, in the "wages of sin."
- (6) The attempt to escape the divine law by denying its existence has left modern man in a meaningless universe, afraid of nothing in particular, yet terribly afraid.
- (7) The fear of nothing, which characterizes our age, is anxiety, and it is the contemporary form of the "sickness unto death."
- (8) Modern man reveals that it is impossible to escape from God and His law. All human efforts to do so end in despair and death.
- (9) The escape from God which is man's futile effort since history began has its root in sin and is aggravated and revealed by the law. Though doomed to failure (Psalm 139), it expresses the eternal predicament of unregenerate man.
- (10) "What a chimera then is man! What a novelty! What a monster, what a chaos, what a contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, imbecile worm of the earth; depository of the truth, a sink of uncertainty and error; the pride and refuse of the Universe" (Blaise Pascal).

Questions

1. What is meant by the "society-destroying" character of sin? Explain.
2. In what way does even the successful lie depend on a general pattern of truth?
3. What is the difference between natural law and positive law?

4. Why is a certain amount of honesty the basis of a successful gang of outlaws? Elaborate the implications.
5. In which realms of life can you discover "law" governing the behavior of all people?
6. Theologically speaking, is law good or bad? Discuss.
7. What is the political use of the law?
8. What is the difference between fear and anxiety?
9. In what way does modern drama depict man under the law? Give examples.
10. In your opinion, which attempts to interpret life have a clearer grasp of the human situation, those of some modern preachers (e.g. Norman Vincent Peale, Liebman, Fosdick) or those of some modern dramatists (e.g. Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller). Explain your answer.

PART II. THE LIFE OF MAN UNDER THE GOSPEL

A. Introduction

References: Bonhoeffer; Köberle, pp. 48-83; Brunner, pp. 68-107; Kierkegaard, Training in Christianity; Kierkegaard, Works of Love; Ramsey, pp. 54-91; Luther, Treatise on Christian Liberty, pp. 312-348; Luther, Treatise on Good Works, pp. 187-194.

- (1) To man accused by the law and condemned by his sin comes the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- (2) The Gospel is the good news that the true pattern of life is to be found in the Jesus Christ whom the Bible reveals and that through the work of this Saviour all men can follow this pattern.
- (3) In Christ all men are potentially saved. Through Him a meaningful life is possible for everybody.
- (4) The Christian life is the life lived in faith and discipleship to Christ.
- (5) Faith stands at the beginning of the Christian life and without it a life of discipleship is impossible. The value of all human works depends entirely upon their relationship to faith. "Faith alone makes all other works good, acceptable, and worthy" (Luther, Good Works, p. 190).

Questions

1. Can the Gospel, the good news of redemption, possibly reach people who do not feel in need of redemption?
2. Can there be any salvation apart from Jesus Christ? Explain your answer.
3. Why could Augustine call the virtues of the pagans "splendid vices"?
4. Is it easier to be a "disciple" in the twentieth century than it was in the first century—or is it harder?
5. Which do you consider the most dangerous barrier to the hearing of the Gospel, agnosticism, atheism, or philistine self-satisfaction?

B. The First Commandment

"I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

References: Luther, Large Catechism, pp. 391-397; Luther, Good Works, pp. 194-204; Calvin, pp. 408-418; Köberle, pp. 84-136; C. S. Lewis, pp. 59-70; Brunner, pp. 111-139; Ramsey, pp. 133-152.

- (1) The work of the first commandment is faith. Thus "this commandment is the very first, highest and best, from which all the others proceed." (Luther, Good Works, p. 194.)
- (2) It is important to distinguish between "I believe" when applied to

objects (e.g. "I believe it is going to rain") and "I believe" when applied to persons (e.g. "I believe in John"). In the latter case the expression "I believe" is the highest expression of confidence.

- (3) "Faith" as it constitutes the basis for the Christian life is not intellectual assent to propositions, or an expression of uncertainty (I believe vs. I know), but when applied to the person of Christ it is the expression of absolute trust and confidence.
- (4) Faith in this sense is not a work which has its origin in man, but a gift of divine grace which is given to man without any worthiness or cooperation on his part.
- (5) Through this faith "good works" become possible. They are then an expression of our trust in God.
- (6) The Ten Commandments when looked at from the perspective of this faith are not merely an expression of divine natural law, but a description of the Christian life.

