

Systematic Theology - Anthropology

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Preface

Anthropology is the study of man as the image of God, his relationship to God, to himself, to others, and to creation. The goal of this study is to know God better through a more comprehensive understanding of ourselves in all these relationships. “Nearly all the wisdom we possess...consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves....In the first place, no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God in whom he ‘lives and moves’ (Acts 17:28)” (Calvin’s *Institutes* I, I,1.).

Introduction

1. Purpose of the course

This course is designed to outline and illustrate some of the major headings in Scripture pertaining to the doctrine of man. My aim has not been theoretical, but practical, hopefully urging the reader to further his exploration of anthropology into every conceivable area of man’s life and work as it relates to God and creation.

2. Summary of Course Content

The course proceeds from the creation of male and female as the image of God to the dominion mandate given to man as co-regent of God. The performance of that mandate is affected by the fall bringing disease and death upon physical life and autonomous rebellion which attempts to banish God from creation and alienates man from His Creator. Although man continues to exercise dominion, he does so without justifiable self-conscious purpose and with mixed results of good and evil, using the products of dominion to further his rebellion against God. From this point we explore the reasons for poverty emerging from man’s alienation from God and creation as well as the reasons for wealth emerging from a reorientation to God and creation—the by-product of conscious or unconscious obedience to Biblical truth. We then consider marriage as the covenant of companionship and the associated problems of divorce and polygamy. Lastly, we trace the covenantal relationships between God and man, focusing specifically on the continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Covenants and the practical implication of this debate for infant baptism.

3. Course Materials

In addition to this textbook, the student must read an additional 300 pages (Bachelors) and 600 pages (Masters). Other textbooks on systematic theology will be accepted. Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology* is an excellent volume which has been widely distributed in Africa. You may also read any volumes listed in the bibliography. Calvin’s *Institutes* and commentaries may be downloaded from the internet. Other especially helpful works are: John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, Charles Hodge, *Ephesians* and *Romans*, D. James Kennedy, *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?*, Vern Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*, Richard Pratt, *Designed for Dignity*, O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*. These are suggested but not exclusively required. Other books listed in the bibliography as well as those not listed but related to the topic of anthropology are acceptable. I can’t think of too many books that would *not* be related to anthropology, but choose the best ones.

4. Course Objectives

- (1) To develop a practical orientation to the subject of theology as the Bible speaks to every area of life and work, thus broadening the concept of salvation to include man's relationship to man and creation.
- (2) To work together with other pastors in applying theology to life and ministry
- (3) To develop a hunger for extensive reading, thus broadening one's horizon of ministry beyond church-related activities.
- (4) To develop strong Christian marriages that model the companionship of Christ and His church.

5. Course Structure

The course will follow the outline. At least fifteen hours of class attendance are required, plus outside reading, exams, and preparation of papers.

6. Course Requirements

- (1) Participate in fifteen hours of lectures and class discussions.
- (2) Complete the questions at the end of each of the eight lessons.
- (3) Read the Anthropology textbook plus an additional 300 or 600 pages from books listed in "Course Materials". Write a three page evaluation (Bachelors) or five page evaluation (Masters) based upon the required reading.
- (4) Write one exegesis paper of seven pages single-spaced (Bachelors); ten pages single-space (Masters) on a selected topic of anthropology—e.g. the image of God, marriage, the dominion mandate, etc.
- (5) Complete one final exam based 80% upon the questions at the end of the lessons and 20% on other material in the textbook.

7. Course Evaluation

- (1) Class attendance (15%)
- (2) Lesson Questions (25%)
- (3) Reading Reports (20%)
- (4) Exegesis Paper (15%)
- (5) Final Exam (25%)

8. Course Benefits

Anthropology comprehends man's whole life in relationship to God and mankind—work, marriage, micro and macro-economics, government, justice, etc. This course gives a sample of how theology helps the Christian interpret his connection with creation, including other people.

Lesson One—Man as the Image of God

Introduction

In our study of creation we notice the significance of man and his distinctiveness from the rest of creation, including animate creation (animals). Although he shares much with the animal world with respect to biological make-up, the Bible makes it clear that he is not a higher form of animal life, but the very image of God. We will take our starting point in the doctrine of anthropology from the book of Genesis where we read,

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27 NASB)

It is an amazing thing that whenever we look in the mirror, we are looking at the image of God. The very fact that people think about God or contemplate God is inescapable evidence that they are his image-bearers, and nothing else can account for this continual awareness of His presence, even when they want to have nothing to do with Him (Rom. 1: 18-21). When speaking to the pagan philosophers in Athens, Paul said that "...in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring'" (Acts 17:28). Paul is quoting from a pagan poem whose author is aware of a fundamental connection between the human race and someone who is separate and transcendent above the human race. Paul is aware that the Athenians' understanding is distorted by generations of sin, ignorance, and false philosophy; nevertheless, He uses this distorted understanding as a contact or common ground between himself (a Jewish Christian possessing the OT) and the Greek culture possessing only meager remnants of the truth of man's origins.

The argument in Acts 17 is basically the same as the argument of Romans 1:18-23. God's wrath against mankind is justified "because that which is known about God is evident within them [*mankind*]; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made [especially man], so that they are without excuse." In like manner Paul tells the Athenians, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). Just as the fact of creation (general revelation) produces accountability, the resurrection of Christ from the dead produces even greater accountability for unbelief. Notice that Paul does not speak of the resurrection as an event which **probably** happened, but one which **most certainly** happened.¹

The inescapable facts of the creation and the resurrection of Christ provide adequate grounds for God's demand for repentance. However, these facts would mean little to mankind if he did not experience within himself the inescapable image of His Creator. John Calvin said that man's knowledge of himself and his knowledge of God are intertwined (mixed together).

¹ In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul says that Christ appeared to many witnesses as proof of his resurrection (1 Cor. 15: 3-8). Christ also remained upon the earth a period of forty days after His resurrection as verifiable proof that He was truly alive (Acts 1: 3). Christians are not required to make a "leap of faith" by believing in something which never happened. Christ did, indeed, rise from the dead, and it is not irrational to believe something which has substantial, material evidence.

Nearly all the wisdom we possess...consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves....In the first place, no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God in whom he 'lives and moves' (Acts 17:28).²

...we cannot have a clear and complete knowledge of God unless it is accompanied by a corresponding knowledge of ourselves. This knowledge of ourselves is twofold: namely, to know what we were like when we were first created and what our condition became after the fall of Adam.³

What then does the Bible mean when it says that man is created in the image of God? This subject has challenged theologians for centuries and there is no absolute consensus of opinion on the elements of this image.

I. Man as the Image of God

A. Conscience—The Innate Sense of Right and Wrong

Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 teach us that Christians are being renewed to the new man who is created in true knowledge, righteousness and holiness. Since Christians are renewed to such a state, it can be safely assumed that knowledge, righteousness, and holiness were elements of man's original condition before the fall. These moral qualities were lost in the fall in that fallen man no longer possesses the ability to please God (in the highest sense of the word) in anything he does without faith in Christ (Rom. 8:7-8; Heb. 11:6). Even the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to God (Prov. 28:9). But although knowledge, righteousness, and holiness have been lost in the fall, this doesn't mean there is no trace of them left in the unbeliever. Any moral standard, however twisted and perverted, is evidence that man is inescapably the image of God. There is no other way to account for the fact that even the most primitive and violent people groups in the world have some standard of right and wrong. Christians are gradually being transformed into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29) which reflects this original knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; and these three will be perfected in us in the life hereafter.

In Romans 2:14-15, we are told that when Gentiles who have never been exposed to the Law of God as given to Moses "do instinctively the things of the Law," they indicate by such behavior that the work of the law is written on their hearts. This begs the question of whether conscience alone is a sufficient moral guide for the individual or whether the corporate conscience is sufficient to establish the civic laws of nations. If natural laws originate from the conscience through "the ordinary exercise of human reason" through the observation of general revelation, then is special revelation of moral law unnecessary?⁴ To this question, Scripture renders an unequivocal answer,

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (Romans 1:18-21 NASB)

² (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*. I. I.1.)

³ *Institutes* I. XV. 1.

⁴ J. Budziszewski, *Written on the Heart: the Case for Natural Law*, p. 109; cited by John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p. 243; henceforth abbreviated as *DCL*),

The moral law of God revealed in creation is understood by all men sufficiently to render them accountable, yet man's sin has rendered him unwilling and unable to believe it or obey it, or to understand it sufficiently to bring him to salvation. Consequently, the law of God evident in creation is not a sufficient guide to personal or civic morality⁵ The moral law in Scripture is therefore indispensable for our comprehension of God's will—individually and socially.

B. Will (Self-determination or Free Agency)

Man is not a machine nor does he act primarily in terms of instinct as animals do. Self-determination is the only thing which can account for the fact that man often acts out of accord with other human beings whether for good or ill. He does things which set him at odds against the society of others or which set him in a place of advantage and make him an object of admiration. He can steal, kill, or exploit; or he can succeed in marriage, business, politics, or his labor, etc. by an internal desire to rise above the average man. He can be extremely selfish or generous. The same external circumstances which may cause some to give up and underutilize their abilities may cause others to become more determined in their efforts to do whatever it takes to make a better life for themselves and their families.

Though man is affected by outside circumstances and internal abilities and limitations, how he responds to them is largely determined by free choices. Children who grow up homeless on the streets of Kampala, Uganda or New York City certainly will be more likely to pursue a life of crime than someone growing up in a loving family; yet, they can choose a more positive course by the determination of their will. On the other hand, children growing up in a better environment and with greater privileges may choose to reject their upbringing and pursue a life of crime and immorality.

Man has the freedom of choice in a relative sense. In other words, his freedom is not unlimited or totally free. Even if we set aside for a moment the problem of sin, men cannot make choices beyond their natural capacities. If someone is born without arms and legs, he cannot become a professional football player, no matter how strong his desire to play. A person with a mental handicap cannot become a nuclear physicist. All of us are born with certain natural limitations which prevent us from doing some things we may desire to do. Analogically, in the case of fallen man, his whole being (mind, heart, will, and body) is affected by sin so that he does not have the spiritual freedom to do what he ought to do. The Apostle Paul says that at one time all believers were dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph. 2: 1) and in Romans 3: 10-18 he gives a detailed description of man's spiritual condition, both Jew and Gentile. In fact, man's fallen condition is so complete that he cannot do anything which fundamentally pleases God in the highest sense.

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:6-8 NASB).

The reason for this inability to please God is that even the external good that man may do is not done for the right motive, the glory of God. Paul says that "...whatever is not from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). Unbelievers do not have evangelical faith; therefore, while they are free to choose an action which conforms to the standard of God's law, their choice is nevertheless marred with the wrong motive and the wrong goal (Gen. 6: 5). In the highest sense of pleasing God—with the right motive, goal, and action—unbelievers are not free *not* to sin. Man's "free" will, therefore, is not absolutely free. He is

⁵ Frame, *DCL*, p. 244

free to make choices between some lesser evil and another, but he is not free to “please” God in the highest sense of the word, “please”. If we ask the question whether the unbeliever sins when he makes choices about what clothes to put on in the morning or what to eat, we may say that every activity of the unbeliever to sustain his life is carried out with the motive of self-love and the goal of living his life as an atheist or practical atheist who takes no account of God’s prerogatives over his life and has no intention of living his whole life for God’s glory. So, in this sense, even putting on his socks and eating cereal is an abomination to God. Even his religious rituals are displeasing to God.

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.⁹
The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But He loves one who pursues righteousness.
(Proverbs 15:8-9 NASB)

Solomon was not speaking to atheists in this passage, but to the covenant people of Israel; and even to them he says that heartless religion *toward Yahweh* is an abomination.

The wicked hope to manipulate God by ritual magic, not to obtain his mercy by confessing and renouncing their sin (28: 13). They are willing to offer everything except what the Lord asked for, their heart....The upright, who reject magic, employ prayer and sacrifice as the means the gracious and holy God instituted to maintain his relationship with sinful humanity.⁶

At the same time, we must recognize genuine believers also act with impure motives and goals. Nothing we think or do is perfect, yet God accepts actions which are imperfect as “good” deeds. If God accepted only those actions or thoughts which were perfect, there would be very little He could accept. God also accepts as “good” some of the actions of unbelievers who can “please” God in a *lesser* sense than Paul is speaking about in Romans 8: 8. For example, God tells Jehu that he had “done well” in executing His judgment upon the house of Ahab (2 Kings 10: 30). Likewise, Jesus says that even sinners “do good” to those who do good to them (Lk. 6: 33). We may also say a society benefits from God’s blessings when the law of God affects the civic life of the nation.⁷

What does it mean to be truly free? Jesus said, “and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32). True freedom, then, is the freedom to do what we ought to do—the will of God (the right action conforming to God’s standards) done with the proper motive (the love of God) and with the proper goal (the glory of God). Christians are now free from the bondage of sin (Rom. 6) and may choose to obey God in heart and action. One day, we will be free from the ability to sin which means that we will not only do what we ought to do, but we will also do the right thing with the best possible motives and goals.

C. Rationality

⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, *Proverbs*, Vol. 1, p. 621

⁷ Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, p. 434; henceforth abbreviated as *DG*). As an example, the nation of Japan with a population less than 2 % Christian (Jason Mandryk, *Operation World—The Definitive Prayer Guide to Any Nation*, p. 489) has one of the largest economies in the world. Its economic strength is not the result of Christianity, but the result of hard work, savings, and the honoring of contracts—Christian principles taught in the Bible. The Japanese work force and business community is “doing good” in this lesser sense, and God honors their efforts by blessing their economy. They are building their economy on the “capital” of the Christian worldview.

Man is a reasoning creature (Gen. 2: 20a; 4: 20-22; 6: 14-15; Rom.12:2).⁸ This will be discussed more in depth when we discuss man's dominion over the earth. It is sufficient to say at this point that he is capable of using his mind to perform functions which reflect the creativity of His Creator. It is true that the higher orders of primates, especially chimpanzees, have reasoning skills and can use tools to a certain extent to accomplish tasks, but such ability is not worth comparing to the creativity and thinking skills of human beings. As Wayne Grudem quips, "No group of chimpanzees will ever sit around the table arguing about the doctrine of the Trinity or the relative merits of Calvinism or Arminianism!" One would think that if evolutionary theory were correct, we would have discovered many animals (extinct or living) falling somewhere in-between the intelligence level of the most intelligent primates and man; but the existence of such animals has never been conclusively proven from the fossil record, and there are no such animals living today. Furthermore, animals do not show improvements in their technical skills. They perform the same tasks—building nests, dams (beavers), hives—the same way they did thousands of years ago, while man is continually improving his methods of farming, construction, etc. and developing new technologies in medical care and computers.⁹

However, there is a limit to man's rational capability. As man's moral conscience has been affected by the fall, so also has his rationality. Man's sin has rendered him incapable of taking every thought captive in obedience to God (2 Cor. 10:5). He is still capable of reasoning, but his knowledge does not have as its starting point the fear of God. Lacking this perspective, man's rationality often drifts into irrationality. In other words, it is unrealistic for man to think he can gain a comprehensive understanding about anything without a previous commitment to the God who created all things.

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.²² Professing to be wise, they became fools... (Romans 1:21-22)

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Thomas Aquinas, the most celebrated theologian of the Roman Catholic Church, argued that

...faith in God had to be founded upon the independent results of man's reasoning and understanding. The Thomistic approach assumes that fallen man is capable of reasoning in a proper way (prior to repenting of sin and submitting to the Savior) and that knowledge and intelligible interpretation of experience are philosophically possible apart from God's [special] revelation.... Man's own intellect, when used at its best, is thus granted the ability and the right to pass judgment on the credibility of God's word (its worthiness of faith). Reason—set up as a judge, not simply used as a tool—takes a privileged position alongside of faith.¹⁰

The problem with Aquinas' conclusion was his starting point, Aristotelian philosophy, the assumed autonomy of natural reason.¹¹ Applying Aristotle to ethics, Aquinas believed that natural reason could lead man, even unbelieving man, to moral and intellectual virtues with their consequence, earthly happiness. Heavenly happiness, on the other hand, could only be achieved through special revelation (the Bible). Extending this thesis, he believed that men did not need the Scriptures to formulate the laws of the state or civil magistrate—reason alone could do this, hence, the emphasis on "natural law"

⁸ The ark Noah built was 150 meters long, 25 meters wide, and 15 meters high, quite a substantial boat, the likes of which were not equaled until the 20th century.

⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology—An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 446

¹⁰ Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic—Readings and Analysis*, p. 47; words in brackets mine).

¹¹ On this point, see also McNeill, "Ecclesiastes", Lesson Six, "Reasoning in a Circle".

revealed to all men through general revelation (creation).¹² The church, on the other hand, could use the Scriptures to guide men spiritually to heaven. Man, thus, has an earthly end facilitated by reason and a heavenly end facilitated by Scripture. This nature/grace dichotomy (duality) is the “main thrust of Roman Catholic teaching concerning the ends or goals of human life”.¹³

Aquinas’ dualism¹⁴ was just the opposite of Augustine who said, “I believe in order to understand.”

...Augustine argued that man’s understanding and reasoning function only upon the foundation of faith in God. Reason has no self-sufficient ability to interpret experience and no true authority to judge the veracity of Christian faith.¹⁵

Likewise, Calvin believed that the natural revelation of creation could not be properly understood by unbelievers because they look at nature through the wrong reading glasses, so to speak. Following Calvin, Cornelius Van Til (in the 20th century) maintained that there is no “brute fact” in the universe which does not require interpretation. All facts (observations, concepts) are interpreted facts. While the Christian will see the data of creation through the glasses of Scripture and his faith in God, the unbeliever will see this same data through the glasses of unbelief and will necessarily interpret them in a different light. The unbeliever has an “axe to grind” (something to prove) and that axe is his unwillingness to submit to the God who created him and has the authority over him. Consequently, it is not possible to “reason” someone into the kingdom of God through argumentation alone—though argumentation is necessary. Even the most compelling reason will not be sufficient to break down the walls of prejudice which he uses to support his own autonomy and self-sufficiency. Further, to present the case for Christianity to him as if it were something he can accept or reject on the basis of his autonomy is the same as capitulating (surrendering) to his sinful autonomy. Man’s reason becomes the standard by which anything—even the Bible—is judged to be true or false. Van Til’s method—followed by Bahnsen, John Frame, R. J. Rushdoony, and others—states the case for Christianity on the basis of the impossibility of the contrary. That is, without Christianity, there is no basis for believing anything because no other philosophy qualifies as a coherent (consistent) system of thought.¹⁶

Not only is man’s reasoning clouded by his inability to perceive spiritual truth, special revelation, (1 Cor. 2: 14), his ability to understand general revelation is clouded by this same unbelief. The theory of evolution has clouded men’s minds for the last 150 years since Charles Darwin’s first publication of his book, *The Origin of the Species*. In man’s fervent effort to rid himself of God and God’s authority over his life, most of the academic community has accepted this theory without compelling empirical proof—the only kind of proof the scientific community accepts—leading it down countless perilous roads applying the theory of evolution to biology, sociology, politics and economics.¹⁷ Although God’s common grace has allowed progress in most disciplines, unquestioning and religious acceptance (“evolutionism”) of the evolutionary paradigm (model) has hindered man’s dominion over the earth.

¹² I wonder what Aquinas would have thought about Adolf Hitler, Pol Pot, and Idi Amin? Yet, he was certainly a good enough student of history to have known the devastating results of man’s rationality previous to and including his own day.

¹³ Frame, *DCL*, pp. 299-300.

¹⁴ Generally, the belief that life is divided between the religious world and the non-religious world.

¹⁵ Bahnsen, p. 47

¹⁶ This involves the discipline of apologetics which is beyond the scope of this course.

¹⁷ Cf. David Noebel, *Understanding the Times*, for a Christian analysis of Hegelianism and Marxism. For a concise illustration of evolutionary theory applied to ethics, see McNeill, “The Crisis of Moral Relativity”; see also McNeill, “Ecclesiastes”, Appendix B, for an abbreviated explanation of the Hegelian assumptions of Marxism and where they led in the 20th century. One of the most helpful books on the subject of how philosophy affects history is *How Should We Then Live*, by Francis Schaeffer.

Evolutionism seems not to have affected medical and communications technologies as much as the zoological and social sciences, hence the progress in these and most other technologies. Yet, in so many disciplines, coherency has suffered from the insistence upon the evolutionary model.

Finally, those who attempt to fashion social and moral law upon natural theology fail to recognize the effects of sin upon one's application of natural law. The Roman Catholic Church appeals to natural law in its defense against abortion, but hundreds of years of natural law theory has not been successful in convincing unbelievers—and even many professing believers—that killing the unborn is the same thing as infanticide.

D. Emotion

Man is an emotional being capable of sadness, joy, anger, and humor, all of which are expressions attributed anthropomorphically to God in Scripture.¹⁸ Admonitions to “rejoice in the Lord always” indicate that man's emotions, as well as his mind and will are to be employed in the worship of God (1 Thes. 5:16). Further, we are commanded to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Dt. 6:5; Mark 12:30). We should understand from this statement that our faith is not just intellectual activity, but involves the whole person, including the emotions. This may be illustrated with a man's love for a woman. It is insufficient for a man to bring his wife into his home and simply provide for her physical needs without providing for her emotional needs as well. She needs to feel a strong sense of his delight in her as his wife. Likewise, God must sense our delight in Him.

Man's sense of humor must be a natural expression of God's sense of humor demonstrated in some of His amusing creatures (monkeys, three-toed sloths) as well as some of the humor used by Scripture writers (1Kings18:26-29; Esther 6:1-11; Prov. 21:9). Christ himself used humor on a number of occasions (Matt. 7:3-5; 23:24). God is not satisfied unless we devote every part of ourselves to Him in worship and service, justifying the appropriate use of humor in sermons.

The impassibility of God is a doctrine which denies that God has emotions and passions, or that God suffers. *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (II. 1.) states,

There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or *passions*, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free...most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal most just and terrible in his judgments; *hating all sin*, and who will by no means clear the guilty (emphasis mine).

In his commentary on this section of the confession, G. I. Williamson quotes A.A. Hodge who says,

“When the Scriptures, in condescension to our weakness, express the fact that God hears by saying that he has an ear, or that he exerts power by attributing to him a hand, they evidently speak metaphorically, because in the case of men spiritual faculties are exercised through bodily organs. And when they speak of his repenting, of his being grieved, or jealous, they use metaphorical language also, teaching us that he acts toward us as a man would when agitated by such passions.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Gen. 6:6; Jer. 18:7-10; Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30; Ps.2:4; 90:7. Attributing a human characteristics or emotions to God in an effort to better understand Him (e.g. Deut. 26: 8).

¹⁹ G. I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes*, p. 24

However, more recently, evangelical systematic theologians have challenged traditional formulations of this doctrine. Wayne Grudem, for instance, after quoting the *WCF*, says that

This statement goes beyond what we have affirmed...about God's unchangeableness, and affirms *more* than that God does not change in his being, perfections, purposes, or promises—it also affirms that God does not even feel emotions or “passions”....But the idea that God has no passions or emotions at all clearly conflicts with much of the rest of Scripture, and for that reason I have not affirmed God's impassibility in this book [Grudem's *Systematic Theology*]. Instead, quite the opposite is true, for God, who is the origin of our emotions and who created our emotions, certainly does feel emotions. God rejoices (Isa. 62: 5). He is grieved (Ps. 78: 40; Eph. 4: 30). His wrath burns hot against his enemies (Ex. 32: 10). He pities his children (Ps. 103: 13). He loves with everlasting love (Isa. 54: 8; Ps. 103: 17). He is a God whose passions we are to imitate for all eternity as we like our Creator hate sin and delight in righteousness.²⁰

Moreover, the expression in the *WCF*, “hating all sin” contradicts the doctrine of impassibility. How God can hate sin without passion; or, for that matter, love His children without passion? I love my wife with passion, and this passion must be derived from God's passion in whose image I am made. This subject highlights the difficulty in any attempt to formulate the doctrine of God. John Frame has also differed with the typical formulation of God's impassibility, although preserving the doctrine in some sense. God expresses emotions²¹ and He also appeals to the emotions of His people.