Questions

1. What is the alternative to the Christian faith, unbelief or other faiths?
2. If the Christian life is based upon faith, how does it happen that in the usual discussions of the Christian life faith is never mentioned but innumerable more or less important rules of behavior? Explain.
3. Would it be possible to believe all that the Church teaches about Christ and not have faith?
4. What is the source of faith?
5. What is YOUR faith?

C. The Second Commandment

"Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain."

References: Luther, Large Catechism, pp. 397-401; Luther, Good Works, pp. 204-221; Calvin, pp. 418-425; Köberle, pp. 137-205; Ramsey, pp. 116-132; Bonhoeffer, pp. 37-85; Kierkegaard, Training in Christianity, pp. 79-144.

- (1) Faith results in the works of the second commandment, namely, the praise of God in thought, word, and deed.
- (2) In order that our life may be a life of praise it must draw attention to the goodness of God rather than to our own alleged holiness.
- (3) The Christian life is a life of praise especially when hardship and suffering make such praise incomprehensible to the non-Christian.
- (4) The Christian knows that suffering and our nearness to God are directly related and that we grow in grace through tribulation.

- (5) The high cost of discipleship has been demonstrated in the life and death of all great Christians up to the present time.
- (6) Peace, prosperity, and progress frequently confuse man in his relationship to God. "For this is the most dangerous trial of all, when there is no trial and everything is and goes well, for then a man is tempted to forget God, to become too bold and misuse the time of prosperity." (Luther, Good Works, pp. 213-214).
- (7) However, the praise of God is not merely a relationship between the Christian and his Heavenly Father, but it also obligates him to his neighbor and the world.
- (8) The Christian is called upon to defend and proclaim God's Holy Name against all His enemies.
- (9) The Christian faith is revolutionary in that it demands from every believer that he speak and act for the truth and against all wrong in defense of the poor, the despised, and his enemies, even though such action may bring him into conflict with secular and spiritual authority.
- (10) Christians are called upon to be the instruments of God. However, if they are unwilling, He will perform His work alone and will condemn those "who were unwilling to help Him and have despised the great honor of doing His work," (Luther, Good Works, p. 219). This is true of individuals as well as nations.

Questions

1. What is unique about the Christian concept of suffering? Compare with hedonism, naturalism, etc.
2. Discuss passages in the Old and New Testament which relate suffering to the eternal purpose of God. What, if any, are the dangers of peace and prosperity for the Christian life?
4. Give examples from contemporary history of courageous Christian witness for the truth and examples of deplorable Christian failures to witness.
5. What do you think of the frequently expressed idea that "Christ has no other hands but ours, etc."?

D. The Third Commandment

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

References: Luther, Large Catechism, pp. 401-405; Luther, Good Works, pp. 221-250; Calvin, pp. 426-432; Calvin, Vol. II, Book IV; Brunner, pp. 523-567; Kierkegaard, Training in Christianity, pp. 11-144; Bonhoeffer, pp. 89-198.

- (1) While the first commandment describes the Christian's attitude toward God in thought, the second commandment that of our mouth in words, the third commandment deals specifically with our attitude toward God in works. (See Luther, Good Works, p. 222.)

- (2) In the Christian life, worship is the result and an expression of faith and love.
- (3) We do not become Christians by worshipping, but because we are Christians we want to worship God.
- (4) Prayer in particular is based upon faith and is the expression of faith.
- (5) Conversely, prayer is also the most effective means to increase our weak faith and trust in God.
- (6) Christian prayer is made possible by the father-child relationship which God has established with us through Jesus Christ.
- (7) Our conviction that God does hear all our prayers does not imply that he will always do what we desire Him to do. Such an attitude would assume that we know more than God and can give orders to Him, and would thus reverse the father-child relationship.
- (8) Like children we can bring everything to God in prayer, realizing that nothing is too important or too insignificant to be included.
- (9) Christian prayer is based upon the realization that God knows what He is doing and, therefore, culminates in the expression of faith: "Not my will but Thine be done!"
- (10) Without actual worship and prayer there is no Christian life even if individuals may consider Christian propositions about God, man, and the universe intellectually correct and acceptable.

Questions

1. Where, in your opinion, is the center of the life of the Christian?
2. What is the high point of Christian worship?
3. Do we need a more orderly life of worship and prayer? If so, how can this be achieved?
4. Since God is omniscient, why is there any reason for Christian prayer?
5. Is it possible to "believe" without participating in the common worship, and is it possible to participate in the common worship without "faith"?

E. The Fourth Commandment

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

References: Luther, Large Catechism, pp. 405-415; Luther, Good Works, pp. 250-271; Calvin, pp. 432-436; Brunner, pp. 320-339, 384-482; Ramsey, pp. 171-190, 337-351; Kierkegaard, Works of Love; C. S. Lewis, pp. 13-18; Niebuhr, pp. 139-198; Bennett.

1. Authority

- (1) The fact that Christ is Lord of my life must affect all the natural

relationships of my life.

- (2) For the Christian life under the Gospel all commandments become descriptions of the fruits of faith.
- (3) The fourth commandment brings the fact of authority under the domination of the Gospel.
- (4) Christians are asked to do more than merely submit to authority. They are to see in all positions of authority and subordination opportunities for Christian service.
- (5) To the Christian, Christ is the ultimate source of all authority. All legitimate authority has its root in God and is justified only in relationship to Him.

2. The Family

- (1) The family is not merely a "bio-social" or "socio-cultural" group but is also the means through which children are brought into the fellowship of the Church.
- (2) A family which is "anarchical" or "tyrannical" interferes with the correct understanding of the Lord's Prayer and confuses a child in his relationship to God.
- (3) The importance of the family is understood by the enemies of the Christian Faith, so that wherever totalitarianism and secularism are in power, the family is under attack.
- (4) The Christian family, where parents and children love each other in the Lord, is the most dangerous cell of opposition to all efforts of the state or the party to become "mother" and "father" and "God."
- (5) There is always danger that the family may be destroyed by men of good will. It is, therefore, of paramount importance to emphasize that the finest school and the best organized playground cannot take the place of the divinely created order of the family.

3. The Political Realm

- (1) In the light of the fourth commandment the political realm is not some horrible snake-pit from which man hopes to be redeemed, but the realm in which the fact that Christ is Lord and Saviour is relevant and must be proclaimed.
- (2) The Christian citizen attempts to show with his life that the power of government is ultimately dependent upon and derived from the power of God. (Read Romans 13.)
- (3) All efforts to withdraw geographically or emotionally from the reality of political authority are futile and dangerous to the cause of Christ.
- (4) Failure to participate in the life of politics is, in fact, negative participation, and leaves the field of politics deliberately to

those who do not trust in God.

- (5) Obedience in the realm of politics is not merely the acceptance of theoretical propositions about the nature of the state, but Christian discipleship within the body politic.

Questions

1. Do you believe that there are certain areas of life which have nothing to do with your faith (e.g. business, politics, art, etc.)?
2. If all authority derives from God, how about the authority of a tyrant like Hitler?
3. Do you consider the typical American family anarchical or tyrannical? Discuss.
4. In what way does the coherent family undermine the totalitarian claims of the state?
5. What are some of the forces which tend to disrupt the American family?
6. How could the family as an organic unit be strengthened?
7. What are the reasons that have given the word "politician" such an unsavory flavor?
8. What are the most important qualifications that a man should have whom you would support in an election? Discuss.
9. Is war ever defensible from a Christian point of view?
10. Who is less guilty, the person who as a bombardier pushes the button that releases the bomb which kills 10,000 people or the person who stays home at his job, paying the taxes which bought the bomb and the plane to deliver it?

F. The Fifth Commandment

"Thou shalt not kill."

References: Luther, Large Catechism, pp. 415-418; Luther, Good Works, pp. 271-274; Calvin, pp. 436-437; Brunner, pp. 188-288; Ramsey, pp. 191-248; Kierkegaard, Works of Love; C. S. Lewis, pp. 38-54; Niebuhr, pp. 201-237; Bennett; Nygren.