There is passion in God's words when he addresses Israel: “Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?” (Ezek. 33: 11)....Scripture does not distinguish “the emotions” as a part of the mind that is radically different from the intellect and the will....Scripture refers to God's individual emotions, but it doesn't specify any metaphysical or categorical difference between these, on the one hand, and his thoughts and decisions, on the other.

Nevertheless, some theologians have drawn a sharp line between emotions and other kinds of mental content, and they have put biblical references to God's emotions into the category of anthropomorphisms. On this view, for example, when Scripture says that God knows his people, he really does know them, but when it says that God is angry, he is not “really” angry.

Why is it that theologians have sometimes thought that emotions are unworthy of God?²²

The impassibility of God has often been guarded by theologians who did not wish to cast any doubt upon other incommunicable attributes²³ of God such as His omnipotence (all-powerfulness) as expressed in His eternal decrees, His immutability or unchangeableness, or His independence from His creatures (aseity).²⁴ But, as Frame points out, although God does not change, He nevertheless “ordains change.” He has ordained any “historical series of events” which necessarily evokes an evaluation from Him—a response. He approves or disapproves of the very event which he has ordained (for example, Solomon's request for wisdom or Aaron's golden calf). Moreover, His response to this event is also ordained—pleasure or disgust. Furthermore, God responds to these events “within history” as a God who is imminent²⁵ with His creatures, “imminent in all times and spaces”. Since every action

²⁰ Grudem, pp. 165-166, emphasis his

²¹ Frame mentions compassion, tender mercy, patience, rejoicing, delight, pleasure, pity, love, wrath, and jealousy. *DG*, p. 608

²² Frame, *DG*, pp. 608-609.

²³ Attributes of God which cannot be “communicated” or transferred to His people.

²⁴ Frame, *DG*, p. 610).

²⁵ The imminence of God is the nearness of God to His creatures, the complement to His transcendence, His distance and separateness from His creatures and from creation itself. God is both above creation and operates within creation. Both of these doctrines protect the Biblical concept of God who is not part of creation (pantheism), yet He actively operates in creation (contrary to Deism, the heresy which says that God created the world and then left it alone to operate independently, like a clock-maker who winds up his newly-made clock and lets it run on its own).

and God's responses to these actions are ordained or predetermined, we cannot say that God is "passive" to the activity of man or that He can be ontologically²⁶ (essentially) changed by man's actions. As Frame insists, "[God] has chosen to create a world that will often grieve him. So ultimately, he is active, rather than passive."²⁷

God's transcendence²⁸ is impassible in that He cannot suffer harm or loss. Suffering loss would imply that God is diminished in some way by losing one of His attributes—omniscience or omnipotence—in which case He may not be able to accomplish His immutable plan. In this scenario, God would no longer be God. Yet, God the Father does suffer the pain of separation from His Son on the cross, and the Son suffers the momentary loss of fellowship with the Father. Furthermore, Jesus suffered the same things we suffered in order to overcome these sufferings.²⁹

As indicated above, Scripture makes many references to God's emotions. These emotions are mirrored in Jesus, God incarnate in human flesh, who became angry about the desecration of the temple (Jn. 2: 14-16), who felt compassion for the multitudes who were like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9: 36), who had sorrow over the fate of Jerusalem (Lk. 13: 34), who wept at the death of His friend Lazarus (Jn. 11: 35). Cold-hearted intellect could not have incited the apostle Paul to make the following statement in Romans 9: 3, "For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh..." (Romans 9:3 NASB). Rather it was the "great sorrow" and "unceasing grief" in Paul's heart for the thousands of Jews who were perishing without Christ which produced such a penetrating declaration of self-sacrifice. Christians, therefore, must be passionate about the truth and rejection of the truth.

E. Spirituality and Immortality

Man is made both body and soul (or spirit). When his body dies, his spirit departs to everlasting life or everlasting death (Lk. 23: 43; Acts 7: 59). Nyirongo notes that in African traditional religions, "children are generally regarded as having no souls and when they die they become nothing. They have less or no life force."³⁰ However, the Bible does not distinguish between the spirituality of adults and children. Both are spiritual and immortal, possessing the image of God at conception; otherwise, the child is not human, and the abortion rights advocates have grist for their argument that a human being is not being murdered in abortion. Moreover, African tradition holds that man is transformed into an ancestral spirit at death by which he maintains a spiritual bond with his relatives—in contradiction to God's command to attempt no communication with the dead (Deut. 18: 11). If he is improperly buried, his spirit comes back to visit his relatives with various punishments, in partial explanation why African funeral rites are so elaborate and relatively expensive.³¹ The bodies of both believers and unbelievers will be resurrected and united with their spirits at the second coming of Christ (Jn. 5: 28-29). Although Genesis speaks of animals having a *nephesh* (soul or animating spirit, Gen. 1:21), nothing is ever said of animals departing to heaven or hell. Death is not the natural consequence of being a creature. God did not create man for death, but for life in fellowship with Himself. Had he not sinned, man would have been confirmed forever in eternal life on earth without ever having to experience death (Gen. 2:

²⁶ Ontology is the subject of the being or essence of something.

²⁷ Frame, *DG*, p. 610

²⁸ See n. 22 above.

²⁹ Frame, *DG*, pp. 614-615).

³⁰ Lenard Nyirongo, *The Gods of Africa or the Gods of the Bible?—the snares of African traditional religion in biblical perspective*, p. 103

³¹ Nyirongo, p. 99

17; Rom. 6: 23). The point emphasized here is that man's spirit is indestructible; it cannot be annihilated (completely extinguished). Moreover, only men have "eternity in their heart" (Ecc. 3: 11), believing in something beyond the grave. This innate belief is nothing less than a reflection of the immortality of God in whose image we are made.

1. Arguments against trichotomy

Some theologians have held to a distinction between the soul and the spirit of man, arguing for a trichotomous view of man consisting of body, soul, and spirit. However, from an exegetical standpoint, it is not possible to maintain the distinction between body and soul. The following points, along with Scripture citations, are taken from Wayne Grudem.³²

(1) The terms "soul" and "spirit" are used interchangeably in the Bible.

"Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour '? But for this purpose I came to this hour." (John 12:27 NASB)

When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me." (John 13:21 NASB)

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, (Hebrews 12:22-23 NASB)

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; (Revelation 6:9 NASB)

(2) The Bible speaks of either the soul departing or the spirit departing, but not both in the same statement.

It came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. (Genesis 35:18 NASB)

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' (Luke 12:20 NASB)

And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last. (Luke 23:46 NASB)

They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" (Acts 7:59 NASB)

(3) The Bible combines the terms "body and spirit" or "body and soul" to describe man.

"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28 NASB)

³² *Systematic Theology*, pp. 472-482.

I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1 Corinthians 5:5 NASB)

For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. (James 2:26 NASB)

(4) Sin is ascribed to both the soul and the spirit, thus removing the trichotomous belief that the human spirit (after conversion) is more pure than the human soul.

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, (1 Peter 1:22 NASB)

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Corinthians 7:1 NASB)

(5) The soul and spirit can do the same things.

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols. (Acts 17:16 NASB)

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, (Romans 8:16 NASB)

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:11 NASB)

My soul waits in silence for God only; From Him is my salvation. (Psalm 62:1 NASB)

Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name. (Psalm 103:1 NASB)

My soul keeps Your testimonies, And I love them exceedingly. (Psalm 119:167 NASB)

(6) Those texts of Scripture which appear to teach that man is body, soul, and spirit, can be explained in terms of Hebrew parallelism.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23 NASB)

Paul was a Jewish writer, and in this text he is using parallelism that is characteristic of Hebrew literature. For example, what does Jesus mean when He says, “And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND...” (Matthew 22:37 NASB). Can heart, soul, and mind be distinguished from one another, or is Jesus simply emphasizing the importance of loving God with all of one’s being?

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12 NASB)

All of these words are parallel terms for our inner being. The word of God penetrates every part of us.

2. Arguments against annihilationism

Recently (twenty-five years or so) the theory of annihilationism or conditional immortality has challenged the traditional evangelical doctrine of the unbeliever's immortality in hell. In *Essentials*, John Stott wrote, "The ultimate annihilation of the wicked should be accepted as a legitimate biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment."³³ J.I. Packer presents four reasons for the annihilationist position along with four objections to it.³⁴ Three reasons for annihilationism, along with Packer's objections, will be presented here.

(1) Everlasting hell is needlessly cruel. Packer points out that only God can determine what His justice demands are. Therefore, it is not gratuitous (unnecessary) cruelty that determines the final state of unbelievers, but divine justice. Further, the annihilationist theory that the wicked are annihilated only at the final judgment allows that they are tormented during the intermediate state between death and the final judgment. If everlasting hell is gratuitous cruelty, so is the intermediate state of the unbeliever (Lk. 16: 24-25). Therefore, God can be accused of cruelty, after all. To be cleared of all accusations of cruelty, God should annihilate the unbeliever at death, something the annihilationists do not teach.

(2) The joy of believers in heaven will be marred by the thought of loved ones still existing in hell. In answer, Packer first says that God's joy is not diminished in the expression of His holy retribution. Likewise, since believers will share His holiness—loving what He loves, including His justice, and hating what He hates—their joy will also be undiminished at the punishment of loved ones who will appear to them as they also appear to Christ who does not "know them" intimately (Matt. 25: 12).

(3) The NT terms of destruction, death, perdition, punishment, worm, and fire could mean annihilation rather than eternal punishment. To this argument Packer remarks,

I will not say that these expedients are impossible, though none of them convinces me; but I will say, as emphatically as I can, that none of them is natural. In all the contexts, the natural meaning of the death-destruction-punishment-fire language is entry upon ruin and distress, not non-existence; and in all Bible study it is surely the natural meaning that should be embraced. Conditionalists' attempts to evade the natural meaning of some dozens of relevant passages impress me as a prime case of avalanche-dodging.³⁵

F. Body

There has been much debate over whether man's body is also an aspect of the image of God. After all, God is spirit and does not have a material body. Nevertheless, the body of man is the organ which serves as a house for the soul and is the instrument of righteousness or unrighteousness (Rom. 6:12-13). This means that man sins by using his body and does good deeds also with his body. It is also the temple of the Holy Spirit which is why Christians must take care not to engage in the sins of the body, including the sin of sexual immorality (1Cor. 6:15-19). Paul further argues that the blood of Christ has purchased not only our souls but our bodies as well, which puts us under obligation to glorify God not only with our souls but with our bodies (v.20).

Moreover, the physical parts of man reflect the character and abilities of God in many ways. Although God does not have a body like man, God still sees, hears, speaks, smells, etc. Man's ability to procreate is, furthermore, a reflection of God's ability to create man and woman in His

³³ *Essentials*, John Stott; cited in *The J.I. Packer Collection*, Alister McGrath, ed., p. 223

³⁴ McGrath, pp. 223-224

³⁵ McGrath, p. 223

own image.³⁶ It is also a reflection of the new creation in Christ which comes about only through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

When Christians are resurrected at the end of the age, we will be resurrected bodily. Our souls (spirits) will already be in heaven unless we are alive when Christ comes back. Otherwise we will live in heaven without our bodies until the second return of Christ during which our bodies will rise from the grave (as Christ's body did) and will meet the Lord in the air (1 Thes. 4:13-18; 2 Cor. 5:1-6). Remember that when Jesus rose from the dead, He rose bodily (Luke 24:39) and ascended into heaven bodily (Acts 1:9-11). His spirit was already with God the Father the moment He died (Luke 23:43, 46). Jesus' resurrection is a paradigm (model) for our resurrection (Col. 1:18). The only difference is the delay in time between our death and our bodily resurrection which could be separated by thousands of years. Nevertheless, the ultimate resurrection of the body teaches us that it is not less important than the spirit in God's plan for humanity. Just as the body is the instrument with which we express the righteousness of God, it is also the instrument with which we exercise dominion over the earth both now and in the new heavens and new earth. As God created the earth, so the image-bearers of God will require bodies to fulfill their destiny in dominion.

The importance of the body distinguishes Christianity from other religions, including African traditional religions which hold that while man becomes an ancestral spirit, his body rots in the ground.³⁷ The bodily resurrection of Christ once and for all establishes the importance of the body in God's plan for man's destiny.

G. Priestly Dominion—the Cultural Mandate, the Great Commission, and the Consummation

Some theologians do not wish to include dominion as an element of the image of God. Instead, they say that God's image is what enables man to exercise dominion. However one views it, the cultural mandate is the very emphasis of man's image found in the Genesis account. When we look at Genesis 1:26 immediately after the reference to man being made in the image of God, God says, "...and let them rule over the fish of the sea...and over all the earth..." Grammatically, the cultural mandate is connected to the image of God in the closest possible way.

We find the same emphasis in Genesis 1:27-28.

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
²⁸ God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."
 (Genesis 1:27-28 NASB)

This is the second time in three verses that man and woman's rule over creation has been mentioned, and both times their rule is connected in the text with the fact that man and woman are created in the image of God. In fact, nowhere in Genesis 1 does it say that "God ruled". The text says that God created, the Spirit of God was moving, God said, God saw, God separated, God made, God called, God placed, and God blessed; but the text never says that God ruled, although His ultimate rule is presupposed throughout the whole account. Then, in Genesis 2:15, God places man in the garden to

³⁶ Grudem, p. 448.

³⁷ Nyirongo, pp. 99, 101

cultivate it and keep it. Bearing children, cultivating and keeping the garden, along with ruling the animal world, defines what God means by ruling and having dominion.

God does what man cannot do. He creates the world and all the natural forces which govern the world out of nothing, but He refrains from doing what man can do. He does not create additional human beings from the dust or ribs, thus populating the world by His creative word as He did with Adam and Eve. He also does not cultivate and keep the garden; man can do that. The rest of the chapter is given as a brief explanation of what dominion implies. It implies procreation (multiplication through childbirth), and subduing (not exploiting) the earth's resources for the glory of God. God created man and woman for the purpose of glorifying Him through their work. This is clear from the texts I have cited from Genesis, and it is also clear from human experience. Most of what we do each week—or what we should do most of the time each week—is work. If we exist for the purpose of glorifying God, then it is reasonable to assume that God should be glorified by that which occupies most of our time.

There is a close relationship between the cultural mandate and the Great Commission in Matthew 28: 18-20.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20 NASB)

Jesus' commission requires that we make disciples ("learners"), not converts. Disciples are those who are continuously learning how to please the Lord, how to observe all that He commanded His original disciples about living their lives in the presence of God, "*Coram Deo*". Discipleship is not limited to teaching others how to evangelize, although learning how to share one's faith is certainly part of being a disciple. Rather, it consists in teaching Jesus' disciples how to apply his commandments to every aspect of one's life—marriage, family, work, etc.—and being able to give a reasonable, biblical account of why we think and act the way we do (1 Pet. 3: 15). Christians must conform every thought to the obedience of Christ's word (2 Cor. 5: 10; Rom. 12: 2).

If we understand the Great Commission in this broad, comprehensive sense, then it is not difficult to comprehend its connection with the cultural mandate. Christians are redeemed in order to fulfill the original cultural mandate in Genesis. This does not mean that fallen man has been unable to subdue the creation in any sense. He has done so through common grace. The cultural achievements of Cain's line in Genesis 4: 20-22 are evident—building cities, the development of animal husbandry and metallurgy (using metal to make tools and implements), and the composition and performance of music. Grammatical analysis shows Lamech's poem (Gen. 4: 23-24) to have the same features of Hebrew parallelism found in the Psalms and Proverbs. However, cultural perversion is also evident in his boast of homicide.

"Adah and Zillah
 Listen to my voice,
 You wives of Lamech,
 Give heed to my speech,
 For I have killed a man
 for wounding me;
 And a boy
 for striking me;

²⁴ If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

John Frame has traced the promise of seed and land through the biblical covenants to the Great Commission.³⁸ The promise begins in the original cultural mandate to Adam and Eve, "God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:28 NASB). The command-promise of being fruitful and multiplying is the promise of seed. The command-promise of subduing the earth and ruling over the animal world is the promise of land. This command-promise was not suspended after man fell into sin or even after the earth was so thoroughly polluted with sin as to make it uninhabitable (cf. Gen. 6: 5). God would destroy man and purify the earth with a flood; but afterward, He would repeat the cultural mandate and commence with the original plan of filling the earth with His image-bearers who would subdue the earth: "As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it" (Genesis 9:7 NASB). Although the command to subdue the earth is absent in v. 7, the promise in vv. 9-16 to not interrupt the normal cycle of life indicated that Noah and his family could resume man's original task of ruling. The next thing we find in the narrative is Noah planting a vineyard (v. 20), a resumption of Adam's task in cultivation. This, in turn, is followed by a reminder that despite God's purification of the earth with water, man himself is not yet purified, but still fallen. Noah demonstrates counterfeit culture by misusing the fruits of dominion—he gets drunk. Noah's success mixed with failure foreshadows the history of culture in both discovering the richness of the earth's potential along with its potential for misuse.

The line of Cain will develop the arts and sciences; their seed will "play the harp and flute" and forge "all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron"....They will write poetry that gives full and creative expression to the human spirit, and in due course they will found universities and grant degrees in the arts and sciences. But yet it will all be depraved. They will build cities but name them after themselves and use them to defend themselves against one another. The good gold and wealth outside the garden (2: 11-12), given by the Creator to enrich life, will also arouse their greed and occasion war.³⁹

The Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants also reiterate the command-promise of land and seed.⁴⁰ God promises him the land of Canaan and descendants through Sarai as numerous as the stars of the heavens and sand on the seashore (Gen. 22: 17). After the twelve tribes of Israel immigrate to Egypt, the promise of seed continues with the rapid multiplication of Israelites. In the text of Exodus 1: 7-20, vv. 8-20a are [bracketed] by vv. 7 and 20b which provide the emphasis of the text, land and seed.

But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them. (Exodus 1:7 NASB)

So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. (Exodus 1:20 NASB)

God renews the promise of land with Moses (Ex. 3: 7-8).

"So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. (Exodus 3:8 NASB)

³⁸ *DCL*, pp. 308-311.

³⁹ Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, p. 268

⁴⁰ Frame, *DCL*, p. 309).

The phrase, “a land flowing with milk and honey” is repeated three more times in Exodus and eight more times in the Pentateuch. The sacramental significance of the land is illustrated powerfully by Naboth’s refusal to sell King Ahab his vineyard at any price (1 Kings 21:3) and by the seventy years of exile in Babylon to provide the land its Sabbath rest (Lev. 25: 4; 2 Chron. 36: 20-21). The land symbolized a place of rest and refuge and served as a type of salvation rest in the new heavens and earth.

In the Davidic covenant, God repeats His promise for Israel to have a place of her own to live in safety from her enemies,

“I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly” (2 Samuel 7:10 NASB).

But not only will the nation enjoy a place of their own, David himself will have a “house”, an enduring dynasty consisting of his descendants (a seed) who will rule the earth (2 Sam. 7: 4-16; Ps. 72, cited by Frame).

The theme of seed and land is continued into the new covenant by means of the Great Commission. Christ is the promised seed who “takes title” not only to the land of Palestine but to the whole world, even the whole heavenly realm: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18 NASB). Furthermore, Jesus is the Son in whom the Father is “well pleased”, and by His perfect obedience has fulfilled the requirements of the dominion mandate given to man at the beginning of creation. Yet, instead of consummating His rule immediately, Christ sends His disciples into the world to perfect and complete the dominion made possible through His active and passive obedience—His perfect obedience to the law and submissive obedience as the atoning sacrifice for sin. Christians may now continue the work of subduing the earth for the glory of God—not the glory of man (Gen. 1:1)—by obeying everything Christ commanded us.

While the command to fill the earth biologically with new image-bearers continues, the Great Commission gives us a new dimension to the multiplication of children. We are commanded through the Great Commission not merely to multiply physical seed, but disciples (spiritual seed) who are committed to observing Christ’s commandments. Thus, both the church and family coordinate with one another to comply with the original cultural mandate and the Great Commission. Moreover, through the obedience of this spiritual seed throughout the world, “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11: 9).

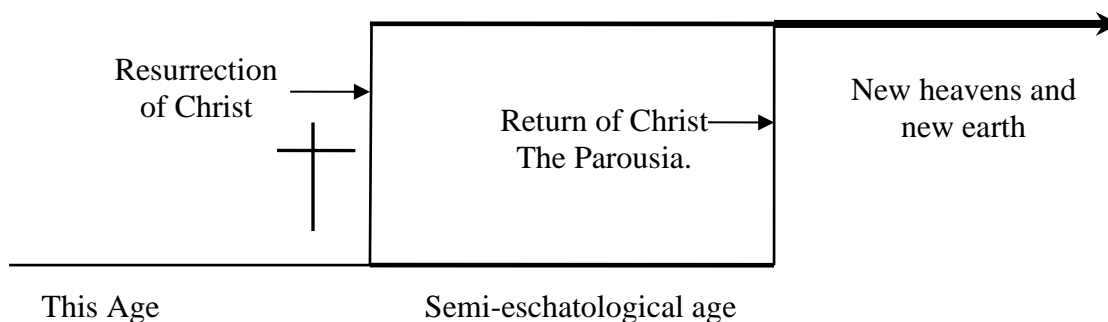
The Great Commission, therefore, can be understood as a republication of the cultural mandate for the semi-eschatological age. Unlike the original cultural mandate, it presupposes the existence of sin and the accomplishment of redemption. It recognizes that if the world is to be filled with worshipers of God, subduing the earth as his vassal kings, they must first be converted to Christ through the preaching of the gospel. But when the evangelization of the world is complete, the result will be that envisaged in the cultural mandate.⁴¹

Diagram A

The Age to Come
realized in part but
not in full

Fully realized in existence

⁴¹ Frame, *DCL*, p. 310



The above diagram is slightly modified from Frame,⁴² and Frame's is a slight modification of Geerhardus Vos' two-age structure.⁴³ "This age" begins at the fall of Adam and continues until the return of Christ, the Parousia. "The age to come" begins at the resurrection of Christ and continues through all eternity. Therefore, "this age" and "the age to come" co-exist simultaneously (at the same time) between the resurrection of Christ and the return of Christ—the "semi-eschatological" age in which we live (represented by bold lines). The age to come (partially realized from the resurrection of Christ until the *Parousia*; 1Cor. 13: 9-12) will be fully realized or consummated at His return and will continue eternally in this fully realized state (represented by the bolder line).

Our salvation is complete in Christ, but sin will not be destroyed until his return. Or, as biblical theologians often put it, salvation is "already" here, but also "not yet" fully here. Christ has all authority, but Satan still has much power....There is much mopping up to be done.⁴⁴

Therefore, our task is not **either** the Great Commission of making disciples *or* subduing the earth for the glory of God. It is **both**. The two commands are correlative (mutually dependent on one another). We cannot adequately fulfill the creation mandate of subduing the earth without understanding how God wants it subdued. Although the Bible is not a textbook on science, technology, or ecology (earth-keeping), it still gives us the principles necessary in governing such disciplines. Reciprocally, we cannot adequately make disciples without the evangelical witness of doing our work "heartily as for the Lord rather than for men" (Col. 3: 23). Unbelievers have little reason to believe our testimony if we fail to demonstrate our faith on a day to day basis through our work.⁴⁵ By all means necessary, Christians must "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" which applies to every aspect of life and work.

The sacredness of the Christian's labor on earth is further supported by the biblical association between the Garden of Eden and the OT temple and tabernacle. Not only was Adam to rule the earth, he was appointed to rule it as a priest-king. G.K. Beale has suggested a comprehensive biblical theology of the Garden of Eden as the typical, arboreal temple of God and the new heavens and new earth as the antitype and fulfillment of the OT tabernacle and temple.⁴⁶ Beginning in Genesis, Beale demonstrates the similarity between the terminology of the cultural mandate of Genesis with the priestly duties found in the Pentateuch. All verses below are cited in Beale except where noted.