- (1) For the life under the Gospel the fifth commandment is the description of the way in which our Christian faith can and must be lived in the local, the national, and the international community.
- (2) The Christian life can never be lived in isolation from other men; it can never be merely a relationship between the individual and God (I John 4:20).
- (3) Though advocated at times by friends and enemies of the Church, "pie in the sky, by and by" is a completely false interpretation of the Christian Faith.
- (4) As Christians we have a responsibility to bring about the amelioration of every human need (e.g. law-enforcement, flood-control, slum clearance, cancer research, etc.).
- (5) It is not enough to be nominally concerned with the need of the neighbor. Since our responsibility is personal, it cannot be

discharged entirely through agencies.

- (6) The touchstone of our understanding of the fifth commandment lies in our relationship to our enemies.
- (7) Only through the power of Christ can we love those who hate us and who are, humanly speaking, utterly unlovable.
- (8) Though love to the unlovable was to the Greeks degrading (e.g. Aristotle), Christian love does not depend on the worth or beauty of the "object" but upon the reality and strength of the Love of God within us.

Questions

1. Is it possible to love God sincerely and not love our neighbor?
2. How do you believe that the notion that Christianity has no responsibility for the amelioration of hunger and suffering in this world originated?
3. What should be the standard by which we measure our Christian responsibility in regard to particular "good causes" that confront us daily?
4. How can we in the typical American community fulfill the fifth commandment?
5. What is the essential difference between human love (Eros) and Divine Love (Agape)?

G. The Sixth Commandment

"Thou shalt not commit adultery."

References: Luther, Large Catechism, pp. 418-421; Luther, Good Works, pp. 275-278; Calvin, pp. 437-441; Brunner, pp. 340-383; C.S. Lewis, pp. 30-37.

- (1) The Christian life under the Gospel includes the reality of sex.
- (2) Sex is neither the ultimate force for good which some claim to see in it, nor is it the basic source of all evil which others assert it to be.
- (3) The Christian Faith rejects the negative obsession with sex of a false asceticism as well as the positive obsession with sex of the psychoanalytic novel, since in both cases sex rather than God become the center of life.
- (4) In the Christian life the reality of sex like all other "facts of life" is subordinated to the relationship of faith and trust in God which must dominate all of life.
- (5) God, not the devil, created man and woman and their dependence upon each other.
- (6) Though man everywhere has circumscribed the relationship of the sexes with definite rules (there are no "noble savages" who live like

animals), Christians believe that the monogamous marriage is instituted by God.

- (7) Marriage is a valid order of God and not merely the means for the propagation of the species.
- (8) We reject the depreciation of marriage by ascetics—who see in it a necessary evil for the preservation of the race—and the sex-obsessed—who see in it an unnecessary encumbrance of "passion."
- (9) Man was created to love and serve God, not to spend his life fighting or attending to his sexual instinct.
- (10) It is the opportunity of the Christian life to demonstrate how through faith the marital relationship can become a symbol of love, trust, and fidelity. (A love song like the Old Testament Song of Solomon can become at the same time a song of praise to God's order of marriage and a sign and symbol of the relationship between Christ and His bride the Church.)

Questions

1. What is the reason for the fact that sex and sin have become identified in the thinking of so many religious people?
2. Our civilization has been called "sex-obsessed" and "sexually frustrated." Discuss.
3. Is it possible to have a negative sex-obsession? What does it mean?
4. If the number of one of the sexes should ever sink to a level which would completely unbalance the normal ratio (because of war or some other catastrophe), should monogamy be modified?
5. Are there valid reasons for divorce?
6. If marriage is "not merely the means for the propagation of the species", what is the main purpose of marriage?
7. What does it mean to subordinate sex to "the relationship of faith and trust in God"?

H. The Seventh Commandment

"Thou shalt not steal."

References: Luther, Large Catechism, pp. 421-426; Luther, Good Works, pp. 278-281; Calvin, pp. 441-444; Brunner, pp. 384-439; Ramsey, pp. 326-388; Niebuhr, pp. 139-198; Bennett.

- (1) Wherever human beings live in society property relationships create problems and are ordered by law.
- (2) Property relationships are not ordered in the same way in all places, but a difference is generally made between "mine", "thine", and "ours."
- (3) Understood as law, the seventh commandment tells us that we have no right to take away property that belongs to somebody else, either by outright theft or fraudulent and unfair dealings.
- (4) Fulfilled through the Gospel, the seventh commandment shows how the

Christian life must bring God's redeeming power into all the poisoned areas of man's economic existence.

- (5) "The love of money is the root of all evil" (I Timothy 6:10). It is in the realm of economics that many of our most basic conflicts have their origin.
- (6) The Christian life is a protest against all efforts to reduce the human problem to an economic problem.
- (7) Private property is neither the metaphysical source of all good of Laissez Faire Capitalism, nor the metaphysical source of all evil of Marxist Communism.
- (8) Neither the alleged economic laws of the capitalists (supply and demand) nor the alleged economic laws of the communists (dialectical materialism) are the ultimate laws of the universe.
- (9) The Christian fulfills the seventh commandment by showing in his life that God, and not some alleged economic law, is the focal point of human existence.
- (10) "Supply and demand" as well as "dictatorship of the proletariat" must be subordinated to man's eternal purpose to love and glorify God.
- (11) Since man's problem is not essentially economic but theological, no economic panacea touches the very root of his anxiety and frustration.
- (12) In the light of the Gospel, economics must be understood from the Christian concept of "Calling."
- (13) Work is neither merely a means to acquire property, nor a means to serve the state or the party, but an opportunity to serve God.
- (14) A job is a "calling" not by virtue of its own inherent characteristics but by virtue of the Christian understanding of the job-holder.
- (15) The seventh commandment is fulfilled whenever we do all our daily work, not for the sake of the boss, nor for public acclaim, nor in order to become rich, but because we have understood that it gives us an opportunity to give thanks for all God has done for us.

Questions

1. What do you consider the basic economic problems of our time?
2. Is it possible to divorce "economic" problems from the problem of man?
3. Is Christianity dependent upon or related to any particular economic theory? Explain.
4. Do you consider your job, or the job for which you are preparing, a calling? Why?
5. How can the Christian bear witness to Christ in the economic order?

I. The Eighth Commandment

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

References: Luther, Large Catechism, pp. 426-431; Luther, Good Works, pp. 281-285; Calvin, pp. 444-446; Brunner, pp. 483-516; Ramsey, pp. 351-366; Kierkegaard, Training in Christianity, pp. 79-144.

- (1) All social organization is based upon a certain amount of honesty and mutual trust.
- (2) Society is in danger when this minimum amount of honesty vanishes.
- (3) There is nothing specifically Christian about not bearing false witness. It is part of God's law for all men proclaimed in order to make harmonious human life possible.
- (4) To the Christian the eighth commandment means that language, understood in its widest sense, must be used to the glory of God and in the service of the neighbor, i.e. in truth.
- (5) This implies Christian responsibility in Art and Literature, Science and History, and for freedom of thought in general.
- (6) Whenever truth is suppressed for the sake of political, social, or ecclesiastical propaganda, the eighth commandment is being transgressed.
- (7) Christians must be honest in their literary efforts, in pictorial art, architecture, scholarship, and research.
- (8) Moral pronouncements or sermonettes at the beginning, during, or at the conclusion of our work are no substitute for honesty in our work.
- (9) Fulfilling the eighth commandment involves witness to the truth not only against "popes and kings"—not too much of a challenge in contemporary America—but also in the face of public opinion polls, congressional investigation committees, etc.
- (10) Loyalty to truth means also the defense of man's integrity and right to search for truth, even though his search may lead him away from what we know to be the truth.
- (11) Not to bear false witness implies also that no attempt must be made to tell people that truth can be found by accepting implicitly the opinions of people who have the truth.
- (12) Truth cannot be inherited like a home, or learned like the Gettysburg Address, but must be believed.
- (13) Nobody can be forced to believe, and every effort to bring about faith by force is a tragic offense against the eighth commandment.
- (14) The Christian Faith has always made its greatest impact when seen as a clear alternative to other faiths. When accepted merely as part of our culture and heritage it decays and dies.

- (15) Christian witness to the truth must be more than theoretical concern for truth. It must be rather a life that shows in every action that the God who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ is Truth.

Questions

1. Illustrate how society depends upon a general pattern of honesty.
2. What does honesty in Art and the Sciences mean? Is there such a thing as an honest painting or building? How about church buildings and religious paintings? Discuss.
3. Where do you think is the greatest need for witness to the truth in our civilization?
4. If the Church had absolute power should it prohibit all non-Christian teaching? Discuss.
5. How does one bear witness to the truth in your particular field of endeavor?