⁴² *DCL*, pp. 278-279

⁴³ Gerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, p. 38.

⁴⁴ *DCL*, pp. 278-279.

⁴⁵ For a penetrating discussion on the need for pleasure in our work, see Wendell Berry, *What Are People For?*, "Pleasures of Eating," p. 152.

⁴⁶ G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*. I am indebted to Dr. Julian Zugg for directing my attention to Beale's work and the temple theme in Genesis.

Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate [*abad*] it and keep [*shamar*] it. (Genesis 2:15 NASB)

As Beale points out, the words “cultivate” and “keep”, within a 15 word range in the OT, are also used of Israelites guarding God’s word or keeping the service of the tabernacle.⁴⁷

"They shall perform [*shamar*—“keep, watch, or preserve”] the duties for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to do [*abad*—“work, serve”] the service of the tabernacle.

⁸ "They shall also keep [*shamar*] all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, along with the duties of the sons of Israel, to do [*abad*] the service of the tabernacle. (Numbers 3:7-8 NASB)

"But at the age of fifty years they shall retire from service in the work and not work [*abad*] any more.²⁶

"They may, however, assist their brothers in the tent of meeting, to keep [*shamar*] an obligation, but they *themselves* shall do [*abad*] no work. Thus you shall deal with the Levites concerning their obligations." (Numbers 8:25-26 NASB)

"So you shall attend [*shamar*] to the obligations of the sanctuary and the obligations of the altar, so that there will no longer be wrath on the sons of Israel. ⁶ "Behold, I Myself have taken your fellow Levites from among the sons of Israel; they are a gift to you, dedicated to the LORD, to perform [*abad*] the service for the tent of meeting. (Numbers 18:5-6 NASB)

Thus they are to keep [*shamar*] charge of the tent of meeting, and charge of the holy place, and charge of the sons of Aaron their relatives, for the service of the house of the LORD. (1 Chronicles 23:32 NASB)

"Yet I will appoint them to keep [*shamar*] charge of the house, of all its service and of all that shall be done in it. (Ezekiel 44:14 NASB)

Waltke also makes note of Adam’s responsibility to guard [*shamar*] the garden.

Ironically, by his not driving Satan from the garden, Adam was expelled by Satan.⁴⁸

Waltke’s statement should be qualified. Adam’s expulsion from the garden was primarily by God’s judgment, but it was through the secondary agency of Satan’s temptation. Had Adam mastered Satan by exercising dominion over the serpent, he would have avoided God’s judgment and expulsion.

“Keeping” and “serving” are also used in the OT context of keeping the commandments of God and serving Him only.

"But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following Me, and do not keep [*shamar*] My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve [*abad*] other gods and worship them,⁷ then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight. So Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. (1 Kings 9:6-7 NASB)

"Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep [*shamar*] His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve [*abad*] Him with all your heart and with all your soul." (Joshua 22:5 NASB, not cited in Beale)

⁴⁷ Beale, p. 68

⁴⁸ Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology* p. 259

Although it has been argued by some theologians that the Adamic probation was not a covenant in the strict sense of the word, the reference in 1 Kings 9 supports the view that Israel's disobedience and its consequences is a repetition of Adam's. Israel was cut off from the land of promise due to disobedience to the covenant. Adam's expulsion from the garden was likewise the result of disobedience.⁴⁹ Moreover, as Adam failed to serve [*abad*] God with a whole heart, Israel also failed by serving [*abad*] other gods. In fact, Adam's fall was a foreshadowing for Israel that she would not be able to keep the terms of the Mosaic Covenant, as Moses had prophesied (Deut. 30: 1-3). If a perfect man in the perfect environment becomes a rebel, how can faithless Israel keep the Law in a land racked by debauchery?⁵⁰

In 1 Kings 6, descriptions of Solomon's temple replicate the garden images of Genesis.

Then he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, inner and outer *sanctuaries*. (1 Kings 6:29 NASB)

So *he made* two doors of olive wood, and he carved on them carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold; and he spread the gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees.³³ So also he made for the entrance of the nave four-sided doorposts of olive wood³⁴ and two doors of cypress wood; the two leaves of the one door turned on pivots, and the two leaves of the other door turned on pivots.³⁵ He carved *on it* cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers; and he overlaid *them* with gold evenly applied on the engraved work. (1 Kings 6:32-35 NASB)

The garden images of Genesis are also repeated in Ezekiel and Revelation in association with the temple.

Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. (Genesis 2:10 NASB)

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,² in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve *kinds of* fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:1-2 NASB)

Then he brought me back to the door of the house; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the house faced east. And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar. (Ezekiel 47:1 NASB)

Thus, the restored heavens and earth will be the fulfillment of God's intention to dwell with His people in intimate communion who serve Him day and night in His cosmic temple. As Adam was expelled from the original garden-temple because of disobedience, the new covenant people will be allowed entrance because of Christ's obedience. In the Mosaic economy this communion was typified by the entrance of the high priest once a year into the holy of holies, and by the entrance of the greater High Priest, Jesus Christ, into the heavenly tabernacle with His sacrificial blood. When Christ entered the heavenly holy of holies, the veil separating God from His people was torn, thus allowing all those who believe in Christ into eternal intimate communion with God. The whole earth will serve as the eschatological temple of God with God's people serving him and keeping His commandments. However, as no unclean person was allowed into the OT temple, so also no unbeliever defiled by sin will be permitted into the heavenly temple-city.

⁴⁹ Cf. Beale, pp. 68-69

⁵⁰ Waltke, p. 255

He stationed the gatekeepers of the house of the LORD, so that no one would enter *who was* in any way unclean. (2 Chronicles 23:19 NASB)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea.² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:1-2 NASB)

²⁷and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21:27 NASB)

The garden-temple is the archetype⁵¹ of harmonious existence enjoyed between God, man, and creation unmarred by human sin.

The garden of Eden represents a territorial space within creation that is qualitatively better than the rest of creation, a unique blessed place. In this special space, God invites human beings to enjoy a state of bliss consisting of harmony with God, with one another, with animals, and with the land. It is peace and wholeness, “the celestial city” with the wide expanse reserved for humanity. Human beings sense they were designed to belong in the garden; it is their home in the ultimate sense.

The garden, by extension, is a temple—God is uniquely present in a way he is not elsewhere. In this garden people meet God and walk and talk with him. As a temple, it is the axis between heaven and earth.⁵²

The Bible ends where it begins, in the dwelling place God makes for His people to walk with Him in fellowship. In Revelation 21, we come to the climax and goal of history, God dwelling among His sinless people in peace, security, and perfect fellowship (v. 3b). Revelation 21 is the ultimate and consummate fulfillment of the tabernacle principle in the OT when God dwelled in the midst of Israel. Further progression of God’s dwelling among men is found in the building of Solomon’s temple and the second temple in Haggai. **Dwelling among** His people is heightened with the incarnation of Christ in the first advent when Joseph is informed of Jesus’ impending birth to Mary. The child would be called Immanuel, which means “God with us” (Matt. 1: 23). Jesus died, was resurrected, and ascended to God, leaving His church physically but not leaving them as orphans; rather, He sent the Holy Spirit, who continues the progression of the tabernacle principle. This **in-dwelling** of the Holy Spirit will continue eternally along with the final installment of God’s promise to dwell with us, the second coming of Christ in the flesh who will rule physically and visibly in the new creation.

Before the fall, God “walked” among Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen. 3: 8), but this fellowship was interrupted by the sin of man and would have been suspended permanently were it not for God’s intervention in putting enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3: 15). The **new heaven and new earth** are now coming from heaven to replace the corrupted heaven and earth subjected not of its own will to futility but by the will of God because of man’s sin (Rom. 8: 18-25). The old has passed away. In this passage the Apostle Paul personifies⁵³ the inanimate, non-rational creation as a pregnant woman who groans and suffers the pains of childbirth awaiting the birth of a new baby, the revealing of the sons of God (vv. 22, 19), a revealing that Paul elsewhere in this passage calls the redemption of our body (v. 23). In other words, creation is waiting anxiously for the consummation of our salvation signaled by the glorified bodies of believers rising from the grave.

⁵¹ The original type

⁵² Waltke, p. 255

⁵³ To treat as a person

With the coming of Christ and the consummation of the kingdom of God, the creation itself will be **set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God** (v. 21). It will be placed under new management—redeemed humanity who capably and flawlessly subdues the creation benevolently without exploitation for the glory of God. The freedom of living in the new creation with resurrected bodies suitable for this purpose (1 Cor. 15: 50, 53) will complete (consummate) the salvation promised to God’s people. Moreover, glorification—as the consummation of salvation—is something enjoyed corporately by the believer in conjunction with the whole body of Christ. As Murray has noted,

This truth that glorification must wait for the resurrection of the body advises us that glorification is something upon which all the people of God will enter *together* at the same identical point in time. There is no priority for one above another....Each saint of God who dies has his own appointed season and therefore his own time to depart and be with Christ. We can see that this event is highly individualized. But it is not so with glorification. One will not have any advantage over another—all together will be glorified with Christ....

There is much for our instruction in this fact that the final act of the application of redemption is one that affects all alike at the same moment of time in the final accomplishment of God’s redemptive design. It is as a body that the whole company of the redeemed will be glorified....It is union with Christ that binds together all the phases of redemptive love and grace. It was in Christ the people of God were chosen before the foundation of the world. It was in Christ they were redeemed by his blood—he loved the church and gave himself for it.⁵⁴

Glorification is also seen to be inseparably connected with the renewal of creation. Not only are believers delivered from the weakness of our perishable bodies beset with remaining sin, but creation itself is released simultaneously from the **slavery to corruption** (v. 21) occasioned by our sin. Creation is anxiously waiting for believers to receive their glorified bodies. It now suffers from the mismanagement of sinful man who seeks to establish his own kingdom through exploitation of other men and creation itself.

The **sea** was symbolic of danger, mystery, and the birth-place of chaotic, seemingly unconquerable powers challenging God’s world order (Dan. 7: 3; Isa. 27: 1; Rev. 13: 1).⁵⁵ As such, the sea no longer exists in the new heaven and new earth, a place of peace and order. But the sea as originally created by God as “good” continues (Gen. 1: 10). Ocean-lovers, take heart! The sea will no longer be a place of danger, and the entire earth will be a place of marvelous wonder and complete freedom of exploration. No one will die from climbing mountains or swimming in the oceans (no shark attacks!).

The new creation is described as **the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God**. Once more we see the continuity between the OT people of God and the NT church. Jerusalem was the city where God placed His name. It was to be His dwelling place (1 Kings 11: 36). As the old creation proceeded from the **word of God**, the new creation comes down **out of heaven from God**. It is not man-made (Dan. 2: 34, 45), and therefore, unflawed and uncorrupted, **the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God** (Heb. 11: 10). Throughout history to the present day, men have sought hopelessly to build their own lasting kingdoms independently of God on foundations of sand (Matt. 7: 26). Daniel and Revelation present these kingdoms as kingdoms of beasts devouring and being devoured, while Jesus likens them to crumbling houses unable to stand against the floods and wind.

⁵⁴ John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, pp. 175-176

⁵⁵ Poythress, p. 185

But the city of God will stand. It is personified as a woman **made ready as a bride adorned for her husband**, Jesus Christ. She is made ready through the trials and testing she has endured as God's people, purified through suffering. This new Jerusalem is parallel to the new heaven and new earth replacing the old creation which is passing away. What will this passing away entail? According to Peter, the old creation will melt away with intense heat.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10 NASB)

However, this description is not necessarily one of annihilation or total destruction. Intense heat is used in the process of **purification**, burning up every foreign element inconsistent with the final product desired. The renewal of the earth is analogous to the renewal of the body of every believer at the resurrection. The believer's body is not annihilated but reconstituted into an indestructible body (1 Cor. 15: 35-57).⁵⁶ Scripture presents the final destruction by fire as analogous to the first destruction of the world by water (2 Pet. 3: 5-7). In the first destruction, the world was washed of all evil but not annihilated. Analogously, the world at the end of this age will be purified of all evil by fire but not annihilated. The destruction of the world is elsewhere called **regeneration**, the renewal or "beginning again" (*palliggenesia*) of creation (Mat. 19: 28).⁵⁷ As we have seen from Romans 8: 18-25, creation eagerly awaits the revealing of the sons of God, the redemption of their bodies. Creation does not eagerly await its own complete annihilation, but its renewal and purification from the destructive effects of man's sin. Everything God made at creation was **good**, but not complete in the sense of being fully developed. God left its completion to man's ingenuity and creativity reflective of God's creativity. Nevertheless, there was no flaw in the original creation calling for its destruction.⁵⁸

The "purification" view of the passing away of the present heavens and earth is consistent not only with **regeneration** in Matthew's gospel but also the prophetic descriptions of Isaiah who envisions the reversal of the effects of the fall upon the original creation when man dwelled harmoniously with the animal world and when the "tooth and claw" violence of the animal kingdom had not begun.⁵⁹

And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. ⁷ Also the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. ⁹ They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰ Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious. (Isaiah 11:6-10 NASB)

As the animal world in Genesis is literal, I take this prophecy as literally fulfilled in the new creation.⁶⁰ But this does not eliminate the symbolic significance, particularly the reversal of enmity between man

⁵⁶ Poythress, p. 185

⁵⁷ Hodge, p. 852

⁵⁸ Yet another reason I disagree with a reading of Genesis demanding billions of years of geological cataclysm, death, and decay. Where is the evidence from Genesis? There is only evolutionary presuppositionalism?

⁵⁹ I totally reject any interpretation of Genesis which pays more attention to evolutionary and geological theories—not scientific "facts"—than it does the express statements of Scripture written in historical narrative. I see no evidence in the Genesis account of violence, death, decay and destruction before the entrance of man's sin.

⁶⁰ So also E.J. Young and Delitzsch

and the serpent which was employed by Satan to do his deceptive work. Even this archetypal enmity will be removed when the knowledge of God fills the earth. The relevant issue is that the passing away of the old order of creation will give place to the restoration of relationships between man and man and between man and beast reflecting the original, unmarred creation.

Summary and Conclusion

Although man resembles animals biologically, there is much that is distinctive to his nature. He is made in the very image of God with an innate sense of right and wrong—a carryover from the true knowledge of God which Adam enjoyed before the fall. The Christian is progressively being renewed to this true knowledge day by day (Col. 3: 10). Man also has will or self-determination, acute reason, emotion, immortality and dominion over the earth and all animals—all of which distinguish him from the animal world. Every aspect of this image has been marred by sin but not eradicated (removed) (see Lesson 2). Fallen, sinful man is still in the image of God and instinctively exercises dominion over the earth, though not consciously for the glory of God. Christ has come to renew men to their original, unflawed image, thus enabling them to carry out His original purpose in cultivating the earth for His glory. Thus, there is a close relationship between the creation (cultural) mandate in Genesis with the Great Commission in Matt. 28. The command to make disciples is not merely for the purpose of getting people to heaven, but making them fit and equipped to carry out their future obligations as cultivators of the new heavens and new earth.

The twin themes of land and seed find expression throughout Scripture, beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, continuing through the promises to Abraham and their fulfillment in the Land of Promise inhabited by the Israelites, and culminating eschatologically in the new earth inhabited by God's elect people. The salvation of God's people is not complete without a place for them to live and work for God's pleasure. Moreover, the eternal dwelling place of God's people is the cosmic temple, the new heavens and earth, typified in the OT tabernacle and temple.

Lesson One Questions

1. How is the image of God a “common ground” for any discussion with the unbeliever about the existence of God? How does Paul use this “common ground” approach in his address to the Athenians? Interact with the Scriptural text.
2. Name the various elements of the image of God in man and give a one or two sentence summary of each one.
3. Is the special revelation of God's law in the Bible necessary or unnecessary to guide us morally, both individually and corporately? Explain your answer.
4. What are the limitations of will or self-determination?
5. What do I mean by “pleasing” God in the highest sense of the word or by “pleasing” Him in the lower sense of the word? Use a relevant text of scripture to support your answer.
6. Discuss briefly John Frame's and Wayne Grudem's arguments against the traditional formulations of the impassibility of God.
7. Why is the body also one element of the image of God? Explain your answer with respect to man's destiny of dominion.
8. Demonstrate exegetically from Scripture why man's dominion is a prominent element of the image of God.
9. Discuss the relationship between the cultural (dominion) mandate and the great commission. Include some of Frame's treatment of the land and the seed.
10. Briefly discuss the relationship between the temple and the new heavens and earth.

Lesson Two—The Continuation of Man as God’s Image after the Fall

Introduction

There have been serious differences of opinion historically about what happened to the image of God when man fell into sin. Some theologians have said that since the image only consisted of original knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, the image was completely lost in the fall—the Lutheran position. We can see that one must have a correct starting point on this subject in order to come to a correct conclusion. From the discussion above, it should be clear that the image of God includes much more than original knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. It also includes the inherent sense of right and wrong, rationality, self-determination (free agency), the dominion instinct to subdue the earth creatively, etc. Besides, if the totality of the image of God was lost in the fall, man then would be nothing more than an intelligent animal, something which is clearly disproven from the Biblical account of man after the fall (cf. Gen. 4: 20-22).

Thankfully, the Bible does not leave us in any doubt. Man, as a fallen sinner, is still the very image of God. It is true that some aspects of the image are lost, including true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. He is no longer capable of loving God with all his heart, mind and soul. Yet we have already said that man retains an inescapable awareness of right and wrong and according to Romans 1, he is inescapably religious. He is forced by his inward nature to worship *something* simply because he was created for the purpose of worship. The problem is that because he is fallen, he worships the wrong thing or things.

II. The Image of God after the Fall

A. Physical Violence—An Attack upon God (Genesis 9:6)

Genesis 9:6 establishes the death penalty for anyone daring to murder another human being.⁶¹

"Surely I will require	A	
your lifeblood;		B
from every beast		C
I will require	A	
it.		B
And from every man,		C
from every man's brother		C
I will require	A	
the life of man.		B
⁶ "Whoever sheds		C
man's blood,		B
By man	A	
his blood		B
shall be shed,		C

Notice the parallelism in this passage. Three sets of ABC parallels followed by a chiastic arrangement ABCBA and closing in another parallel, ABC.

In the last parallel beginning with **by man**, God delegates to His image-bearer the obligation of executing the murderer. In the last line, the **For** indicates the reason both for the execution of the murderer and the delegation of the responsibility—man is made in the image of God.

For in the image of God He made man. (Genesis 9:5-6 NASB)

⁶¹ For more information on parallelisms, see McNeill, "Biblical Interpretation—New Testament Epistles and Old Testament Poetry."

The reason for the severity of this penalty is that man is made in the image of God; and therefore, any unlawful attack upon another man is an attack upon God. Notice that the context of this passage is post-fall, which means that the fall has not obliterated (done away with) the image of God inherent in man. Even as a fallen sinner, man is still in the image of God; and his life is therefore sacred in the eyes of God. Consequently, any fatal attack upon this image or the rape of this image receives the most severe judgment of God (cf. Deut. 22: 25-26).⁶² Even kidnapping was punishable by death (Deut. 24: 7).

The arguments of political liberals opposing the death penalty for murder on the basis of the sanctity (worth) of life totally miss the point. It is precisely because life is sacred that the death penalty must be imposed. No man or woman should be allowed to live who *deliberately* murders another made in the image of God. The execution of the murderer is not delegated to the mob, but to the “avenger of blood” (Num. 35: 19-29).

Who is this avenger of blood? The Law does not specifically identify him; however, Genesis 9: 6 is addressed to Noah and his family. No one else survived the flood, and it is an exegetical stretch to assume an official civil magistrate from this passage—although many have argued for it (including me, I confess, in days past). Furthermore, the parable of the woman of Tekoa (2 Sam. 14) indicates that the administration of justice also extended to the clan but could be appealed as high as the king.⁶³ Therefore, the blood avenger was a member (or multiple members) of the victim’s family who were given sanction by the Law of Moses to avenge the blood of their relative. If the relative had been killed accidentally, then the case was involuntary manslaughter and not premeditated murder. Accidental homicide (accidentally killing another human being) was not punishable by death; hence, the responsible person could flee to the closest city of refuge to avoid the avenger of blood in the heat of his anger—before he could cool off and think clearly about how his relative died. If it was determined by the elders of the city of refuge that this was a case of premeditated murder rather than accidental homicide, then the refugee would be turned over to the avenger of blood to be executed (Deut. 19: 1-12; Num. 35: 1-34). In the case of premeditated murder, there was no ransom for his life (Num. 35: 31).

‘If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death at the evidence of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.’³¹ Moreover, **you shall not take ransom for the life of a murderer** who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death.³² ‘You shall not take ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to live in the land before the death of the priest.’³³ ‘So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.’³⁴ ‘You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD am dwelling in the midst of the sons of Israel.’” (Num. 35:30-34 NASB)

⁶² Deut. 22: 25-26 is an obvious case of rape which is likened to murder: “for just as a man rises against his neighbor and murders him, so is this case.” (Deut. 22:26b NASB). What is perplexing is Deut. 22: 28-29 which appears at first sight to be another case of rape against a woman who is *not* engaged. However, this text seems to be parallel to that of Ex. 22: 16. The main problem with equating Ex. 22: 16 and Deut. 22: 28-29 is that in the Exodus passage the man “seduces” (NASB) the woman while in Deut. 22: 28 the man “seizes” (NASB) the woman, suggesting rape. However, “seizes” (*taphas*) in v. 28 is not the same Hebrew word as “forces” (*chazaq*) in v. 25. It would appear, then, that there was no need to repeat the case law against rape found in Deut. 22: 25 for the case of a non-engaged woman. She is still made in the image of God, engaged or not, and the equivalent of murder had been committed against her.

⁶³ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, p. 301.

The interesting thing in Genesis 9, Numbers 35, and Deuteronomy 19 is that the accused is not turned over to an agency which moderns would classify as the state. If he runs to the city of refuge, the elders serve only as a facilitating agency which either protects the accused from the avenger of blood or hands him over to him (them). The elders themselves do not execute the convicted murderer.⁶⁴

This is not an argument for dissolving the state and turning capital punishment over to families. Israel was the chosen nation of God uniquely set apart for a special purpose, a role not given to any other nation.⁶⁵ Romans 13 is clear concerning the divine ordination of the state for the purpose of punishing evil and deterring crime through the fear of punishment. On the other hand, kinsman-redeemer does illustrate how far modern society has come in handing over almost every conceivable responsibility of the family and tribe to the modern state, including the education of children (cf. Deut. 6: 1-7). Yet, anyone questioning the responsibility of the state to educate the young would be considered subversive and anachronistic (outdated).

There are many who argue that capital punishment does not deter (lessen) the occurrence of murder. According to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, there were 14,180 murders in the US in 2008 alone.⁶⁶ A total of 1,300 people have been executed for capital murder in the US since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976⁶⁷ If there were 14,180 US murders in 2008 alone, how many have there been since 1976? The question I have is this: When execution occurs so infrequently for murder, what is the justification for any claim that the death penalty does not deter capital murder? The sheer percentages indicate that a person will not likely be executed for committing murder in the US.

On the flip side of the coin, African mob justice is often executed upon a non-convicted criminal without due process of law by unrelated citizens having no authority. Thieves caught in the market place are occasionally put to death in clear violation of the Biblical principle of fitting the punishment to the crime (Ex. 21: 22-25). I have spoken with an eyewitness who saw a fourteen-year-old boy “necklaced”—having a tire filled with fuel placed around his neck and ignited. He was burned to death for stealing plumbing fixtures. Mob justice pollutes the land with innocent blood which will not go unpunished (Num. 35: 32-34). No judicial system is perfect. Often criminals go free, thus provoking other remedies for crime outside the judicial system. At other times innocent people are either executed or incarcerated, proven by later evidence. However, mob justice invariably punishes the crime excessively,⁶⁸ and often results in the punishment of innocent people. It produces chaos rather than biblical justice.

Rwanda serves as another horrific example of what can happen when ordinary citizens become judge, jury, and executioner without Biblical restraints. In radio broadcasts months before the genocide, the Interhamwe leaders called Tutsis “cockroaches”. Whenever we view fellow image-bearers as animals or insects, life soon becomes cheap resulting, in the present instance, in the wholesale murder of 800,000 people. While the *gaucacha* village courts in Rwanda have intended to bring reconciliation in the aftermath of the genocide, they do not offer biblical justice to the families of murdered victims. After confessing their crimes, known murderers are allowed to go free. The same kind of solution was

⁶⁴ For additional reading on the role of the family in the administration to justice, see John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, chapter 32, “*The Fifth Commandment: Family Church and State*,” and Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, pp. 293-294; 301-304.

⁶⁵ Frame, *DCL*, p. 600

⁶⁶ Wikipedia).

⁶⁷ *Aljazeera*, May 10, 2012

⁶⁸ Theft is not punishable by death according to Mosaic Law (Ex.22:1-14; Luke 19:1-10; Num. 35:6-34; Dt.19:1-10).

initiated in South Africa under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the Irish government has recently sent delegates to South Africa to learn from their example.⁶⁹ We will have to wait and see whether this is a real solution or simply a bandage applied to cancer—my suspicion. Rwanda may be a time-bomb waiting to go off again, and from the news we hear from South Africa, the troubles there between racial groups are far from over.

The crime in Johannesburg and Cape Town is frightening, making those cities two of the most dangerous places in the world to live. Innocent blood pollutes the land (Deut. 21: 1-9) and invites God's judgment.⁷⁰

Ransom was available for the life someone whose ox had gored a person to death. The ransom was necessary only if the ox had been in the habit of goring and the owner had been warned; but without the ransom, the careless owner would be put to death (Ex. 21: 28-30). Quite understandably, probably no one in Israel was ever executed for his aggressive ox; nevertheless, the penalty was costly—"whatever is demanded of him" by the victim's family (Ex. 21: 30b). Ransom was not accepted for anyone guilty of premeditated murder (Deut. 35: 31). Importantly, no other crime punishable by death is mentioned in Deuteronomy 35: 31, implying that other capital criminals (receiving the death penalty) could ransom their lives. We must read between the lines of the text to come to this conclusion, but the explicit **exclusion** of premeditated murder implies the **inclusion** of other capital crimes as possibilities for ransom—e.g. adultery, homosexuality, even blasphemy.⁷¹

Also interesting is that not even Moses himself could pardon premeditated murder, and modern presidents have no biblical authority to pardon them. The US presidential pardon comes closer to the ancient idea of the divine right of kings than biblical justice. However, in Israel, the king could not even pardon himself, as the example of King David illustrates (2 Sam. 12: 13). Only God can pardon the crime of murder—and He has done so many times—thus leaving the executed murderer completely in His hands.⁷²

B. Verbal Abuse—An Attack upon God (James 3:9)

In James 3:9, we are admonished not to use our tongues both for blessing God and for cursing men. The two practices are inconsistent and hypocritical since the first is an act of piety toward God and the other is a verbal attack upon men who "have been made in the likeness of God". Even as murder is a *physical* attack upon God, cursing another human being is a *verbal* attack upon God which is forbidden for no other reason than men are still the image-bearers of God.

Paul also teaches us to "bless and curse not" (Rom. 12: 14), following the Lord's commandment to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us in imitation of God who does good things for those who are evil (Matt. 5: 44-45; cf. Lk. 6: 28).

⁶⁹ *Aljazeera*

⁷⁰ In this hypothetical (not actual) situation, a case law is presented in which a man is found slain in a field but whose murderer cannot be identified. The elders closest to the city of the slain man must sacrifice a heifer to make atonement for the people of that city, even though the murderer may not have come from there. The point is that innocent blood must be atoned for lest God's wrath come against them. God was, and is, deadly serious about the sin of murder.

⁷¹ Frame, *DCL*, p. 206

⁷² The Apostle Paul was implicated in Stephen's murder (Acts 8: 1). I have personally spoken with convicted murderers serving life sentences whom I believe had been genuinely converted and, therefore, pardoned by God.

This brings up the problem of the imprecatory psalms (Ps. 69; 109; 58; 35, et al). An imprecation is the act of calling down a curse upon someone. This fact is troublesome for all Christians, especially African Christians who have grown up in a culture whose pagan past (and present) contains stories of witch doctors employed by others to curse their enemies. The imprecations of the psalms are not in any sense comparable to the curses which are called down upon one's **personal** enemies by a local witch doctor working for hire—a purely selfish act. Speaking of this practice in his day, John Calvin laments,

How detestable a piece of sacrilege is it on the part of monks, and especially the Franciscan friars, to pervert this psalm [Ps. 109] by employing it to countenance [approve] the most nefarious [wicked] purposes! If a man harbour malice against a neighbor, it is quite a common thing for him to engage one of these wicked wretches [the friars] to curse him, which he would do by daily repeating this psalm. I know a lady in France who hired a parcel of these friars to curse her own and only son in these words.⁷³

African Christians have been correctly taught by their Christian pastors and teachers to depart from such pagan practices and to love their enemies. They are then confronted with seemingly the same practice in the Bible, of all places! Space will not permit a thorough explanation of these psalms.⁷⁴ Let me suggest the following points toward a solution.

(1) Praying such imprecations are still appropriate for Christians in certain situations. Christians living during the regime of Idi Amin in Uganda were obligated, I believe, to pray imprecatory prayers against him. Moreover, while they were also permitted to pray for his conversion, it was not unbiblical to pray for his physical removal or death. Why? Because Amin, a radical Muslim who wanted to see the church destroyed, stood as a threat to the kingdom of God in Uganda. Had he succeeded, Uganda would now be a Muslim nation. Personal vengeance for his crimes against an individual Ugandan was not the issue—but his crimes against the whole nation and against God. While praying for his conversion was commendable, it was also commendable for Christians to pray for his death to the end that the church and thousands of innocent lives be preserved. As Frame observes, also using Amin as an example, such prayers were not for Amin's ultimate damnation but for “historical judgment” in the present situation. Had God converted him during that time, the Christians praying for God's vengeance against him would doubtless have been pleased that their prayers were answered beyond their expectations.⁷⁵

On the other hand, Frame argues, prayer is often “realistically short-term in its expectations.” In other words, prayer is provoked by immediate needs. The immediate need of Ugandans during Amin's administration of terror was his removal or death, not for his long-term conversion. While his conversion was not impossible, it was highly unlikely and, therefore, quite acceptable for Christians to pray for his death. “When Peter was in jail, the church prayed for his release, not for the conversion of everybody in the prison system.”⁷⁶ Presumably, they would have also thanked God for his release by any means God chose to accomplish it, even the angelic execution of the jailors.

(2) Imprecations are prayers for vengeance against the enemies of God and not against one's personal enemies. The biblical command against personal vengeance always applies, “Never take your own

⁷³ *Calvin's Commentaries*, Vol. 6; Psalm 109, p. 276.

⁷⁴ I have explained them in more detail in my “Hermeneutics” textbook under “Imprecatory Psalms”. For an insightful treatment of this subject, see Frame, *DCL*, pp. 338-343.

⁷⁵ Assuming that Amin would have been willing to accept his execution, a willingness without which I seriously doubt the “conversion” of any person guilty of a capital crime (Acts 25: 11). It is unlikely that Paul ever personally put anyone to death for their Christian faith. Even if he did, he was doing it in ignorance as a religious executioner, not as a premeditated murderer (1 Tim. 1: 13).

⁷⁶ Frame, *DCL*, p. 341

revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath *of God*, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord" (Romans 12:19 NASB). But, as I have said, there are situations which cry out for God to avenge His people. Christian prayers become the means by which God takes revenge.⁷⁷ The enemies of the church are God's enemies. Citing Motyer, Frame says,

The imprecatory psalms, he points out, are prayers that call upon God to remedy those injustices that neither we as individuals, nor the state, are competent to remedy. They do not seek personal vengeance; rather, they leave vengeance to God, as God demanded.⁷⁸

Moreover, we are not demanding that God avenge His people in the way we desire, but in any way He wills. If God chooses to convert rather than destroy, that is His business; and we must rejoice in it—unlike Jonah. "...all prayer is a recommitment to God's purpose."⁷⁹

(3) Prayers of imprecation are not contradictory to the command to love one's enemies. It is clear that the command to love one's enemies is based upon God's example of loving those who do not love Him (Matt. 5: 44-45). Likewise, Jesus felt compassion for the multitudes, many of whom He will condemn in the final judgment (Matt. 14: 14). If we drive a wedge between the command to love one's enemies and the imprecatory psalms, we have a conflicting example contradictory to the love of God—by none other than David, author of most of the psalms and a man after God's own heart (1 Ki. 14: 8). The Bible contains no such contradictions.

The imprecations express hate for the enemies of God, but they do not imply personal hatred of the individual. By way of illustration, while the European and American nations hated Germany during WWII, most injured German soldiers were given medical care when captured by allied troops.⁸⁰ They were not tortured and killed. While hated for their aggression, they were also treated with dignity. Yet, if these same troops escaped back to German lines and fought against allied troops, they would be shot again as the hated enemies of Europe and America. Just as there is godly anger and ungodly anger (Eph. 4: 26), there is also a godly hatred zealous for truth and honor and an ungodly hatred that expresses selfish vengeance.⁸¹ There is likewise a godly jealousy of a wife toward an unfaithful husband and an ungodly jealousy suspicious of anyone speaking to her husband.

(4) The NT writers also make imprecations. Leupold mentions Paul's remark concerning Alexander the coppersmith (2 Tim. 4: 14); his rebuke of Ananias (Acts 23: 3); and Peter's rebuke of Simon Magus (Acts 8: 20).⁸² There is also Paul's double curse upon preachers of a false gospel in Galatia (Gal. 1: 8-9) and Christ's woes against Bethsaida and Chorazin (Matt. 11: 21-22) and upon the scribes and Pharisees in Jerusalem (Matt. 23). These imprecations are not fundamentally different from the imprecatory psalms. Moreover, some of the imprecatory psalms are quoted in the NT as predictions of what would befall the enemies of Christ. Peter applies the imprecations of Ps. 69: 25 and Ps. 109: 8 to

⁷⁷ Acts 4: 29, "'And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence'" (NASB). In Acts 4 believers were praying an imprecatory prayer against all the enemies of the gospel. Note the words, "now, Lord, take note of their threats". Incidentally, Pilate was recalled to Rome a few years after Christ's crucifixion, committing suicide before he got there. He should have listened to his wife (Matt. 27: 19).

⁷⁸ Frame, p. 340

⁷⁹ Frame, *DCL*, p. 340

⁸⁰ And, yes, some American soldiers murdered surrendering German troops against the Geneva Convention. American soldiers were also sinners.

⁸¹ Frame, p. 342

⁸² L.C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*; p. 20.

Judas in Acts 1: 20. In Matt. 23: 38, Jesus applies the same imprecation of Ps. 69: 25 to the unbelieving Jews of Jerusalem. Likewise, Paul condemns the unbelieving Jews of his day with the imprecation of Ps. 69: 22-23 (Rom. 11: 9-10). If the imprecations were beneath the dignity of the NT Christian, it is doubtful that Peter, Paul, and Jesus would have employed them.

C. The Image of God Continuing After the Fall (1 Corinthians 11: 7)

In 1 Corinthians 11:7, Paul says that man “is the image and glory of God...” Notice he did not say that he **was** the image and glory of God but that he **is** that image. But Paul also says, “but the woman is the glory of man.” Does this imply that the woman is not the image of God? In African traditional beliefs, the woman is not as important as man, and does not have the same “life force” as man.⁸³ But this cannot be Paul’s meaning for two reasons.

First, Paul is referring back to the Genesis account in Genesis 1: 27 which says explicitly, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”. The full complement of “man” is found in both male and female, both created in the image of God. Thus, the reference to Genesis 1: 26-27 proves that Paul cannot be promoting the image of God as the distinction between sexes or the reason for the woman’s head coverings in worship contexts. Their distinction from one another is not found in their essential nature as the image of God which both man and woman share equally. Rather, their distinction is found in their functional roles in creation which Paul mentions later in the passage.

Second, the reader will notice that Paul does not say that woman is the image of man, but that she is the “glory” of man. Paul does not bring up the identity of the woman’s image since this is too obvious to mention. By referencing the Genesis account, there is no admissible doubt about the image of the woman. She is also the image of God.

This leaves the question about what Paul means when he says that woman is the glory of man. The structure of vv. 7-10 may help us understand the meaning.⁸⁴

⁷For a man **ought not** to have his head covered, since he is the image and **glory** of God; but the woman is the **glory** of man.

⁸For man **does not originate** from woman,
but **woman from man**;

⁹for indeed man was not created **for the woman's sake**,
but **woman for the man's sake**.

¹⁰Therefore the woman **ought** to have *a symbol of authority* on her head, because of the angels.

Verses 8-9 provide two reasons for vv. 7 and 10. Notice the reason indicators “for” in both vv. 8 and 9. Woman is the glory of man because man did not come originally from woman but woman from man (v. 8). The woman had her original source in man (v. 12), and this will be used later to show that wives must honor their husbands because of this original source. Secondly, man was not created for the purpose of helping the woman, but woman was created for the purpose of helping the man—“for the man’s sake.” Both of these reasons refer back to creation and have nothing to do with the cultural

⁸³ Nyirongo, p. 104

⁸⁴ I am indebted to Thomas R. Schreiner for much of my understanding of this passage. “Head Coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity, 1 Corinthians 11: 2-16, in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood—A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds.

distinctions of Paul's day or our own. Thus, the reasons given for a woman's head covering relate to the order of creation at which the woman was placed under the authority of her husband from the beginning, not merely after the fall. The head covering is a sign of her submission to her "head," i.e. her husband (v. 3). The man must not wear a head covering because he is directly in submission to God as his original source. The specific expression of submission in the form of head coverings would not be currently relevant in most cultures today, although it would be relevant in some. Other culturally specific expressions of the woman's submission would be required. By wearing a head covering in 1st century Corinth, the woman demonstrated her willingness to submit to the headship of her husband for the specific reason Paul has given—the order of creation. If she refuses to do this, she might as well imitate the prostitutes and other immoral women in Corinth and completely shave her head (v. 6).⁸⁵ Thus far, then, the glory of a woman has something to do with her submission to male authority.

Verses 14-15 further explain the meaning of **glory**.

¹⁴Does not even nature itself teach you
that if a man has long hair,

it is a **dishonor** to him,

¹⁵but if a woman has long hair,
it is a **glory** to her?

For her hair is given to her for a covering.

The "dishonor" of a man with long hair is antithetically parallel (parallel as opposites) to the "glory" of the woman with long hair. Thus, the glory of the woman is synonymous (the same as) to the honor of the woman. The woman is the honor (glory) of man in the same way as man is the honor (glory) of God (v. 7). Moreover, woman should honor her husband as her head in the same way that man should honor God as his head—his original source.

But what does Paul suggest by "honor"? Since man and woman share the same image of God, honor has nothing to do with the essential nature of man and woman. This is proven in the phrase, "and God is the head of Christ" (v. 3b). Christ is God, essentially and ontologically one with the Father; yet Christ humbled himself to assume a functional role in salvation in submission to the Father—He became incarnate in human flesh and died on a cross. Moreover, Jesus Christ, the divine/human Son of God, had His source in God, being conceived in the womb of the virgin, Mary, by the Holy Spirit. This is not the same as saying that Christ, the second person of the Godhead, originates from God. Christ is eternally God. Nevertheless, Christ was not eternally incarnate in human flesh. His incarnation originated in the womb of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the functional role of Christ, a role submissive to the Father (Jn. 6: 38), is analogous (comparable) to the functional role of the woman, a role submissive to her husband. In her functional role of helping the man fulfill the creation mandate she is the glory (honor) of her husband just as Christ was the glory (honor) of God the Father in fulfilling His role in salvation. The male, likewise, reflects the honor of God in his submissive role to God, thus imitating the role of Christ who glorified the Father (cf. Jn. 13: 31-32).⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Douglas Moo believes that the social problems among Christians in Corinth and Ephesus were essentially the same, and that a woman's shame in having her head shaved was that she was identifying herself with immoral women who were flaunting their independence of their husbands (*Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, p. 182). For a concise analysis of 1 Tim. 2: 11-15 which also incorporates 1 Cor. 11, see McNeill, "*The Pastoral Epistles of Paul—1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*".

⁸⁶ The same word for "glory" is used in both 1 Cor. 11: 7 and Jn. 13: 31-32 (*doxa*). The creation (or dominion) mandate will be covered later. The essence of it is that man and woman together fulfil this mandate. However, Genesis 2 indicates that man was fulfilling it before the woman was created, and that she was given to the man to help him fulfil it. She does

The glory of the woman, then, pertains to her willingness to honor her husband in fulfilling her submissive role in dominion. The glory of the man pertains to his willingness to honor Christ in fulfilling his submissive role to Christ in dominion. Women wearing head coverings in worship demonstrated this appropriate order in the particular culture Paul was addressing. As mentioned earlier, wearing head coverings would not be culturally relevant or biblically required in most cultures today.

We conclude from the passages treated thus far that men and women have not ceased to be the image of God, however sinful they have become. On the other hand, man's whole being has been affected by the fall to the extent that there is nothing about man or his actions which are not fundamentally affected by the fall. This tragic outcome of sin is called the doctrine of total depravity.

D. The Image Marred

As I have indicated earlier under "Reason", Thomas Aquinas believed that man's reasoning in the realm of nature was unimpaired after the fall. Because of this, he can live a happy earthly life apart from faith in Christ. Further, Aquinas believed that man can follow the logical progression of proofs for the existence of God without the enablement of the Holy Spirit. Upon hearing these arguments, he is then free to agree or disagree that they are compelling. Within this framework, man remains autonomous (independent of God) in his thinking. What's more, by granting the unbeliever the premise that his mind is unaffected by the fall and can therefore adequately examine all the facts for God's existence and His claim to man's life, we also grant that he may find no compelling reason to surrender his autonomy to the lordship of Jesus Christ. He has examined the evidence and found it wanting. Case closed.

Cornelius Van Til's view (and I believe, the Reformed view) sees man's reasoning as flawed by sin to the extent that he cannot look objectively at the compelling evidence for divine creation or Christ's resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1: 21). Professing to be wise, he has become a fool. When we present the gospel to unbelievers, we may acknowledge openly that our evidence may not be **convincing** to them, but not because it is not **compelling**. It is not convincing because of their commitment to personal autonomy. When approaching the philosophers on the Areopagus in Athens, Paul does not grant them the two options of believing the resurrection of Christ or disbelieving it. As the witness of creation is sufficiently compelling to convince men of their Creator, so also is the evidence for the resurrection of Christ.⁸⁷

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, **having furnished proof** to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31 NASB)

so by bearing children, a task fundamentally important to the goal of dominion in Gen. 1—multiplying and filling the earth. But she also helps him in other innumerable tasks. Analogously, Christ glorified God by fulfilling the subordinate task given Him by the Father; likewise, the Holy Spirit, the "Helper", fulfils His role by renewing our hearts both in regeneration and sanctification. The different functional roles of the Son and the Spirit "glorify" the Father but do not diminish the essential nature of the Son or the Spirit. By bearing children, the woman reflects the role of the Spirit by whom men and women are "born" again (Jn. 3: 5).

⁸⁷For a concise manual on defending the faith using Van Til's apologetic method, see Richard L. Pratt, *Every Thought Captive—A Study Manual for the Defense of Christian Truth*, and Greg Bahnsen, *Always Ready*.

However, apart from the divine assistance of the Holy Spirit, unbelievers will not be able to look at the evidence objectively. They will persistently suppress the truth in unrighteousness to defend their own personal autonomy (independence). When they do this, their autonomous reason leads inevitably to moral unrighteousness and degeneration. In Romans 1: 18-32, Paul describes the outer fringes, so to speak, of moral unrighteousness, but because of varying degrees of common grace, not all men reach these levels of decadence and self-indulgence. It is possible for unbelievers to live externally upright lives and even appear as true believers. Inwardly, however, they are self-righteous and corrupt. They cannot please God in the highest sense of the word (Rom. 8: 8), nor can they do anything to merit their salvation. As stated earlier, they can please God in some sense; otherwise, God would not respond with blessing upon those who keep His word externally. For example, God will bless a marriage between two unbelievers who are faithful to one another. He will bless an unbelieving husband who is gentle and kind to his wife and children. He will bless a whole country with prosperity if the general work force is diligent, if people honor titles and contracts, if debt is kept to manageable levels, etc. God is faithful to His own word governing the laws of economic prosperity as well as his word governing the law of gravity.

Man's body is also affected by sin. At creation, man's body was so perfectly constructed that it could have lived forever; otherwise, God's warning to Adam that he would die if he ate from the tree would have no meaning. The moment he ate from it, he began to die. However, Adam lived a total of 930 years even after he sinned, and his descendent, Methuselah lived 969 years (Gen. 5: 5; 5: 27), a testimony to the wonderful design of the human body. Man's body wears out because of the effects of sin, not because of design flaws. He carries within him the sentence of death, but when God restores all things in Christ, the perfection of man's body will also be restored to endure a limitless eternity (1 Cor. 15).

E. Historical Background of the Image of God in Genesis

By virtue of his being created in the image of God, man is given the task of ruling over the rest of creation. Throughout the ancient Near East, kings made images of themselves and placed them in many locations to maintain control of their kingdoms. Images of the Pharaohs were erected in many strategic locations reminding the people of Pharaoh's power and stature as the representative of God walking on the earth.⁸⁸

Understandably, when Near Eastern kings made images for themselves they often would use material which they thought appropriate to their majesty and grandeur—namely, gold, silver and other precious metals. Daniel 3:1 records the statue of Nebuchadnezzar which was 90 feet tall (30 meters) and 9 feet wide (3 meters) built of gold on the plain of Dura in Babylon. No expense was spared to display his power and majesty. Everyone was required to bow before this statue or suffer death by fire; and we know from the story in Daniel 3 that Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego conscientiously refused. Other kings, many in Egypt, built statues of themselves in stone to indicate permanence. The Egyptian pyramids were monumental tombs for the burial of the Pharaohs who believed that they would pass into an afterlife very similar to the one lived on earth. For this reason, their wives and many slaves would be buried alive along with them in the pyramids.

⁸⁸ Richard L. Pratt, *Designed for Dignity*, p. 8.

As powerful leaders extending their kingdoms to remote geographical regions, the ancient kings presented themselves with the difficult problem of ruling all these remote areas. How could they keep their kingdoms from falling apart when they were spreading their armies so thin? The answer was a type of psychological warfare waged upon the conquered peoples in the form of multiplied images that discouraged rebellion.

This tactic (method) is still used by dictators in many parts of the world. Until recently, the Soviet Union was ruled with a rod of iron by communist dictators, the most infamous being Vladimir Lenin until his death in 1924, and Josef Stalin until his death in 1953. Until the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990's, Lenin's statues and pictures were seen all over the Soviet Union, including vast stretches of land that were later divided into sovereign, independent states. As the empire crumbled in the satellite states, the statues and pictures were torn down to symbolize the end to a repressive, cruel, and exploitative regime (government).⁸⁹

In more recent history, Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq was overthrown by the United States military with the help of other countries who are members of the United Nations. The most symbolic event which happened in the war with Iraq, televised on international news, was the tearing down of Saddam's statue in the downtown square of Baghdad. This momentous event meant that he was no longer in control of Iraq.