J. The Ninth and Tenth Commandments

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."

References: Luther, Large Catechism, pp. 432-438; Luther, Good Works, p. 285; Calvin, pp. 446-457; Ramsey, pp. 295-306; Kierkegaard, Works of Love, pp. 15-74.

- (1) Whether called "Will to Power", "Libido", or "Desire for Happiness", man's life is impelled by the passion to obtain what others have.
- (2) Even the revolt against God is rooted in our desire to be "as gods." (See Genesis 3:1 f. and the humanist effort to substitute man for God.)
- (3) In relationship to our neighbor we are dominated from childhood by the desire to have what the other person has.
- (4) The object of interest to our covetousness changes with age; the covetousness itself stays with us.
- (5) Human covetousness has been developed into a social "virtue" when the interest of our nation, our class, and the profit-motive are glorified.
- (6) It seems that every effort at successful social organization must come to terms with the fact of individual and group covetousness.
- (7) When the Christian Church advertises Christianity as supernatural fire insurance it appeals to man's arch-covetousness.
- (8) The Christian life of faith sees through the pitfalls of covetousness because it knows that "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39).
- (9) In the moment when we interpret these words of Christ as a prudential

prescription for the "abundant life", we are losing our life (I Corinthians 13:3).

- (10) Covetousness, in whatever form it may appear, and even in its most ecclesiastical garb, separates man from God.
- (11) If we believe in Christ as Lord, the basic motive of our life must change, and love that serves God and the neighbor must replace covetousness.
- (12) The love that is in Christ Jesus will replace the individualistic, socialistic, or even ecclesiastical profit-motive.
- (13) Repentance, the new direction of mind of which the Bible speaks, implies a life directed not toward our own interest but toward the interest of those around us.
- (14) Instead of using everything and everybody for our own advantage we will let God use us in the interest of our fellowman and for the proclamation of His kingdom.
- (15) This life of discipleship is only possible when God in His grace gives us the faith to see in Christ the Lord of our life.

Questions

1. As illustrated in the advertising business covetousness is an accepted part of our daily life. Explain.
2. Elaborate some of the "Christian" appeals to covetousness.
3. How can Christian Love modify covetousness? Give examples.
4. What does repentance mean?
5. In your opinion, is the profit-motive as the basic motive of our daily life good or bad? Is any other motive desirable and workable?

K. Conclusion

References: Bonhoeffer; Küberle, pp. 245-268; Kierkegaard, Training in Christianity; Kierkegaard, Works of Love; Niebuhr, pp. 103-135; Luther, Treatise on Christian Liberty.

- (1) Whenever the challenge of the life under the Gospel comes to us, we are overwhelmed by its possibilities and depressed by our own inability to live up to them.
- (2) No man ever lives unambiguously his faith in Christ in love toward his neighbor.
- (3) Christians know that in all their actions they are involved in motives which come not from faith but from their unbelief and revolt against God.
- (4) Even with the best of intentions we are constantly confronted by decisions which confront us with alternatives which are all clearly wrong.

- (5) Because of our sin and weakness the Christian life would be impossible were it not for the fact that it is not lived out of our own resources but out of the power and grace of God.
- (6) The beginning, the center, and the end of the Christian life under the Gospel is God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ which is sealed to us in the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper.
- (7) The Christian life in the shadow of the cross is not some static possession which we attain once and for all, but a constant struggle with the power of evil which attempts to keep us in subjection. As Luther explains in the Small Catechism: "The old Adam in us is to be drowned and destroyed by daily sorrow and repentance, together with all sins and evil lusts; and the new man should daily come forth and rise, that he shall live in the presence of God in righteousness and purity forever."
- (8) The Christian realization of the ambiguity of the human situation and of man's inability to extricate himself is not pessimism, because it is coupled with complete trust in our Divine Saviour.
- (9) The Christian life is discipleship made possible through the Grace of God who gave His only Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Questions

1. What is the difference between a "static" and a "dynamic" concept of the Christian life?
2. What is the function of Holy Communion in the Christian life?
3. Is evil something within us or something outside of us?
4. What is the difference between ethical optimism, ethical pessimism, and the Christian life?
5. What do you consider the most important fact in the Christian life?

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