How does this historical background help us understand the significance of God making man in His own image? The practices of the Egyptian kings were remembered by Moses (educated as an Egyptian prince) when he wrote the book of Genesis under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As Pratt observes,

The custom of Moses' day helped him understand why God called Adam and Eve his image. Just as human kings had their images, the divine King [God] ordained that the human race would be his royal image. Put simply, the expression 'image of God' designated human beings as representatives of the supreme King of the universe.⁹⁰

God is in control, not simply in control of one single kingdom, but the whole universe; and He displays this sovereignty through the multiplication of His images throughout the world. Everywhere we see people, we see the images of the divine ruler of the universe reminding us that He is the Creator and Sustainer of all that exists. These multiplied images are necessary for man to accomplish the task of dominion—improving creation to reach the full potential God intended for it. Yet, God did not make us of silver and gold, but common dust (Gen. 2: 7). Although image-bearers of God, we are not gods walking on earth as the ancient kings presumed. Moreover, all of us are derived from the same dust originating in Adam. God did not make kings, queens, and princes from gold and silver. They have a special function, but they are not essentially special.

Moses had been trained in the courts of Egypt to divide the human race into a hierarchy of classes. Commoners served at the bottom of the ladder, and kings ruled from the top. This scheme reflected more than convenient socioeconomic groupings. It stemmed from the Egyptian beliefs about the human race. Common people ranked low on the scale because they were little more than clay. The pharaohs stood above all others because they were divine. Some people were humble creatures and easily replaced. But others,

⁸⁹ Pratt, *Designed for Dignity*, pp. 26-27.

⁹⁰ Pratt, p. 8

especially the high-ranking nobles, were anything but humble. They stood above all others, at times even becoming gods.⁹¹

The ancient Israelites learned that God was no respecter of persons in Moses' account of the plagues of Egypt in which the firstborn sons of all Egyptians, even Pharaoh's son, were put to death (Ex. 12: 29).

Centuries later, Nebuchadnezzar wanted to think of himself as god walking on earth—made of pure gold, no less (Dan 3); thus completely misinterpreting Daniel's earlier remarks, "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory....You are the head of gold (Dan 2:37, 38b). One could have wished Nebuchadnezzar's conversion from the heated confrontation with three common Hebrews whose God defied his threat, "and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?" (Dan 3:15). But shortly thereafter he proved that his high estimation of Daniel's God did not go nearly high enough.

According to the dream, as Nebuchadnezzar saw it, the great Fifth Monarchy would be preceded by four great empires, of which he was the head, and to whom God had given "kingdom, power, and strength, and glory" (2; 37). For God to give glory to a man meant one thing to men of antiquity, outside the Hebraic faith—to share His divinity and kingdom with the man. It meant for them participation in the life and kingdom of God, and made them and their order a continuation of God and a manifest incarnation of Him. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar could move in the confidence, based on his interpretation of Daniel's words...that God had handed over the world to Nebuchadnezzar, His vice-regent, and made him God's power and presence to that age...History therefore was in Nebuchadnezzar's hands and derived its meaning from him.⁹²

God later showed him that there could only be one God who would not share His glory with Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4) or Nebuchadnezzar's profligate (licentious) grandson (Dan. 5).⁹³

History testifies that men—even the most powerful—are dust. Nebuchadnezzar and the kingdom of Babylon are gone. Xerxes and the vast Persian Empire are gone. Alexander the Great and the Greek empire are gone. Mighty Rome has fallen and all its Caesars claiming divinity. Adolf Hitler ended his life as a coward by committing suicide after Berlin's fall. Pol Pot, the murderous leader of Cambodia responsible for the deaths of thousands, died recently as a pitiful, broken old man. Powerful presidents of the United States have come and gone, and only few remember anything at all about their accomplishments.

The unmistakable lesson of Daniel is that all the kingdoms of the earth will one day be turned into rubble. They will be crushed by the avalanche of an enduring kingdom made of a single stone cut out of a mountain without hands, a kingdom which will put an end to all other kingdoms. This kingdom is the Kingdom of Christ which awaits its final glory and consummation (fulfillment) at the end of the age with the return of Christ. "Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever'" (Revelation 11:15 NASB).

⁹¹ Pratt, p. 10

⁹² Rousas John Rushdoony, *Thy Kingdom Come, Studies in Daniel and Revelation*, p. 21

⁹³ It was common to refer to the ancestors as "fathers". From other sources we know that he was the son of Nabonidus with whom he was a co-regent of the Babylonian Empire. Nabonidus was the son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar (Rushdoony, p. 34, citing Raymond Philip Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar, a Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, p. 146).

As image bearers, we have been given unspeakable honor. The Psalmist says “What is man that You take thought of Him? And the son of man that You care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than Elohim [*translated either “God” or “angels”*], and do crown him with glory and majesty!” (Ps. 8:4-5) The wonder of man as the image of God is summed up in these verses, and the practical implications are staggering. Nevertheless, we must never forget that we are only dust, and one day we will die and return to the dust (Gen. 3:19). This is the sober and ironic conclusion to man’s bold experiment to be his own god. He returns to the common and ignoble (not noble) origins from which he came.

Summary and Conclusion

In spite of the fact that fallen man lost the original knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, he is still in the image of God. Physical and verbal abuse of other human beings is an attack upon God in whose image they are made. Thus, the word of God imposes strict sanctions upon murder, rape, and other violent crimes. We have determined from our study of 1 Cor. 7 that Paul was not questioning the equality of woman as the image of God, but safeguarding the created order by establishing the male as the head of his wife in the pursuit of dominion. Eve was created to be man’s helper and not Adam to be Eve’s helper. The passage also proves that the image of God continues without interruption although man is fallen.

However, man’s image is marred. His body, created to live forever, is now subject to disease and death. His mind, fully capable and willing before the fall to obey God’s will and to think God’s thoughts, is now polluted with sin and unable to think clearly about what he sees in the natural world or about the will of God. Thomas Aquinas, the premier theologian of the Roman Catholic Church even to this day, believed that the fall did not prevent man from reasoning correctly about the natural creation. Aquinas believed that man can follow the logical progression of proofs for the existence of God without the enablement of the Holy Spirit. Augustine, on the other hand, believed that man’s ability to interpret creation was so affected by the fall that he cannot properly understand creation. Men will suppress the truth in unrighteousness persistently to defend their own personal autonomy (independence). Everything about creation must be interpreted through the lens of man’s bias, which is either submissive to God or in rebellion against Him. Augustine’s “I believe in order to understand” has been the theme of much reformed apologetics from Calvin to Van Til.

We concluded the section on man’s image with an examination of the image of man presented in the Genesis account. God made man purposely from the dust of the earth to help him understand his place in subordination to God. Moreover, all men have their common origin in Adam to indicate that no man is ontologically (essentially) superior to any other man. We are but dust, and one day our bodies will return to dust (Ps. 90: 3).

Lesson Two Questions

1. How is the image of God a “common ground” for any discussion with the unbeliever about the existence of God? How does Paul use this “common ground” approach in his address to the Athenians? Interact with the Scriptural text.
2. Name the various elements of the image of God in man and give a one or two sentence summary of each one.
3. Is the special revelation of God’s law in the Bible necessary or unnecessary to guide us morally, both individually and corporately? Explain your answer.
4. What are the limitations of will or self-determination?
5. What do I mean by “pleasing” God in the highest sense of the word or by “pleasing” Him in the lower sense of the word? Use a relevant text of scripture to support your answer.
6. Discuss briefly John Frame’s and Wayne Grudem’s arguments against the traditional formulations of the impassibility of God.
7. Why is the body also one element of the image of God? Explain your answer with respect to man’s destiny of dominion.
8. Demonstrate exegetically from Scripture why man’s dominion is a prominent element of the image of God.
9. Discuss the relationship between the cultural (dominion) mandate and the great commission. Include some of Frame’s treatment of the land and the seed.
10. Briefly discuss the relationship between the temple and the new heavens and earth.

Lesson Three—The Dominion (Cultural) Mandate

Introduction

God did not hand a full-blown civilization to Adam on a silver platter with nothing else to accomplish. The world was created very good, but not complete. Since God is **the** Creator, man in His image must be **a** creator. Taking the resources provided, Adam goes to work in the garden to improve it. Since work was given before the fall, it was designed for man's blessing, not his curse, as many in our world believe. The cultural mandate was also given to man and woman corporately. It could not be fulfilled by two human beings alone. The man's primary task was production from the ground while the woman's was the production of children—as startling and distasteful as this may sound to the western mind. Without millions and billions of image-bearers, the earth would not be filled and fully cultivated for the glory of the One who made it.

Man fell in the garden and was cursed. The curse upon the woman is directed to her production of children while the curse upon the man is directed to his production from the ground. Both curses are made less painful by the promise of children—especially the seed who will crush the head of the serpent—and the promise of food. In Christ Jesus, all our labor has been sanctified and made holy, and we can commit all our labor to him knowing that our labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Cor. 15: 58). We have reason, therefore, to maintain a high level of joy in our labor.

III. The Dominion Mandate

As we said earlier, some theologians do not like to include dominion as an element of God's image. Yet, this appears to be the emphasis of Genesis 1. We will explore this further here.

A. Six features of Dominion in Genesis 1-2

1. God gave man an uncultivated earth.

He was placed in a garden, but one which had not been developed to its fullest potential. It was “good” but not complete. God could have given man a fully-cultivated garden which required no planting and no up-keep, but He didn't. In fact, God could have created millions of people and thousands of cultures at once, and He could have created cultures with a large degree of sophistication and technological expertise already in place. He chose, rather, to allow the human race to develop its innate potential as the image-bearers of God. Man was required to utilize and fully develop his God-given potential in an environment which, before the fall, was completely responsive to his efforts. After the fall, he must continue his culture-making efforts in spite of the earth's resistance. In the new heavens and earth,

man's work will continue unimpeded and at maximum potential in a new, sinless environment unhindered by the curse.

2. Dominion over the earth is given to man before the fall (Genesis 2:15).

This leads us to a very important conclusion. Work is a blessing, not a curse. It is not part of the curse placed upon man after the fall in Genesis 3. When I was a teenager I used to watch a TV show called "Doby Gillis". One of the characters in that show was named Maynard who was an irresponsible, unproductive loafer who was basically "allergic" to work. Whenever he heard the word "work", he would get visibly nervous and make a quick, but quiet, exit through the first available door. There are many in every culture who view work in the same sinful way. Since the fall of man, work, especially manual labor, has become a dreaded thing to many people. It was not so when Adam cultivated the garden before the fall. Adam enjoyed his work. Work was an act of worship before God and was just as meaningful and rewarding as walking with God in the cool of the day (Gen. 3: 8).

Adam was free to arrange the plants the way he wished and to cross-pollinate and graft to produce new species within their kinds. Every day proved to be a new adventure in expressing his creative ability as a reflection of God's creativity. Each new day was a day of discovery and experimentation. In a well-known movie, "Chariots of Fire", the famous Scottish runner, Eric Liddell, was being discouraged by his sister from training for the Olympics. She believed that his training would hinder him from his mission work in China. But Liddell did not distinguish his running from his mission work. They both equally expressed his devotion to God. He replied to her, "God made me fast, and when I run I feel His pleasure." Doubtless this was the way Adam felt when he worked in the garden. He could feel God's pleasure in his labor.

The Biblical commentary on man's work after the fall is found in Ecclesiastes. No matter how hard he tried, Qohelet (the preacher) could not initially resolve the tension between the value of his labor and the seeming meaningless of it all, especially since he believed that death would be the end of work and man's legacy. Everything he had accomplished would be forgotten. He knew from the wisdom of the OT (Proverbs) that labor was a gift from God to be enjoyed, but in his own experience and the observable experience of others, work "under the sun" was from all appearances unsolvable enigma. He later resolves this tension at the end of the book.⁹⁴

After the fall, God cursed the ground, and it no longer readily yielded its produce to man's efforts.

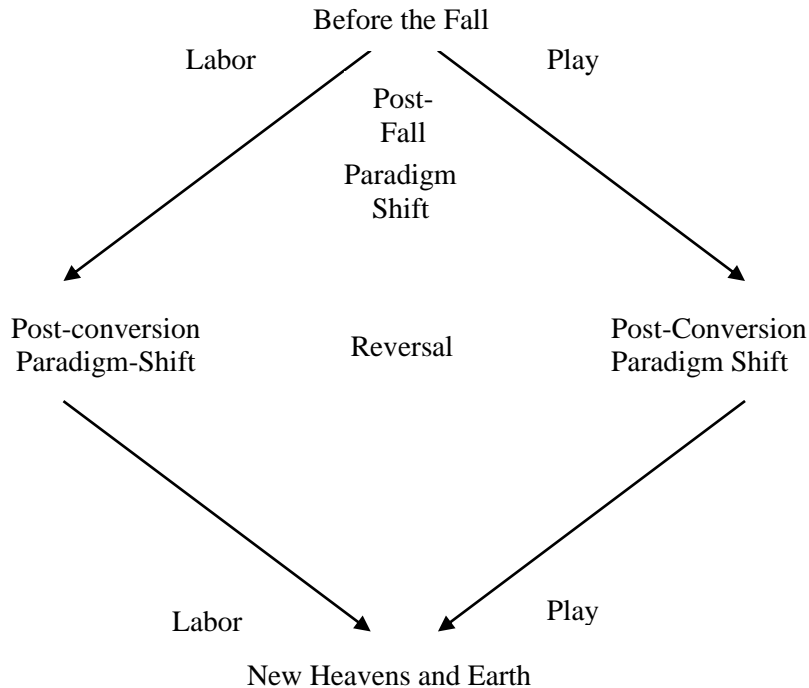
"Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. ¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:17b-19 NASB).

Man would now "work himself to death".⁹⁵ Work would no longer be the enjoyable thing it was in the past. Nevertheless, it is not work that is cursed but the ground, making work difficult and sometimes unrewarding. Nevertheless, man's labor is not totally futile since he will still "eat bread" (Gen. 3: 19). Man will still continue to till the ground, for without work life is meaningless and without purpose—not to speak of insufferably boring.

⁹⁴ See McNeill, "Ecclesiastes"

⁹⁵ Pratt, *Designed for Dignity*, p. 55

A former professor of mine provided a very helpful illustration in class to explain the relationship between man's labor and leisure (play) before the fall and after the fall and how Christ has changed this relationship for the Christian.⁹⁶ It's been 23 years since I heard this illustration, so I will do my best to capture the basic substance.



Before the fall, Adam and Eve did not discern any substantial difference between work and play as far as their enjoyment of each activity. Both work and play were equally enjoyable. In one sense work was play and play was work. After the ground was cursed at the fall, Adam's labor "under the sun" (Ecclesiastes) became difficult and often unrewarding. His paradigm or model for understanding his work changed. Work and play diverged (separated) from one another in terms of enjoyment so that man welcomed the time when he could get some relief from the drudgery of his labor. This does not imply that there was no enjoyment at all in his labor, only that the "thorns and thistles" of the cursed ground were often overwhelming and led to discouragement and fatigue. Man would now cultivate the earth by the sweat of his brow, and the earth would not be as yielding to his efforts, often resisting them.

The extent to which work and play are distinguished from one another will be different for different people, and even non-believers often enjoy their work without understanding its relationship to God. Nevertheless, Christ should make a tremendous difference. When a person is converted to Christ, another paradigm shift takes place in which work and play begin to merge together again. The difference between our work and our play in terms of enjoyment *should* diminish and *will* diminish given certain factors. First, work and play will once more come closer together as we become more mature in our faith, recognizing that whatever we are doing, work or play, we are doing it *coram deo*, in the presence of God and for God's pleasure (Col. 3: 23).

⁹⁶ Richard Watson, former academic dean at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, MS

Secondly, our work and play will come closer together the more we realize and pursue the specific calling God has for each of us. If we are not given the gifts and desires to do a certain kind of work, it is unrealistic to believe that we will be fully happy in it. New Testament slaves had to become content with their slavery because they had no other choice; but if they ever had the opportunity to be free, Paul tells them to take advantage of the opportunity (1 Cor. 7: 17-23).

As much as possible, we should try to be content in any circumstance we find ourselves, even slavery or imprisonment (Phil. 4: 11), but if the opportunity to improve our standard of living or to pursue the kind of job we love, then by all means we should do so. There is no spiritual superiority in being miserable in what we have to do every day. The more we understand our work before the Lord and our specific place in God's world, the more we will enjoy our labor and the less we will look forward to "retirement" or our day off. In the new heavens and earth, the confusion we may have now in our work will be dispelled. We will know our place, and we will properly assess our giftedness for whatever God has for us to do. The ground will no longer be cursed. We will once more find work and play indistinguishable from one another.

Christ has already restored to us the dignity and meaning of labor as Paul clearly indicates in Colossians 3:23-24. Speaking to slaves he says,

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

In African culture, we may wonder what significance planting bananas and corn, and laying bricks could have in the eyes of One who created the universe. It should be sufficient for us to know that God receives glory—and pleasure—from our labor and bids us to work for that reason. Only later will we understand the full importance of what we have done on earth. By taking pleasure in our labor, we also give *God* pleasure in our labor.

Many passages [of scripture] take us beyond a merely economic stewardship, but the one that has come to seem most valuable to me is Revelation 4: 11....: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."....

Our responsibility, then, as stewards, the responsibility that inescapably goes with our dominion over the other creatures, according to Revelation 4: 11, is to safeguard God's pleasure in His work. And we can do that, I think...by safeguarding *our* pleasure in His work, and our pleasure in our own work.⁹⁷

It may be argued that our whole society [namely, western society] is more devoted to pleasure than any whole society ever was in the past, that we support in fact a great variety of pleasure industries and that these are thriving as never before. But that would seem only to prove my point. That there can be pleasure industries at all, exploiting our apparently limitless inability to be pleased, can only mean that our economy is divorced from pleasure and that pleasure is gone from our workplaces and our dwelling places. Our workplaces are more and more exclusively given over to production, and our dwelling places to consumption. And this accounts for the accelerating division of our country into defeated landscapes and victorious (but threatened) landscapes.

More and more, we take for granted that work must be destitute of pleasure. More and more, we assume that if we want to be pleased we must wait until evening, or the weekend, or vacation, or retirement. More and more, our farms and forests resemble our factories and offices, which in turn more and more resemble

⁹⁷ Wendell Berry, *What Are People For?—Essays*, p.100; emphasis his

prisons—why else should we be so eager to escape them? We recognize defeated landscapes by the absence of pleasure from them. We are defeated at work because our work gives us no pleasure. We are defeated at home because we have no pleasant work there. We turn to the pleasure industries for relief from our defeat, and are again defeated, for the pleasure industries can thrive and grow only upon our dissatisfaction with them [in other words, we move from one entertainment to the other because none of it really satisfies us].⁹⁸

Perhaps Paul's warning in 2 Thessalonians 3: 6-15 makes more sense in light of Berry's application of Revelation 4: 11. We *owe* God pleasure in our labor, and we rob Him of pleasure when we attempt to avoid it, either because we are lazy or because we nurture an unbiblical view of labor. We are made for work (Gen. 1: 28; 2: 15), not idleness, and even God is still at work in sustaining creation, "upholding all things by the word of his power" through Christ (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1: 17). Laziness is a sin and a blatant (bold) denial of the kind of person God designed us to be, and it should not be surprising that those who have labored diligently and found meaning in their work in the presence of God have lived more happily, and generally longer, than those who have squandered the time and talents God gave them.

3. Dominion is given first to the man and later to the woman.

That man and woman were both given the task of dominion is clear from Genesis 1: 26 when God said, "...and let them [*male and female*] rule...." As we have already seen, the woman is also an image-bearer, an important consideration in a male-dominated world which often views women as inferior and insignificant.⁹⁹ Both are necessary in filling the earth and in having dominion over the earth. The cultural mandate is a partnership between men and women and their Creator. Yet, it is important that the woman was created later, indicating a subordinate role in dominion as man's "helper". Woman was created to help the man; man was not created to help the woman. This does not mean that she was, or is, inferior, only that she has a subordinate position **functionally**. As we have seen, difference in **function** does not imply difference in **essence** or worth, and a misunderstanding of this principle has led not only to the abuse of women world-wide but also a misinterpretation of male and female roles in society.¹⁰⁰

Man's priority in time in both creation and dominion also implies priority of responsibility. Leading in dominion includes leading in the labor of dominion. Thus, man is given the primary responsibility to provide for the physical needs of his family. As the head of the family (1 Cor. 11; Eph. 5), he must set the example of one who labors. Women with small children have plenty of work at home and should be appreciated by their husbands for their sizable but often unappreciated contributions to the family—spiritually, psychologically, and economically.

For more than half a century, the trend in the US is that women have traded the home for the market place, leaving the nurture of children to day-care centers and schools. This trade-off is increasingly evident in Africa and is reaching a new level with the escalating use of boarding schools from P-1 through A-6. Young adults in Africa are now entering marriage and the market place having never

⁹⁸ Berry, pp. 139-140; words in brackets mine. My thanks to Craig Bartholomew and his commentary on Ecclesiastes for first drawing my attention to this section in Berry's book. To see how this fits into Qohelet's enigma in Ecclesiastes, see McNeill, "Ecclesiastes", "The relation of our work to creation", pp. 29-30.

⁹⁹ Every truth of God's word can, and will, be perverted for self-serving reasons. God's word says that woman was made to help the man, and men have taken this to the extreme of enslaving and abusing women.

¹⁰⁰ See McNeill, "The Pastoral Epistles of Paul"; see especially *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood—A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds.

experienced a normal home life under the nurture and authority of two parents living in the same home. Only time will reveal the detrimental effects of this system of education upon African culture, and there will be many. God put children into families with fathers and mothers, not into boarding schools (Deut. 6 and Eph. 6).

Notice the emphasis on the fathers in the above texts. More often than not women throughout the world are expected to work hard outside the home or in the fields all day and then, at the end of the day, to work even harder preparing the meals and caring for the children. Where are the men? Many of them are talking idly with their friends in the market place, drinking beer, playing cards, or watching sports on TV. There is nothing wrong with any of these activities in moderation, but many of their wives receive no help from them in the fields or the home.

On the way back from the field the man is often seen walking behind his wife, carrying nothing. On a journey she is expected to carry a basket of provisions on her head and a child on her back whilst the husband walks almost free. The reason why the husband has to carry little—so I have been told—is that he can effectively defend his wife from wild animals. But...my view is that the custom is linked to the men's low opinion of women. Today we do not have wild animals prowling around and yet women are still expected to carry the same loads they carried many years ago.¹⁰¹

Several years ago, in a class of theological students, I mentioned lazy behavior as particularly characteristic of Ugandan males. Some were visibly offended. Ironically, those who were particularly offended were the ones who failed to finish the course requirements.

4. Dominion is given to corporate humanity, thus, the continuing importance of reproduction and the nurture of children.

Woman helps the man in another way which appears from Scripture, arguably, to be her most important role in dominion in her child-bearing years and while the children are young.¹⁰² Women alone can give birth to other image-bearers to join in the work of dominion. Remember that ancient kings placed their images throughout their extended kingdom to display their power. God commands man to cultivate the earth and bring it to its maximum potential to display His glory, a command which requires more than one image. Multiplication is an equal part of the creation mandate which two people could never fulfill. It is given to the whole human race, not just believers.¹⁰³ In spite of what the “experts” are saying today about the over-population of the earth and the need for population control, we have no record in the Bible of God ever limiting the multiplication of His images.¹⁰⁴

The command to be fruitful and multiply has never been suspended either in the OT or the NT. Overpopulation occurs in cities which keep growing in spite of limited promise for economic success,

¹⁰¹ Nyirongo, p. 117

¹⁰² See Appendix A for an explanation of 1 Tim. 2: 15

¹⁰³ The command to multiply indirectly forbids the sin of homosexuality which insists on the normality of “families” which cannot produce children for dominion. Such “families” are inherently selfish and man-centered rather than God-centered. The homosexual rights agenda in the US is increasingly focused on the right of homosexuals to legally marry and adopt children. The two demands go together, as homosexuals are not satisfied to remain childless. The command to multiply also condemns the materialism of heterosexual couples who do not want children for the selfish reason of having more money to spend on cars, bigger homes, and lavish vacations. But I suppose such materialists are doing everyone a favor for not having children who would grow up as duplicates of their selfish fathers and mothers.

¹⁰⁴ See Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Myth of Overpopulation*; also Darrow L. Miller with Scott Allen, *Against All Hope: Hope for Africa*, in which Miller and Allen argue that the African population is its greatest resource.

and the cities are the focus of overpopulation alarmists who conveniently ignore vast unpopulated spaces. However, anyone with good eyesight can travel across the globe and see that there is enough space for many more people than the seven billion presently in existence. In the United States, the state of Wyoming alone has more than enough unoccupied space for the entire population of Uganda with room left over. Vast expanses of the earth have never been populated; they are awaiting the ingenuity of man to make them fruitful and inhabitable. While living here in Uganda for eight years, I am still impressed with the openness of the countryside in spite of its population of 35 million people. The problem is not lack of space or natural resources, but man's reluctance in utilizing the resources present. Most of Uganda's land is not being put to productive use due to underutilized labor.

Nevertheless, individual couples should consider limiting their children to the number they can adequately care for with food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care, and most of all, spiritual nurture. When God told man to multiply, it was not simply for the purpose of producing more people, but more people capable of exercising responsible dominion.¹⁰⁵ If a father and mother produce ten children who grow up to become irresponsible adults, they have not fulfilled the cultural mandate.

There is no point in producing many children who end up delinquents or in hell. Thus the command carries with it a parental responsibility to educate and train children in the fear of God.¹⁰⁶

Without the ability to subdue and rule, the dominion mandate is only half-fulfilled and half-obeyed. Some children grow up to be a negative drain on society by turning to a life of crime or being lazy and depending on the productivity of others for their subsistence. Christian children must be taught to be responsible image-bearers of God which requires that we take care of them physically and spiritually, providing godly education either formally in school or informally at home. A balanced approach is essential.

We have to be careful not to go to extremes here. Bearing children is an important dimension of human responsibility, but we have many other duties that also require our attention. Just as we do not evangelize or help the poor every moment of our lives, God does not expect us to have as many babies as we possibly can. We must balance our call to physical multiplication with our other responsibilities. The age and health of the couple, the constraints of extraordinary vocations, responsibilities for aging parents, financial considerations, and many other factors help us determine the timing and number of our children. Balancing the responsibility of bearing children against all of our other duties requires wisdom. There is a time to multiply and a time to refrain from multiplying (Eccl. 3: 1-8). Each couple must determine how God would have them serve him in this way.¹⁰⁷

In spite of this important task, it is demeaning to view women as mere baby factories. Marriage may continue, and should, without the blessing of children. It originates in the covenant agreement before witnesses and is consummated in sexual love, not in the birth of the first child. Failure to understand this principle in African culture has led to polygamy or the taking of a wife's sister if the wife is considered infertile (cf. Lev. 18: 18). If the man is considered sterile, he may arrange for a relative to have sexual relations with his wife, thus condoning adultery.¹⁰⁸

5. The first dominion task given to man was cultivating the garden—manual labor.

¹⁰⁵ Pratt, *Designed for Dignity*, pp. 27-31. See the previous discussion of the relationship between dominion and the great commission.

¹⁰⁶ Nyirongo, p. 120

¹⁰⁷ Pratt, p. 29.

¹⁰⁸ Nyirongo, p. 113

Manual labor is not the only dominion task, but it was the first; and it should not go unnoticed that our Lord Jesus was a carpenter who took up his father's trade, as did most Jewish boys (Mark 6:3; Matt. 13:55). He was not a lawyer, physician, political ruler, or anyone else that we would call a "professional". Thus, we see that in His first 30 years of obscurity (of which we know very little), Jesus accomplished something that He did not accomplish in His last three years of public ministry: He gave dignity to all kinds of common labor. There is no distinction in God's mind between the dignity of one kind of labor as opposed to another. All legitimate labor has dignity. God shows no partiality, so why should we?

But it would appear that in every culture with any degree of sophistication, professional work requiring more formal education is respected far more than common labor—often to the point of arrogant condescension toward those who provide us with daily goods and services we need, as if they exist solely to make wealthier people more comfortable. Arrogant condescension toward common laborers is nothing less than condescension to Christ himself who was Himself a common laborer (Matt. 25: 45). He who created the world and holds it together is not impressed with advanced degrees in medicine, law, mathematics, economics, or theology. He is not impressed by man's power and wealth, "...for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). What does impress God is the man or woman who does his or her work heartily in a way that pleases Him, however lowly the work appears to be in the eyes of others (Eph. 6: 5-8; Col. 3: 22-25).

6. The animal world is subjugated to mankind and submitted to his use.

In Genesis 2: 19-20, God created the land animals and brought them to man so he could give them a name. In the ancient world, giving someone or something a name implied the exercise of authority over them. Adam named his wife Eve, implying authority over her.¹⁰⁹ God changed the name of Abram to Abraham (Gen. 17: 5). Man's humane use of animals for dominion is legitimate and does not fall into the category of exploitation. Most environmentalists, who have an unswerving devotion to the theory of evolution, elevate the animal world to a level equal to and even surpassing man, often insisting that his survival is dependent on the survival of many insignificant species of animals. They are commonly the same people who passionately oppose any legislation protecting the life of unborn children, yet they will leave no stone unturned to protect the life of some little-known species of animal life.¹¹⁰

As stewards of the earth and not owners, we are responsible to protect the ecosystems and environments of animals from unnecessary exploitation resulting in the extinction of endangered species (Prov. 12:10).¹¹¹ "The earth is the Lord's" (Ps. 24: 1) not ours. But it does not belong to the modern environmentalist, either. Many environmentalists have trampled on the rights of land owners and even brought about their financial ruin through their ruthless efforts to protect the "rights" of animals. People have priority over animals, but this is only arguable from a Christian world-view which holds that

¹⁰⁹ The reason, I believe, that it is appropriate for a wife to accept the name of her husband. My wife goes by the name of Fran McNeill, not her maiden name, Fran Wiggins. She has become my wife and placed herself under my authority as her husband.

¹¹⁰ A classic case of what R.J. Rushdoony calls "intellectual schizophrenia" in his book by this title.

¹¹¹ "A righteous man has regard for the life of his animal, But *even* the compassion of the wicked is cruel." (Proverbs 12:10 NASB)

people, not animals, are the image of God. Any other world-view fails to provide any justification for man's priority except from a purely pragmatic or evolutionistic view—the survival of the fittest.

Evolutionists generally discount *a priori* (without proof) the revelation of God in Scripture. Discarding the preexistence of God, they substitute the preexistence of matter and energy. They must believe this by faith since science is based upon empirical observation. The beginning of the world was not observed by anyone but God.

Nevertheless, science and technology made their greatest gains in cultures distinguishing between the value of man and beast. Quite obviously India, with its belief in reincarnation (becoming “re-infleshed” in a different life form after death), did not allow experimentations with animals which could be reincarnated relatives.¹¹² Forty percent of Indian children are malnourished despite India being one of the world's fastest growing economies, particularly in the area of pharmaceuticals. But its progress is based primarily upon copying the technology of western nations, not original innovation. Medical science is the product of the Christian world-view which allows man to subjugate the animal world for the greater good of man whose life is inherently more valuable by virtue of his image.¹¹³

B. The Effects of the Fall on Man's Dominion

1. The curse directed to woman

Man's sin in the Garden of Eden had terrible consequences. The curse pronounced upon him is recorded in Genesis 3:16-19. Notice that the curse given to man and woman specifically targets their strongest areas of dominion. It is the natural and God-given desire of women to have children, and in every culture most married women feel a great loss if they cannot bear children. In pronouncing the curse upon woman, however, God did not say she could not have children but only that she would experience much pain in childbirth. Two kinds of pain may be implied. First, the act of childbirth would now become physically painful, inferring that Eve had already given birth before the fall without the experience of pain and suffering or with minimal pain. God now says that He will “greatly multiply [her] pain in childbirth”. Had she never given birth before, she would not be able to make a comparison between birth pangs before the fall and afterwards. Secondly, she would have emotional pain in rearing her children who themselves would follow her example of disobedience to God's word. Her children would think independently of God's authority and their parent's authority. Eve will reap the defiance of authority she has sown, and her heart would be broken many times. Nevertheless, the curse is mitigated (made less painful). God shows grace to the woman in promising future children, even the seed who would crush the head of the serpent.¹¹⁴

Another consequence of the curse upon woman is that she and her husband would no longer be in perfect, harmonious cooperation with one another in dominion. Instead of working happily together, they would often be in competition with one another concerning who would be the covenant head of the family. The words, “Yet your desire shall be for your husband” do not refer to sexual desire for Adam, but the desire (*teshuqah*¹¹⁵) to dominate him. The desire (*teshuqah*) of sin to dominate Cain is

¹¹² Whatever gains India now has in medical technology is not the result of independent research, but dependence upon western research.

¹¹³ See Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, and D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?*

¹¹⁴ See Appendix A.

¹¹⁵ *BibleWorks*

revealed in Genesis 4:7 and gives us a clue to the meaning of the expression in Genesis 3:16. As sin desires to rule Cain's life, Eve desires to rule Adam's life. This interpretation is further established by what follows in v.16, "And he shall rule over you." Since the fall, it is the natural, sinful tendency for women to attempt to dominate their husbands rather than submit to them. This naturally produces tension in their dominion tasks of helping their husbands and the rearing of children since there is no third party to break a tie-vote in decision-making. Despite the woman's desire to take the leadership for herself, man will remain in charge even as he was at the beginning before the fall. Satan succeeded in dominating Cain's life, but woman will not succeed in dominating the male. God won't allow it because it violates the very order of creation—man created first and woman second; man exercising dominion in the garden first and woman second. The fall does not eradicate (remove) man's headship; it makes it all the more necessary.

However, man's leadership after the fall will not often be godly leadership and will more often become harsh, unloving, and irresponsible. Men have commonly abdicated (surrendered) their roles as the heads of their families through negligence and irresponsibility. In African culture, they have repeatedly surrendered the role of family provider to their wives who commonly till the ground with babies strapped to their backs while the men are "occupied" with idle conversation in the trading centers.¹¹⁶ Certainly many African men work hard and long each day, but many have gained a reputation of irresponsibility from their own wives.¹¹⁷ On a recent news cast a group of Ethiopian women involved in microfinance claimed that men were a bad risk for microfinance loans. Why? As one woman interviewed claimed, "Women spend their money on the home and children. Men get drunk and fall out."¹¹⁸ Again, there are many African men who do not fit this description, and I personally know several Ugandan and Kenyan men whose work schedules are very demanding. However, this characterization of Ethiopian men was sufficiently wide-spread for the microfinance administrators to avoid submitting loans to them. Moreover, the Ugandan practice of separate bank accounts for husbands and wives also lends support to the theory that women do not trust their husbands' management of money.

The history of man reveals a sad, tragic testimony of the ill-treatment of women in every culture. As we study the NT, we come to the predictable conclusion that Jesus was the first true liberator of women, and those cultures which are the most influenced by the gospel will demonstrate the greatest respect for a woman's role in dominion and her worth as a fellow image-bearer of God.

2. The curse directed to man

Once again the curse is concentrated upon man's particular emphasis in dominion, in this case the labor of cultivation. The ground which once so readily yielded its produce to man's efforts would now only grudgingly produce fruit. As an additional burden, it would grow other plants not beneficial to man's sustenance, thorns and thistles, thus resisting his efforts. Instead of thoroughly enjoying his work as before, man would labor "in toil" (v.17), i.e. hardship and sorrow. Nevertheless, man's curse is mitigated (lessened) due to grace, just as the woman's curse. As she will continue to have children, man will continue to eat from the ground. But now that sin has entered, he shall eat from the ground "by the sweat of [his] face" (v.19), thus implying that cultivation that was once pure enjoyment would

¹¹⁶ I am not being theoretical; I have seen with my own eyes able-bodied men playing cards under the same shade tree day after day as I made my routine bike ride through a small trading center.

¹¹⁷ This is also not theoretical. I have heard their complaints.

¹¹⁸ *Aljazeera*, date unknown

now become a burden. God continues to care for the man and does not take away the work of dominion without which life would be meaningless. Nevertheless, life will be hard; man will grow old and die, and his body will return to the dust from which he came. He may no longer exercise dominion in the safe and friendly environment of the Garden of Eden, but in a world filled with hatred, violence, greed, natural and man-made disasters. Man's story now becomes the story of Qohelet in Ecclesiastes. Regardless of any success, the value of labor becomes enigmatic (confusing).

Yet, even in a world dominated by sin and sin's hardship, dominion never stops. God will not let it stop. As we carefully read Genesis 4, we notice that the history of Cain's descendants is a history filled with progress and achievement. After he "went out from the presence of the Lord", Cain built a city (v.17), a cultural achievement in itself. His descendants practiced animal husbandry, developed musical instruments and metallurgy (production and use of metals). Their rapid cultural advancement indicates that they had not lost every element of what it means to be God's image. However, their progress is essentially unholy in that it is not motivated by love for God or the glory of God, but the glory of man. As a matter of fact, man's progress became an encouragement to elevate himself to the same level as God, a motivation which becomes apparent in Genesis 11 and the building of the Tower of Babel. It is ironic that human achievement, one element of God's common grace, is used by him to defy God and is interpreted as the reason he does not need God.¹¹⁹

We conclude, then, that although sin complicates dominion and presents the task with many obstacles and hardships, sin does not eradicate dominion. As God's image-bearers, we are still presented the task of "cultivating" the ground and multiplying other image-bearers of God throughout the earth. Cultivating the ground, of course, includes anything by which man makes an improvement to the earth God created. Many examples are apparent, including the products of modern technology—cell phones, automobiles, airplanes, modern medicine (which minimizes the dreadful effects of the fall), modern shelters built with longer lasting materials, labor saving devices like washing machines, tractors, and power saws. One of the most important developments in dominion has been in the task of cultivation itself. Notice Tubal-Cain's forging of labor-saving implements of bronze and iron (v. 22). By using modern methods of agriculture developed after many years of research, we can now spend less time growing ever-increasing amounts of food.

In the United States, for example, in 1982 (30 years ago) less than 4 million farmers grew enough food to feed 234 million US citizens plus food for export—enough for himself and 61 other people.¹²⁰ This allows other citizens to pursue different dominion tasks such as computer technology, engineering, medical technology, manufacturing, etc. without the necessity of growing their own food. Wealth (measured in economic terms) in any society is only possible with division of labor and diversification. Other factors are also necessary which we will discuss below.

On the negative side, the products of dominion can be used to dishonor God as well as to honor him. Cell phones are being used by terrorists to detonate bombs in heavily populated areas, and automobiles and airplanes are used to carry out terrorist attacks. Computers and the internet are used to spread the filth of pornography throughout the world. Nuclear technology is sufficient to destroy the whole world several times over. Surplus food created by modern technology and donated to the poor in developing nations is often used by dictators to fortify and continue their tyrannical regimes. Millions of people live under the oppression of governments which would have collapsed long ago were it not for foreign

¹¹⁹ Thus, the only means of denying God are the gifts God provides.

¹²⁰ E. Calvin Beisner, *Prosperity and Poverty—The Compassionate Use of Resources in a World of Scarcity*, p. 86).

aid in food and money. In the 1970's while the dictator Idi Amin was murdering hundreds of thousands of Ugandans, the United States government was pumping millions of dollars into Uganda to help its economy.¹²¹ It takes more than technology and wealth to exercise godly dominion; it also takes wisdom which is in far shorter supply than money and technology.

3. The curse directed to Satan through the serpent

Symbolically, the serpent who served as Satan's medium of communication is cursed to crawl on its belly—apparently not its means of movement before the curse. To this day the serpent is also the most hated, perhaps the most feared, of all the animals God has created, possibly because of its craftiness. It is not easily seen, nor is it easily identified as either dangerous or harmless—kind of like sin, which is also crafty. Sin creeps in on us; and sometimes a thought or an activity seems harmless enough until it bites and kills us. Snakes are also the most ubiquitous (everywhere) of all dangerous animals, with relatively few places on the globe enjoying freedom from poisonous varieties. Very few men, and virtually no women, like snakes; and even the harmless ones are summarily killed before proper identification. Kill them first; identify them later. As my wife says, and her mother before her, “The only good snake is a dead snake.” Too bad we can't act this way about sin, putting it to death before it bites.¹²² Though well-adapted in biting men on the heel or legs, the snake has a bad habit of getting its head bashed in, symbolic of the end for which Satan was ordained (Rev. 20: 1-10). While the curses against man and woman are mitigated, the curse against Satan is absolute and final. He will be utterly destroyed.

Satan had desired to align himself with mankind forever against God, with himself as man's lord and master. This is seen clearly when Satan attempted to seduce Christ into alliance with himself against God the Father.

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;⁹ and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” (Matthew 4:8-9 NASB)

The rebellion of Genesis 11 on the plain of Shinar recalls the motive of Satan expressed as a temptation to the woman.

They said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” (Genesis 11:4 NASB)

“For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:5 NASB)

But his plan was cursed from the beginning. Some of mankind is allied with Satan—the line of Cain representing those who are, and will remain, unbelievers. But God will choose the seed of the woman through the line of Seth—representing all who are, or will become, believers. The offspring of the woman, Jesus Christ, will crush the head of the serpent through His active obedience to the Law and

¹²¹ Ronald H. Nash, *Poverty and Wealth: The Christian Debate Over Capitalism*, p. 192

¹²² American readers will recall the comic series “B.C.” in which the woman, upon discovering a snake, always screamed, “Snake!” and beat the poor creature over the head. The author of the series, Johnny Hart, was a committed Christian with theological motives behind his cartoon series.

His passive obedience upon the cross (Rom. 16: 20). God's elect people, the extended offspring of the woman, are Satan's enemies whom he seeks to destroy (Rev. 12: 17). While succeeding in Adam's fall, he utterly failed to seduce Christ, the second Adam. Having defeated Satan, Christ will draw all men (i.e. all kinds of elect men and women) to Himself through the message of the cross (Jn. 12: 32), thus forming the predetermined alliance between men and God. Rather than building the city of man and the tower which reaches into heaven to defy God, and rather than defying the creation mandate to fill the earth with His image bearers, the renewed humanity will build the city of God (Heb. 11: 10) by filling the earth and subduing it for the glory of God, not the glory of man (Rom. 8: 18-25).

Summary and Conclusion

Man is commissioned with the responsibility to cultivate the earth for the glory of God, using all the creative potential that his image allows. This dominion will continue unhindered by sin in the new heavens and earth. Until then, his progress in cultivation and his use of the products of dominion will be marred by the devastating results of sin. Men often hate their labor because their labor often is unproductive under the cursed ground. Men also abdicate on their dominion responsibilities, handing off the duties of cultivating the field to their wives—a common problem in Africa in which 80% of the Agriculture is done by women. The potential for agricultural increase is tremendous if a greater percentage of men would enter the agricultural workplace. We will discuss this more later. In each of the individual curses given to man and woman at the fall, the curse is directed to his or her specific task in dominion. The primary task of the man is agricultural production, thus the curse is directed to the ground which will no longer be as productive as it once was. The curse against the woman is directed to her production of children who are image-bearers of God. She must endure much pain in childbirth. While the curse against Satan is unmitigated destruction, the curse against woman and man is mitigated with grace. The woman will continue to bear children, and the man will continue to reap a harvest.

Lesson Three Questions

1. Summarize (one or two sentences each) the six features of dominion presented in Gen. 1-2.
2. What is the significance of the fact that Paul's admonition concerning work is addressed to slaves rather than free men? (Col. 3 and Eph. 6)
3. What are the implications of the priority of the male in the order of creation and the dominion mandate?
4. Is the world overpopulated? Defend your answer.
5. Exegetically, how would you argue the continuing importance of reproduction in the plan of God? What would be the limitations to having as many children as a couple could possibly produce?
6. How would you argue for the dignity of all labor?
7. What is implied in Adam's naming of the animals? What practical importance does this have in environmental legislation?
8. Why is the Christian world-view important for the maximum use of the world's resources?
9. What is the implicit teaching of Gen. 3: 16b, "Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you." (Genesis 3:16 NASB)? Use another text to support your answer.
10. How does the curse upon the man imply his responsibility as the bread-winner of the home?

Lesson Four—Wealth and Poverty in Biblical Perspective (Part I)

Introduction

Man was created to love God and enjoy Him forever through the faithful exercise of cultivating the earth. This was designed to be a joyful duty reflecting the image of God in daily, creative labor. Before the fall, man's efforts at cultivation were abundantly rewarded, but now the ground is cursed, making his efforts difficult and sometimes fruitless. Poverty is the result, and most of the history of man is the story of poverty for most people. However, God's grace has allowed sinful man to discover new and more efficient ways of making a living on cursed ground.

The reader may wonder why I am introducing the subject of economics into a course of systematic theology. Very simply, anthropology is the study of man in relationship to God and creation. Most of what we do—or should be doing—six days a week, is work; and if our theology is relevant, it must be applied to our labor. Because of the fall, our labor is often toilsome, unrewarding, and fruitless. In the last lesson, we discussed why this is so, and how a Biblical perspective of work can remedy some of our distaste for labor. Our labor is worship before God.

In this lesson, I will attempt to make the argument that personal and national prosperity is not based on chance or fate. Prosperity follows from the freedom to discover and implement more efficient means of production. It also comes through the willingness to sacrifice immediate gratification (present consumption of goods) for saving and planning for the future. We must not only work hard, but smart; and we must save for the future. Failure to work hard consistently and using the same methods outmoded methods—because this is the way our ancestors worked—will contribute to poverty. Individuals and nations that are not willing to implement new methods and technology will not prosper, nor will nations and people whose efforts are suppressed through excessive taxation and bureaucracy. I will briefly discuss some of the failures of African and American governments and the futility of putting any trust in government solutions to eliminate poverty. Foreign aid to African countries has been mismanaged and stolen by African bureaucrats, thus failing to help the common man out of poverty. The primary thing governments can do to eliminate poverty is to get out of the way and allow the private business sector to grow unhindered by paper work, corruption, coercion, and excessive taxation.

However, even private charity through non-governmental organizations (NGO's) has failed to encourage innovation and progress in the private sector. Sometimes helping actually hurts people if we attempt to help someone in the wrong way by violating biblical principles. It takes more than good motives to accomplish sustainable goals.

These are intensely biblical issues. Any casual reading of the Pentateuch and the OT prophets will prove that God is concerned for the poor and that He hates oppression and corruption. He wants His people free to serve him to the fullest capacity, and He desires those who are able to help the weak in ways that pull them out of poverty. If our faith is not concerned with the practical issues of helping people and nations, it is a dead faith (James 2: 17).

IV. Wealth and Poverty

A. Definition of Poverty

Ever since the fall there has been a scarcity of resources for the fulfillment of man's needs. This is not God's fault since man decided he didn't need God's rule to maintain life and prosperity. As a result, the ground is cursed and many live in poverty to one degree or another. Modern western definitions of poverty have attempted to define it in terms of material possessions implying that if a person has only one old car, a washing machine, and a radio, he is poor. Some people in the US would claim that a man is poor if he doesn't have a few thousand dollars in the bank or if doesn't have a retirement account. (If this is true, then not very long ago I would have fit the western definition of "poor".) A more Biblical definition of poverty is the lack of ability to sustain one's life which would include the lack of ability to acquire the means of sustaining oneself. People who fall under this definition would be the sick, very old, or severely retarded who simply cannot work. It would also include those who are sick and cannot afford the medical care to get well. In other words they cannot acquire the means of supporting a healthy body.

It is doubtful that the Scripture writers would have accepted the western definition of poverty. As part of the world has become more prosperous, our definitions of poverty have changed to accommodate for the abundance of many, an abundance which was unknown until the 20th century and certainly was not foreseen by the Biblical writers. As a matter of fact, even kings living before the 20th century did not enjoy the lifestyle of the present day middle class in Uganda, much less the wealthy. They did not have running indoor water or indoor plumbing, automobiles, modern medicine, or refrigerators. One can see that arriving at a good definition of poverty is difficult and lends itself to much comparison with the conditions of others.

B. A Biblical Perspective on Poverty

E. Calvin Beisner believes that a biblical perspective on poverty "has to do not with relative incomes or possession of relative proportions of total wealth in a society, but with bare survival."¹²³ I'm inclined to agree, given the commands in the Bible to give freely to the poor, including the case laws of the OT showing how this distribution should be accomplished—i.e. the law of gleaning in which the poor must exert physical effort to glean from fields which had already been harvested (Lev. 19: 10). On the other hand, the bible forbids giving to able-bodied persons who refuse to work (2 Thes. 3: 10).

The Bible gives us no absolute definition of poverty for the possible reason that the biblical writers understood that *all* men without exception are poor in sin regardless of their financial situation. Even the wealthiest of men are destitute in the sense that they are bankrupt in their standing before God and also because whatever wealth they possess in this life will be forfeited when they die (1Tim. 6:7). There is a well-known American joke about a rich man's funeral attended by many people in the community—most of whom had no concern for the man. As some observers stood around his open casket, one of them asked what everyone was thinking, "I wonder how much money he left behind?" "All of it," another responded sarcastically.

Another possible reason for lack of a precise biblical description of poverty is that God doesn't wish for us to measure true wealth in monetary or material terms. Our true riches are in Christ alone, and if

¹²³ E. Calvin Beisner, *Prosperity and Poverty—The Compassionate Use of Resources in a World of Scarcity*, pp. 192-193

we have Christ, we own everything (2 Cor.6:10; Matt.5:5). True wealth consists of many non-material things like the love of others, peace with God, and peace with one's wife or husband. All the "better—than" proverbs in the Bible distinguish between the relative values of wisdom and money. "Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it than a house full of feasting with strife" (Prov. 17: 1). "It is better to live in a corner of a roof, than in a house shared with a contentious woman" (Prov. 21:9).¹²⁴ Who is rich, one who possesses great wealth but whose wife is never satisfied and makes his life miserable, or the man who is "poor" by comparison but whose wife is pleasant, loving, and easily satisfied with the simple pleasures of life—someone like my own wife? The Bible leaves us in no doubt about the answer. In another proverb, King Lemuel (whoever he was), says "An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels" (Prov. 31:10). Truer words were never spoken.

Having attempted to put economic wealth in proper perspective, I am not saying that economic poverty should be preferred to a comfortable living; far from it. Another proverb says, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion, lest I be full and deny You and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God" (Prov. 30:8-9). Both riches and poverty have their own peculiar dangers which make us more susceptible to temptation than we would be in a state of neither poverty nor riches. However, we would all agree that all other conditions being equal (a Christian home, good health, etc.) a better quality of life is possible with sufficient income. For this reason, the biblical writers spend considerable time on the subject of wealth and poverty and the conditions which lead to both. God created man body and soul, and He is concerned about both. When Jesus preached to the multitudes, He felt compassion for them partly because they were hungry and on two different occasions (at least) and possibly more, performed miracles providing food (Matt.14:13-21; 16: 32-39). If our faith does not cause us to be concerned for the physical needs of others, it is a dead faith and we are just deceiving ourselves about loving others (James 2:14-20; 1John 3:16-18; Matt. 25: 31-46).

At the same time, we don't have to have a Ph.D. in economics to recognize that we cannot give to everyone who is needy. Even Jesus did not feed all the poor. Economically, the redistribution of wealth by forced taxation (socialism, and its less evil twin sister, interventionism) makes no economic sense and has accomplished little in the long-term well-being of individuals or nations.¹²⁵ It can be argued that such "forced charity" has a negative impact and not a positive one.¹²⁶ There is simply not enough wealth in the whole world to eliminate poverty, and if all the wealth of individuals or nations was distributed equally throughout the world, not only would we fail to eliminate poverty, such a measure would guarantee the poverty of everyone in every nation. Rather than raising the standard of living for all, everyone would then be plunged into poverty and the world of technological and agricultural progress as we know it today would cease to exist due to capital depletion (the lack of money to support business and research).

C. Reasons for Introducing This Subject

¹²⁴ This very same truth is repeated in Prov. 25:24 which implies that Solomon (with 700 wives over his lifetime—1 Kings 11: 3) was better qualified than most to accurately assess the relative value of domestic peace, having experienced immeasurable wealth along with the palace squabbling of jealous wives who turned his riches into poverty. Speculative, yes, but a realistic assumption.

¹²⁵ Assuming we are willing to be honest about the history of the Soviet Union which imploded in 1989. China, on the other hand, has adopted capitalist solutions since 1978 resulting in a swelling middle and upper class. China's communist leaders use capitalism pragmatically to support its government. The closest we can come nowadays to a purist communist country is North Korea which is systematically starving the poor masses.

¹²⁶ Forced charity is an oxymoron—a contradiction in terms—since charity is love; and love cannot be forced upon anyone.

I decided to introduce the subject of wealth and poverty in our study of anthropology for two reasons, one of which has already been mentioned. First, the study of man includes his efforts in having dominion over the earth, an activity which encompasses (involves) most of man's life. It therefore seems irresponsible to omit such an important application of dominion. Second, the subject of wealth and poverty is a very relevant subject for any developing continent like Africa which sees the prosperity of the west—as well as the continuing economic progress of many other developing nations like India—but remains far behind economically.¹²⁷ Citing the Human Development Report of 2003, Ayittey says that “while most of the world's economies expanded in the 1990's, people in 54 developing countries had become poorer; the majority of these countries were in Africa”.¹²⁸

It is hoped that this very brief introduction will be informative and will at least outline biblical guidelines for prosperity. I do not claim to be an economist, yet I haven't seen much tangible success by brilliant economists who have been working on Africa's problems for half a century. So, why shouldn't I add my 50Ush-worth to the debate? Besides, I am only following the work of gifted evangelical theologians who are also concerned for the poor. I also admit that I am treading on sensitive ground; but my willingness to do so is out of love for Africa and the desire to see it prosper—but not at the expense of the gospel, which, according to Proverbs, is “better than” material prosperity. I do not pretend to have the solutions to the problems, but only offer a few biblical principles to give you some perspective on the problem. I would invite disagreement and argumentation as well as sufficient interest to read the books cited in this section.

I have been impressed with many African families and students whom I have met personally. By American standards, most of them have little by way of material possessions, but that does not seem in any way to diminish their contentment, happiness or their hospitality to strangers. Their contentment is a stark contrast with the sense of entitlement (“you owe me” mentality) which is common among many of the “poor” in the US who live at a far higher standard than the poor in Africa. Many of the American poor are bitter and jealous toward those who have more because they have been told for five decades that others cause their financial problems. They perceive themselves as victims of the rich. Some African-American economists¹²⁹ have attempted to dispel this myth for decades, but have had a very limited impact on the American culture compared to the entrenched liberal media and well-funded academic elite in practically all the major universities.¹³⁰

Having said this, I must also admit some personal reservations. Based on my conversations with Ugandans and my experiences in the market place—paying muzungu (white person) prices while Africans are charged market prices—have made me wonder whether the abuses of the Colonial era have caused a deep-seated entitlement mentality among Africans. Some believe, I think, (and possibly

¹²⁷ See Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion—Why the Poorest Countries are Failing, and What Can Be Done About It* and George B.N. Ayittey, *Africa Unchained—The Blueprint for Africa's Future and African in Chaos* by the same author. Ayittey's books are must read for anyone trying to understand the dynamic between government mismanagement and poverty in Africa, especially since Ayittey is from Ghana. It should be added here that according to a recent documentary, 40% of the children in India are undernourished (Aljazeera, May, 11, 2012). Poverty is not the exclusive problem of Africa.

¹²⁸ Ayittey, *Africa Unchained*, p. 5

¹²⁹ Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams. See Walter E. Williams, *The State Against Blacks* and *America, A Minority Viewpoint*

¹³⁰ While the failure of the communist experience in the Soviet Union, Cuba, and North Korea have exposed the nakedness of communist philosophy (“The emperor has no clothes!” for you western readers), many American universities like Harvard, Yale, and Berkeley keep the socialist dream alive. The academics tear down the capitalist system in their classrooms and smugly drive home to their up-scale neighborhoods in their BMW sedans—courtesy of the capitalistic system they despise.

have been taught in school), that the main economic problems in Africa¹³¹ have been caused by Colonialists.¹³² It is, therefore, “pay-back time” from the West which has caused Africa’s problems in the first place. Some of these accusations are true, and almost anyone would admit that the colonial past was fraught with mistakes—any foreign policy is. However, I believe the burden of proof falls upon those who wish to shift most of the blame upon the west. I would invite any discussion on this issue, and I will strive to be as objective as possible as a mazungu who has lived 52 of his 61 years in the US.

D. Divine Providence versus Fate

The question may be asked, why do some nations prosper and others do not? And why do some individuals prosper and others do not? Is it only good luck or bad luck—or as Hindus would say, “Bad karma.” Or, rather, are there logical reasons leading to wealth or poverty? Stated differently, has God put any economic principles (or laws) in motion which govern the field of economics and prosperity? If we acknowledge God’s providence, we must conclude that nothing happens by chance or luck (fate). Everything is the primary result of the will of God worked out in time and space—human history. Ultimately, it is God who has already ordained who will be poor, who will be wealthy, and who will be in-between according to His unquestionable wisdom. It is God’s wealth to give and His to withhold.

But if we believe in this providence, we may be tempted to believe that it does not matter what an individual or nation does one way or another, since God’s decision has already been made. But we would be wrong in this conclusion, even as we would be wrong in saying that since God has already chosen the elect to salvation it does not matter whether we preach the gospel to sinners or not. Blind fate is not the same as providence. God ordains not only the end, but the means to the end. Just as He has ordained that the elect are saved, He has also ordained that these same elect hear the preaching of the gospel, repent, believe, and become progressively sanctified through the truth. Likewise God has ordained beforehand how His wealth is to be distributed throughout the earth, but He has also ordained beforehand the means by which this wealth should be distributed.

The production of wealth follows predictable patterns or laws just like water behaves according to the law of gravity. We would not expect water to flow uphill, and we should not expect wealth to be produced in an economic environment, individual or national, which is adverse (in opposition to) to prosperity. Prosperity generally follows obedience to economic principles which are evident in the Bible, and failure to follow these principles leads to poverty individually and nationally. I have emphasized the word “generally” because prosperity is never guaranteed in the Bible for good behavior. This was the error of Job’s three friends, the error of rigid retribution theology maintaining that God *always* rewards obedience with prosperity during this lifetime and disobedience with punishment during this lifetime—no exceptions.¹³³ But God is sovereign, and He sometimes brings glory to Himself by allowing exceptions—Job, for instance, whom God acknowledged as a righteous man (Job 1: 1). Thus, we can never account for all the unforeseen providence which affects our financial future. Having said this, the financial future of an individual or nation is not a dice game, either. God doesn’t play dice; He controls the world according to predictable laws which reflect His divine nature.

¹³¹ Perhaps I should say, Uganda, since this is where I have been living for over 9 years, minus furloughs. I have not lived in other African countries, but I have heard similar experiences from those who have lived elsewhere in Africa.

¹³² See also *Against All Hope—Hope for Africa*, Darrow L. Miller, who devotes some space in the book to this subject.

¹³³ McNeill, “Job”

E. Poverty the Normal State of Mankind since the Fall

We will first attempt to understand some of the economic factors which make some nations rich and others poor. Beisner says that until the late 18th Century (late 1700's) in Europe and North America, poverty was...

...the normal state of the vast majority of the world's people in every part of the world throughout the history of the human race....Then the Industrial Revolution, spurred by the adoption of various new liberties in economic activity, substantially brought famine—the most horrible sort of poverty—to an end for the Western world.¹³⁴

Famine occurred in England about seven times per century before the Industrial Revolution or about ten years per century, and this was about average for the rest of the world. Since the Industrial Revolution, there has been no famine in the industrialized world since 1700 other than in war-time. The exceptions were the Irish Potato Famine of 1846-1847 caused by the potato blight and several famines in Communist countries resulting from failed political policies and government-produced shortages. Chairman Mao, dictator of communist China for decades, once forced practically the whole labor force into steel production, a colossal (huge) misappropriation of resources which brought starvation to millions of Chinese.

This historical record must be contrasted with the record of other non-industrialized nations such as India in which ten million people died during the famine of 1769-70. Eight more famines occurred in India from 1838-1901 which cost 9.3 million lives, and in northern China 9.5 million people died of starvation from 1877-78 in a single famine.¹³⁵ Why the disparity (difference) between West and East? The question, Beisner insists, is not how one society or individual becomes poor. The real question is: Why do some people and nations emerge from poverty and others do not? What are the conditions leading to economic prosperity?

Poverty is the natural condition of mankind, a condition from which some have risen from time to time, from which many have yet to rise, and into which any will fall back if they ignore, misunderstand, or fail to apply the causes of wealth.¹³⁶

Other history and economic scholars agree that poverty was the normal condition of the human race until the 1800's.

Way back in time, 100 per cent of people were poor. With the rise of kings like the pharaohs of Egypt, a tiny percentage—the rulers—were prosperous. The rise of ordinary business then led to mass prosperity for more and more people, to reach today's figure of 60 percent....

Go back in time for every region on earth and you will find that the people there started out poor. You will also find that there was no business sector. Over the centuries, at different rates and at different times, ordinary business grew and spread to more and more parts of the world.¹³⁷

But there is one major qualification to this theory offered by Hubbard and Duggan: the Industrial Revolution would not have been possible without the pre-existing condition of a healthy business sector

¹³⁴ Beisner, *Prosperity and Poverty*, p. 193

¹³⁵ Beisner, p. 193

¹³⁶ Beisner, pp.193-194

¹³⁷ R. Glenn Hubbard and William Duggan, *The Aid Trap—Hard Truths about Ending Poverty*, pp. 4-5.

and free markets. Science and technology alone will not drive the local business sector. The ancient Greeks and Chinese already knew some of the principles of Arkwright's power loom and Eli Whitney's cotton gin, but prosperity did not come to these civilizations until the 20th century—with the exception of a very small percentage of rulers and slave owners. The Russians were the first to put a man in outer space (Sputnik, the first manned space travel, 1957); and the US government did a lot of hand-wringing afterward to put the first American into space. Yet, Sputnik did not improve the economic life of Russia because it did not have a vibrant business sector under a repressive communist government.¹³⁸

Do we need proof of this for Africa? Travel deep into any African village and one of the first things you will notice is African men and women with cell phones to their ears. In fact, I am more impressed with cell phone service in Uganda than I am Jackson, MS. In African cities, many businesses have computers, but many of the workers operating those computers are paid \$150 per month—if they get paid that month. The business sector in Africa has not kept pace with the availability of technology. Thousands upon thousands of university students are graduating with business degrees, but with nowhere to go for a job. The technology is there; the business sector is not.

F. Working Harder

1. The Old Testament record

Beisner says the first cause of wealth is “working harder”.¹³⁹ This is consistent with what the Solomon teaches in Proverbs.

- 3: 13 How blessed is the man who finds wisdom And the man who gains understanding.
- 3: 14 For her profit is better than the profit of silver And her gain better than fine gold.
- 3: 15 She is more precious than jewels; And nothing you desire compares with her.
- 3: 16 Long life is in her right hand; In her left hand are riches and honor.

- 6: 6 Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise,
- 6: 7 Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler,
- 6: 8 Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest.
- 6: 9 How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?
- 6: 10 "A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest"—
- 6: 11 Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.
- 10: 4 Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, But the hand of the diligent makes rich.
- 12: 11 He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, But he who pursues worthless things lacks sense.
- 12: 24 The hand of the diligent will rule, But the slack hand will be put to forced labor.
- 12: 27 A lazy man does not roast his prey, But the precious possession of a man is diligence.
- 13: 4 The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, But the soul of the diligent is made fat.
- 13: 11 Wealth obtained by fraud dwindles, But the one who gathers by labor increases it.
- 14: 23 In all labor there is profit, But mere talk leads only to poverty.
- 15: 19 The way of the lazy is as a hedge of thorns, But the path of the upright is a highway.
- 16: 26 A worker's appetite works for him, For his hunger urges him on.
- 18: 9 He also who is slack in his work Is brother to him who destroys.
- 19: 15 Laziness casts into a deep sleep, And an idle man will suffer hunger.
- 19: 24 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish, But will not even bring it back to his mouth.
- 20: 4 The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, So he begs during the harvest and has nothing.

¹³⁸ Hubbard and Duggan, p. 59

¹³⁹ Beisner, pp. 77-83

20: 13 Do not love sleep, or you will become poor; Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with food.
 21: 25 The desire of the sluggard puts him to death, For his hands refuse to work;
 21: 26 All day long he is craving, While the righteous gives and does not hold back.
 22: 13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside; I will be killed in the streets!"
 22: 29 Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before obscure men.
 23: 20 Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, Or with gluttonous eaters of meat;
 23: 21 For the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, And drowsiness will clothe one with rags.

 24: 30 I passed by the field of the sluggard And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense,
 24: 31 And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles; Its surface was covered with nettles, And its stone wall was broken down.
 24: 32 When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction.
 24: 33 "A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest,"
 24: 34 Then your poverty will come as a robber And your want like an armed man.
 26: 13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road! A lion is in the open square!"
 26: 14 As the door turns on its hinges, So does the sluggard on his bed.
 26: 15 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; He is weary of bringing it to his mouth again.
 26: 16 The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes Than seven men who can give a discreet answer.

 27: 23 Know well the condition of your flocks, And pay attention to your herds;
 27: 24 For riches are not forever, Nor does a crown endure to all generations.
 27: 25 When the grass disappears, the new growth is seen, And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in,
 27: 26 The lambs will be for your clothing, And the goats will bring the price of a field,
 27: 27 And there will be goats' milk enough for your food, For the food of your household, And sustenance for your maidens.

 28: 19 He who tills his land will have plenty of food, But he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty.
 28: 20 A faithful man will abound with blessings, But he who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished.
 31: 10-31 (The virtuous, hard-working wife)

As I have noted above, the Proverbs are not guarantees that hard-working people will be prosperous, but they present general principles or rules which may have exceptions according to God's inscrutable providence (e.g. Job's hardships). However, they do offer a predictable pattern which we have all observed for ourselves first-hand. We should also not equate "riches" (Prov. 3: 16) with a Mercedes Benz or a mansion on a hill-top in Kampala. In the ancient world, a man was considered economically rich if he did not suffer the normal patterns of "feast or famine"—having plenty during good years and almost nothing in other years. If he could provide well for his family every year, he was "rich".

The first people specifically mentioned in the Bible who were endowed with the Holy Spirit were tailors or seamstresses who made priestly garments for Aaron, the first high priest of Israel (Ex. 28:1-3). The second person so endowed was Bezalel (Ex.31:1-5), whose genius in craftsmanship for the tabernacle would probably rival that of many of the masters of the Renaissance.¹⁴⁰ His co-worker,

¹⁴⁰ The sculptor and artist, Michelangelo, was one of those masters. The Renaissance was the renewal of interest in classical art and literature which began in Italy in the 14th century. In Italy and France, the Renaissance primarily continued as the glorification of man, moving away from the Medieval religious orientation of humanity subordinate to a sovereign God. However, in Germany and England, it had positive results. The rebirth of interest in ancient literature prompted a man named Erasmus to produce the first Greek New Testament in the last part of the 15th century. This Greek NT was used by the Reformers to translate the Bible into the common languages of the people. See N. R. Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's*

Oholiab, is also given honorable mention. That we hear so little about these people even within church circles is the consequence of a world-wide cultural bias against the dignity of manual labor, a bias which has infected even God's people.

Work is given such priority in the Bible that it is given a place of distinction in the Fourth Commandment. John Murray notes that the fourth commandment

...is the commandment of labour as well as of rest....The day of rest has no meaning except as rest from labour....The divine ordinance [of labor] is not simply that of labour; it is labour with a certain constancy [continuation]....We can be quite certain that a great many of our physical and economic ills proceed from failure to observe the weekly day of rest. But we can also be quite sure that a great many of our economic ills arise from our failure to recognize the sanctity [saintliness] of six days of labour."¹⁴¹

2. The early American work experience

With hopes of a better life and freedom from various forms of oppression, hundreds of thousands of people came to the US over a period of many decades with little more than the clothes on their backs. Their main assets were energy, the determination to better their lives, and the freedom to do so. Immigrants took any kind of job they could find, most of which were physically demanding and requiring long hours. Because of the back-breaking efforts of these first generation immigrants, the second or third generations were able to receive the education needed to “work smarter” than their parents and grandparents. Yet, it took the willingness of the first generation who “worked harder” than the socio-economic classes above them to provide the opportunity for succeeding generations.¹⁴²

A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous. (Proverbs 13:22 NASB)

Though Beisner is speaking of the early period of American history, the same scene has been played out throughout the history of America and other western nations. Hard-working fathers and mothers worked long hours in factories providing the money to educate their children. The children educated were able to get higher-paying work which was not as physically demanding and did not take as many working hours. Furthermore, as the general level of the economy rose from generation to generation, factory work also began to pay better. Some “blue collar” jobs in America—factory jobs, plumbing and electrical contracting, general contracting, auto repair, carpentry, etc.—are now paying better than some jobs requiring an education, based on the law of supply and demand.¹⁴³ But the wealth of the US did not spring up overnight; it was the gradual progress of many generations of hard-working American people.

The economic progress which has made American life so affluent has not occurred in one generation, but is the cumulative (ongoing) progress of several generations of hard-working Americans working long hours, sometimes in very unpleasant conditions. The way my parents and grandparents lived in the 1920's and 30's, and even the 40's, was not much different from the lifestyle of the many Africans

Power. For a very concise treatment of Erasmus, see McNeill, “Religious Persecution in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century”, “Positive features of 15th and 16th century humanism”.

¹⁴¹ John Murray, (Principles of Conduct, p. 83; words in brackets mine.

¹⁴² Beisner, p.79.

¹⁴³ Some self-employed carpenters in Mississippi are making \$35 US an hour or \$280 per day. Others in more prosperous states are making far more.

today who have no electricity, running water, indoor plumbing, or automobiles, but who have plenty of food to eat. Only during the “baby-boomer” generation of the 50’s—after World War II—did the average American begin to enjoy many of the luxuries which are now so common-place in American society.¹⁴⁴

3. The New Testament record

Contrary to much commonly held opinion in the US and elsewhere, work is not a dirty word. Remember that working in the garden was man’s first job, and Jesus labored in his father’s carpentry shop. It is quite possible that at an early age He was the sole provider for his mother and younger siblings since we don’t read anything about His father after He was twelve years old. As we have seen from Proverbs, the Bible repeatedly extols the efforts of the working man and woman but condemns laziness. Thoroughly familiar with the OT teaching, the apostle Paul admonished believers who were slack in their labor.

He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. (Ephesians 4:28 NASB)

But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,¹¹ and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, (1 Thessalonians 4:10b-11 NASB)

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,⁸ nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;⁹ not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.¹¹ For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.¹² Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. (2 Thessalonians 3:7-12 NASB)

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Timothy 5:8 NASB)

It should be noted from 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 that a persistent refusal to work is serious enough to elicit the discipline of the church. The purpose of such censure is to make the person ashamed of his behavior and repentant. Paul, the same apostle who sanctions the use of church discipline for the chronically (consistently) idle, even more passionately condemns laziness in 1 Tim.5:8, insisting that the one who will not provide for the needy members of his own family “has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”. “Worse”, because even most unbelievers will care for their own families. It should be evident from these same passages that we have no obligations of charity toward the able-bodied members of our own families who refuse to work. Paul’s command of 2 Thessalonians 3:10 cuts in two directions. First it is a warning to those who refuse to work and wish to “mooch” off those who do. Secondly, it forbids feeding this person out of a false sense of guilt or charity. To provide the “busybody” or sloth with food is not an act of love or charity; it is a sinful subsidy of his irresponsible life-style which is itself the equivalent of theft (Eph. 4:28). If not corrected, it may lead to much more sinful behavior sooner or later in life, possibly even armed robbery or murder.

¹⁴⁴ See Appendix C for a journey into my personal past. The story illustrates the simplicity of most middle-class workers from the early 20th century until the 1950’s when I was born.

Although commendable in many ways, the African sense of community often works against personal responsibility. If a person has a rich relative, the relative is expected to provide a minimum level of support regardless of the needy relative's work ethic.

“My uncle's riches are mine too, so why work hard?”¹⁴⁵

Starvation from sloth is appropriate punishment upon the wicked for neglecting the benevolent commandment of God to exercise dominion over the earth for His glory. We need not be overly concerned about the number of people dying under such discipline, as they would be relatively few, if any (Prov. 16: 26). Given the only choices of working or dying a slow, uncomfortable death from hunger, few if any would chose the latter. The problem is that we often give them another choice, illegitimate charity. It should be stressed that Paul is not talking about those who are unable to work or those who may need temporary or even long-term assistance to meet a pressing need. Think of the millions of refugees throughout the world, many living under conditions of draught and war. Thousands of these people have been displaced from their land and have no means of producing food. The only solution for such people is relief aid. To these suffering victims of war and greed we have strong obligations of charity, especially to believers (1 John 3:17-18; James 2:15-16; 1Tim.5:8; Gal. 6: 10). Many Africans who care for their own family members and even the children of others at great sacrifice and without the help of government assistance should be praised for their generosity, even as the Scriptures praise them.

Proverbs 19: 17 One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, And He will repay him for his good deed.

Proverbs 22: 9 He who is generous will be blessed, For he gives some of his food to the poor.

Proverbs 28: 27 He who gives to the poor will never want, But he who shuts his eyes will have many curses.

The Biblical principles discussed above apply not only to those who do no work **at all**, but also those who do **too little** work. As Murray points out, the command to work is also the command to work with consistency¹⁴⁶, and any country which expects to climb out of poverty must have a work force which steadily produces enough goods and services for available buyers. Even in a world of scarcity, it is doubtful that there is an economy anywhere that doesn't have something to offer the rest of the world at a better price than its competitors—a principle known as comparative advantage.¹⁴⁷ Even a sand-filled country like Saudi Arabia has oil, and if there is enough effort and freedom in the market place, any country should be able to find the raw materials necessary or produce some product to carve out their niche (place) in the global market.

Many of the fastest growing economies in the world are found in eastern Asia. They include Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. One important implication of these nations' impressive growth rate is that easy access to natural resources is *not* a condition of economic development. If the major difference between being a rich or poor nation were easy access to natural resources, countries like Japan and Taiwan would be poor while the nations of South America would be rich.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Nyirongo, p. 102

¹⁴⁶ See footnote 116

¹⁴⁷ Beisner, pp. 93-96. For example, Saudi Arabia has a comparative advantage in oil production, but not automotive manufacturing. With a large workforce and millions of acres of undeveloped land, Africa should have a comparative advantage in food production, but it doesn't, leading to the question: Why not?

¹⁴⁸ Ronald Nash, *Poverty and Wealth* p.186; emphasis his.

Miller and Allen make precisely the same point. Japan, poor in natural resources, is a major economic power while the Democratic Republic of Congo, one of the poorest nations, is potentially one of the wealthiest countries on earth in terms of natural resources—possessing 90% of the world’s supply of cobalt and 85% of its platinum. But Japan made use of its most valuable asset after World War II, its people, while the DRC has been progressively impoverished through civil war.¹⁴⁹ The new country of South Sudan, rich in oil deposits, is now suffering the same fate of unrealized potential due to civil war. People at war cannot produce.

What did the Asian nations have which caused them to prosper? One thing they did *not* have, according to Nash, Miller, and Allen, was easy access to raw materials. Most of the raw materials they used in manufacturing had to be imported into the country from the outside, making these materials very expensive. One thing they did have, however, was a massive labor force. A nation’s labor force by itself is a valuable commodity which should not be taken for granted.¹⁵⁰

A massive labor force is one thing Africa has in abundance, judging from the busy sidewalks of its cities and the landscapes throughout the continent dotted everywhere with rural villages. The main question is: How can Africa maximize the potential of its workforce? Unemployment and underemployment (not enough work) are very high throughout the continent, and there is a desperate need for capital (money) to provide manufacturing jobs for Africa’s young work force—roughly 50% of its population under the age of 15. If even 85% of the workforce were employed in 40-50 hour work-weeks, the whole economy of Africa would be radically changed for the better. The 40-50 hour work-week needs to be emphasized, since a nation can have a high employment rate but its work force still underemployed with short work weeks. Working harder is not just a short burst of activity, but a sustained activity until the job is done and profits are produced. The nature of the work is also important, since working harder will not *by itself* secure a good economic future. Many Africans work long hours farming and selling produce and clothes from their shops for small incomes, but there are millions of shops in Africa selling the same merchandise. This results in excessive competition for the available demand. I’m not an economist, but I believe manufacturing jobs are necessary to take advantage of the large labor force and for long-term prosperity. Furthermore, as one African economist has suggested, the expansion of Africa’s agricultural potential is the most important way forward to prosperity.¹⁵¹

4. Relationship between population growth and prosperity

In light of what I have said about the “myth” of overpopulation, I would be remiss (negligent) if I failed to mention the relationship between population growth and national prosperity. Again, we must balance our understanding of the dominion mandate with the great commission. Together, these two commands indicate the reproduction of disciples who are capable of responsible action—subduing the earth. People should not be merely consumers, but primarily producers.

The economic growth of a nation is measured by starting with its Gross National Product (GNP) and then subtracting its population growth. Ronald Nash gives the example of Bangladesh which had an

¹⁴⁹ Darrow L. Miller and Scott Allen, *Against All Hope: Hope for Africa*, pp. 12, 32. See also Darrow L. Miller with Merit Newton, *LifeWork—A Biblical Theology of What You Do Every Day*.

¹⁵⁰ A fact that the US and other Western nations will one day recognize when there are too few laborers to sustain a healthy economy—the consequence of decades of abortion and poor attitudes about producing and rearing children.

¹⁵¹ George B.N. Ayittey, *Africa Unchained—the Blueprint for Africa’s Future*, pp. 366-367.

average GNP of 3.3 % between 1970 and 1979. During this same period, the population growth of Bangladesh was 3.0%. Therefore, by subtracting 3.0% from 3.3%, the economic growth of Bangladesh in real per capita income (income for each person) from 1970-79 was 0.3%, not 3.3%. Although there was growth in the GNP, the growth had to be averaged out over the growth in population. The “important lesson” to be learned is that

A nation’s rate of population growth will have as much effect on its overall economic growth as will any increase in the total value of the goods and services it produces....

An important distinction must be made between a nation’s extensive and intensive economic growth. Any real growth (against inflation) of a nation’s gross national product will constitute extensive growth. But if that nation is also experiencing too rapid a growth in population, the benefits of any extensive growth may result in little if any real benefit to the people. For intensive economic growth to occur, there must be growth *per person*. There must be a broad improvement in the standard of living across the whole range of a nation’s population; this improvement must also help the people at the bottom of the nation’s income ladder.¹⁵²

Again, I would hasten to add that the real problem is not population growth by itself, but inadequate production *per person*. As a nation’s population increases, so should its production by reason of the larger labor force. For example, Hong Kong has a population density 47 times that of mainland China¹⁵³ but the per capita (for each person) income of Hong Kong in 2001 was \$24, 800 per year compared to \$860 in mainland China.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, increased population density does not necessarily diminish the per capita income of a nation as long as there is increased production per person. But when there is considerable unemployment or underemployment, as in many parts of Africa, an increase in population usually reduces the per capita income and the economic prosperity of the nation.

Due to the lack of employment opportunities in Africa and other developing nations, many have moved to urban centers like Nairobi, Kampala, and Mexico City seeking jobs and a better life. Many, perhaps most, of the people looking for a better life have failed to find it. Cardboard hovels have sprung up in Mexico City, the corrugated metal slums in Soweto, Johannesburg, all racked by homicide, rape, and drug dealing. “Concrete jungles” have sprung up in many cities in the US with the same problems—unemployed people who turn to crime. Most cities do not have the necessary employment opportunities for the massive migrations of people. The result is aggravated poverty, crime, and homelessness. Living in a mud hut in rural Africa is a better life, by comparison, than that of many people living in over-populated cities throughout the world (including the US) plagued by the problems mentioned above. In rural areas, people at least have access to the land and can grow enough to eat and not be in danger of starvation or dependent upon others. Comparing their rural life styles to the typical slum dweller in the US, they are rich. There are reasonable alternatives to living in heavily populated areas.

Nevertheless, a growing business sector in Africa is needed to provide jobs for a growing population, 50% of whom are under the age of 15. This is a need not unrelated to the spiritual needs of Africa. If we believe that a nation’s economic policy is outside the sphere of biblical study, then we have created a sacred/secular or nature/grace dichotomy.¹⁵⁵ Every sphere of human activity belongs to the Lord and

¹⁵² Nash, p. 185; emphasis mine

¹⁵³ Miller, Allen, p. 34

¹⁵⁴ Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, *Operation World*, pp. 159, 181.

¹⁵⁵ A dichotomy is a division into two groups which are mutually exclusive of one another. That is, the two groups of things or ideas have nothing to do with one another. However, the Bible treats both nature and grace as the work of God. Man is both body and soul; his work on earth involves both the spiritual realm and the physical realm. God is concerned for man’s body which He created; therefore, He is concerned that there are few jobs in Sub-Saharan Africa to provide for people’s needs.

either wins His approval or condemnation. Our Lord Jesus fed the hungry on at least two occasions, proving that He was not unconcerned for hungry people. But this was an example of short-term relief, not a long-term solution. The long term solution is economic development (Lk. 19: 11-26), and Christians throughout the world should be occupied with long-term development rather than the short-term solution of charity.¹⁵⁶ Long-term charity to the same people breeds dependence and increased poverty.

G. Foreign Aid as the Solution to Poverty

1. Foreign aid to governments

a. Insufficient to bring billions out of poverty

Some would argue that the money for economic development must come from ever-increasing amounts of foreign aid from western nations. Between 1960 and 2006, seven hundred and fourteen (714) billion US dollars in foreign aid have been spent by western nations for Africa alone.¹⁵⁷ Calls for forgiving the debt of African nations and doubling foreign aid have been made with great fanfare by western celebrities—rock star Bono (lead singer of the rock band U-2), Bob Geldof (Irish singer and song writer), movie celebrities like Angelina Jolie, as well as billionaire business tycoons like Warren Buffet and Bill Gates. I personally believe that they mean well. It is unlikely that Angelina Jolie and Bono, after making millions in movies and musical recordings, or that Buffet and Gates, with their billions earned from capitalist market economies, are seeking additional publicity and admiration. But charitable solutions do not hold up to careful scrutiny. Motives alone do not eradicate poverty.

The World Bank reports that 1.4 billion people live on less than \$1.25 per day. That's a bit less than \$500 per year. To double their income these people need a total of \$700 billion per year (1.4 billion x \$500). That's about seven times the total world aid budget [of \$100 billion]. If we give the aid as charity and all of it reaches its target—even with absolutely no inefficiency or corruption—then we help them one seventh of the way (\$100 billion /\$700 billion). Hence the calls to double aid, to help them another one seventh. But even that leaves a gap of five sevenths, or \$500 billion per year, forever. Charity can never fill that gap. Even if it did, that still leaves the people poor, living on \$1000 per year. To get them to \$2000 per year, you would need another \$1.4 trillion per year [\$700 billion x 2], or fourteen times the current annual world aid budget [14 x \$100 billion].

You can never deliver enough charity to give poor people a decent [economic] life. Business is the only sustainable answer to poverty. It gives people a way to earn money to pay for a decent life themselves....The answer is not to give more charity—even if you could find \$1.4 trillion per year—but to help their business sectors thrive.¹⁵⁸

I've added "economic" to the above quote to reemphasize the point made earlier that material prosperity alone cannot guarantee a "decent life". Many poor Christian people in Africa have a better, "richer" life than materially rich westerners who are spiritually poor. Those who know Christ have much more than a merely "decent" life. They have a good life in fellowship with God. What they do not have is a comfortable **economic** life. They suffer many hardships unknown to American believers. All Christians, African and bazungu, want a better **economic** life for Africa, and that is why I have included

¹⁵⁶ We often interpret this parable to apply only to spiritual accomplishments, as if what we do in our jobs is irrelevant.

¹⁵⁷ Hubbard and Duggan, p. 169

¹⁵⁸ Hubbard and Duggan, p. 110; words in brackets mine

this discussion. But we must never lose sight of Jesus' admonition, "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?" (Luke 9:25 NASB)

b. Stolen by heads of state and other government elites

Even if prosperous nations could come up with an extra \$1.4 trillion per year, we all know what would happen to most of it. Large portions would magically disappear into the private (foreign) bank accounts of African heads of states and MP's ("ministers of plunder") who are closest to the cookie jars of foreign aid funds. As a resident of Africa perhaps I should be afraid to say this, but every peasant farmer on the continent knows this already. It is not news. What may be news is the enormity of their fortunes. African heads of state are among the richest men in the world, making Donald Trump look destitute by comparison. George Ayittey, an African economist from Ghana living in the US, makes note of this remarkable phenomenon.

The fortunes of African heads of state were published by French Weekly (May, 1997) and reprinted in the Nigerian newspaper. The News (Aug. 17, 1998)

- General Sani Abacha of Nigeria...(\$20 billion)
- President H. Boigny of Ivory Coast...(\$6 billion)
- General Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria...(\$5 billion)
- President Mobutu of Zaire (\$4 billion, [estimated at \$8 billion by some sources])
- President Mousa Traore of Mali...(\$2 billion)
- President Henri Bedie of Ivory Coast...(\$ 300 million)
- President Dennis N'guesso of Congo...(\$200 million)
- President Omar Bongo of Gabon...(\$80 million)
- President Paul Biya of Cameroon...(\$70 million)
- President Mengistu Haile Miriam of Ethiopia...(\$30 million)
- President Hissene Habre of Chad...(\$3 million)

Ayittey does not mention Daniel Arap Moi, Robert Mugabe, or numbers of other African heads of state, but not because he is unaware of them. Moi from Kenya, a professing Christian who was "converted" in the Africa Inland Church, is reported to have stolen over \$2 billion. (As we say in the states, a man's money is the last thing converted to Jesus.) Understandably, African heads of state are very reluctant to leave their posts. From 1960 to 2003 (roughly 40 years since the independence of many African nations) only 19 heads of state have retired; nineteen others have lost elections. From 1960 to 1989, only one African head of state lost an election in contrast to 12 who lost elections between 1990 and 1999. Eleven have lost elections since 1999.¹⁵⁹ What happened to the rest?

Of the 107 African leaders overthrown between 1960 and 2003, two-thirds were killed, jailed or driven into exile. This combination of risks and rewards gave African leaders a compelling reason to cling to power. They gagged the press, banned dissent, and turned the security services into private militias.¹⁶⁰

Although the "kleptocracies" (Ayittey's term) would be wrong in any sense, the situation would be helped if African kleptocrats would spend their loot inside Africa.¹⁶¹ I can't say for sure that the

¹⁵⁹ Ayittey, p. 405

¹⁶⁰ *The Economist* (Jan. 17, 2004), quoted by Ayittey, p. 405

¹⁶¹ "Kleptocrat" is a coined word describing bureaucrats who steal. Ayittey, an African scholar, also calls them "suitcase bandits" When they are exiled, they take suitcases stuffed with cash with them. They also have their foreign bank accounts which make their exile quite comfortable.

following story is true, but I heard that Museveni requested that the members of parliament would at least spend their stolen money in Uganda rather than sending it to foreign bank accounts. For politicians who are going to steal anyway, this is “good” advice. At least the common laborers building their mansions in Kampala can make wages from stolen money. But the advice has limitations. How much money can you spend on the home turf without arousing suspicion? It’s easier just to stash it away somewhere.

For every dollar that foolish northerners [westerners living latitudinally north of Africa] lent Africa between 1970 and 1996, 80 cents flowed out as capital flight in the same year, typically into Swiss bank accounts or to buy mansions on the Cote d’Azur.¹⁶²

Therefore, eighty percent (80%) of the money loaned to Africa between 1970 and 1996 did not help the common citizens of the African continent. It helped the bureaucrats in African governments. Small wonder that so many university graduates in Uganda desire government jobs.

c. Sustains despotism and corruption

Not only is international aid stolen, it helps sustain despotism and corruption on African soil. In many five-year plans for foreign aid, it has been common to include part of the government budget into the plan resulting in African governments substantially funded by foreign aid.¹⁶³ What does this do? When African heads of state are sustained by foreign funds, they are no longer accountable to their people through public tax revenues simply because they don’t need these revenues to stay in power. There is plenty of cash from foreign aid to purchase guns, ammunition, and to pay armies. Dambisa Moyo, an African economist from Zambia, highlights this problem.

The list of corrupt practices in Africa is almost endless. But the point about corruption in Africa is not that it exists: the point is that aid is one of its greatest aides....

With aid’s help, corruption fosters corruption, nations quickly descend into a vicious cycle of aid. Foreign aid props up corrupt governments—providing them with freely usable cash. These corrupt governments interfere with the rule of law, the establishment of transparent civil institutions and the protection of civil liberties, making both domestic and foreign investment in poor countries unattractive. Greater opacity [obscurity or dimness] and fewer investments reduce economic growth, which leads to fewer job opportunities and increasing poverty levels. In response to growing poverty, donors give more aid, which continues the downward spiral of poverty.

This is the vicious cycle of aid. The cycle that chokes off desperately needed investment, instills a culture of dependency, and facilitates rampant and systematic corruption, all with deleterious consequences for growth. The cycle that, in fact, perpetuates underdevelopment and guarantees economic failure in the poorest aid-dependent countries.¹⁶⁴

Moyo is not by any means alone in her criticism of western foreign aid. After 50 years and billions of dollars, many economists are coming to the realization that aid is not accomplishing the purpose for which it is *should be* intended—helping the masses of African people.¹⁶⁵ However, the failure of

¹⁶²*The Economist* (Jan 17, 2004); quoted in Ayittey, p. 324; words in brackets mine

¹⁶³ Hubbard and Duggan, pp. 52-53

¹⁶⁴ Moyo, *Dead Aid—Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa*, pp. 48-49; words in brackets mine

¹⁶⁵ I use the qualifying words, “should be”, because much of the aid given by western nations from 1960 to 1990 was used to influence the foreign policies of African nations, many of whom looked to the Soviet Union as a model for prosperity. How these recipient nations used the aid was of secondary importance to national security against the threat of communism. (See Hubbard and Duggan, pp. 51-57, and Ayittey, pp. 57-92, “The Postcolonial Elite Developmental Model”) Doubtless,

foreign aid has been recognized a long time, long before African scholars like Moyo (*Dead Aid*, 2009) and Ayittey (*Africa in Chaos*, 1998, and *Africa Unchained*, 2005) became well-known. Ronald Nash summarized the problem in 1986.

There are many unfortunate consequences of foreign aid. It often hinders economic development, frequently subsidizes destructive national policies, encourages consolidation of political power at the expense of individual freedom, reinforces the myth that the reason some countries are rich is because they have exploited poor countries, and deceives people into thinking that benefits are available without the need to pay for them....Pursuit of the prize of political control that in turn provides access to foreign aid dollars has produced much internal strife and conflict.¹⁶⁶

Writing in 1981, P.T. Bauer expressed the same skepticism of any long-term positive benefits of western foreign-aid policy.

In fact, harmful policies buttressed by aid usually damage the poorest, most notably the rural poor. This is the result of the urban bias of Third World economic policies. Aid goes to government, that is, to the ruler, not to the [masses of population] familiar in aid publicity. To give money to Third World governments on the ground that most of their subjects are poor, differs completely from giving money to the poor themselves. The policies of aid-recipient governments, including their patterns of public spending, are rarely governed by the needs of the very poor.¹⁶⁷

It should be said that misuse of foreign aid is not the sole monopoly of African governments. Not only in Nigeria, Tanzania, and Malawi, but also in Pakistan, governments have used foreign aid to build new cities to serve as their capitals.¹⁶⁸ The government of Bangladesh confessed that it sold all the food aid it received for one year to the nation of India.¹⁶⁹ Schlossberg reports in his book that cooking oil was seen for sale in the market places of India bearing the label, “Not for sale. Gift of the American people”¹⁷⁰

Undoubtedly, the UN has brought needed food and medical relief to millions of poor people, particularly refugees. The question is whether, like the US “War on Poverty,” the funds supporting the bloated bureaucracy of the UN could be better spent on actually helping the poor and whether the poor would be better off with those funds in the hands of the private sector—both for aid relief and for the capitalization of new businesses. The United Nations has fared no better than the US government in the distribution of public funds. Andrew Apostolou, director of research at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, has drawn attention to the eight year “Oil-for-Food” program with Iraq.¹⁷¹ This program, designed and supervised by the UN, intended to take Iraq’s oil revenues out of Saddam Hussein’s hands and use them for food and medicine rather than for military equipment. As it turned out, Saddam’s notorious son, Uday, used some of the money (\$20 million) to build the Iraqi Olympic arena in his bid for the 2012 Olympics. The hand-over of money to Uday took place with the approval of the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on June 13, 2002. This was 11 years after the US went to

foreign aid is still used by western governments to influence government policies, but not against the threat of communism. How much it is used to influence policy against terrorism is another book to be written by someone who has this information.

¹⁶⁶ Nash, *Poverty and Wealth*, p. 191

¹⁶⁷ P.T. Bauer, *Equality, The Third World and Economic Delusion*; quoted in Nash, p. 192; words in brackets mine

¹⁶⁸ Nash, p. 192

¹⁶⁹ Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, p. 73; quoted from Nash, p.216

¹⁷⁰ Schlossberg, p. 73

¹⁷¹ See foreignaffairs.com from which Rush Limbaugh derived his information.

war with Iraq in 1991 over the occupation of Kuwait. Uday was also known for torturing male Iraqi athletes and raping female athletes if they did not perform well in international competition.

As for Saddam Hussein himself, much of the money from the Oil-for-Food program secured construction of many elaborate palaces, a fact which became evident to all TV viewers when the US invaded Iraq in the spring of 2003. Commander of the US forces in Iraq, Tommy Franks, said that this UN program was an “Oil-for-Palaces” program.

To top it all off, the United Nations itself was one of the largest beneficiaries of the program, with the UN taking 2.2% of the Iraqi oil sales for its administrative costs, a total of \$1.9 billion feeding a bloated staff of 3,000 people, the largest single UN program in the world. Apostolou concludes his article with this statement, “No wonder that when Kofi Annan met Saddam Hussein in February, 1998, he said that the Iraqi dictator was a man that “I can do business with.””¹⁷²

d. Fails to promote the private business sector

In 1986 alone, \$200 million of developmental assistance poured into Uganda, followed by \$850 million in 1987 due to the promising potential of the National Resistance Movement. This government, along with Museveni’s leadership, has had many beneficial results for Uganda’s people not the least of which is domestic stability. However, the massive foreign aid has had marginal (little) effect in helping the average citizen better his economic life. The gap between imports and exports has increased steadily since the mid-1980’s. The goods exported from Uganda have grown only modestly while the goods imported from other countries have dramatically increased—resulting in a growing debt to donor nations which must either be paid by Ugandan tax-payers or forgiven by donor nations.

The irony of Uganda’s recovery is that the macroeconomic stability [national economic stability] that has been achieved is based almost entirely on concessional, and conditional, transfers of developmental aid, and not on any fundamental improvement in the basic structure or capacity of the economy. Uganda is completely dependent on aid, and while dependency continues, so does poverty....Despite all of this [foreign aid] Uganda remains one of the poorest, least developed, and highly indebted countries in the world today....Poverty reduction depends on how the benefits of growth are distributed and utilized.¹⁷³

2. Foreign aid to non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Although foreign donor governments have known for decades that billions of funds were being siphoned off by leaders of developing world nations, they kept throwing money at the problem. To minimize the damage, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were formed—thousands of them—to administrate donor funds with tighter controls away from government bureaucracies. NGOs have succeeded in providing refugee relief—food, water, clothing, medical supplies and personnel, temporary housing, etc. They are still valuable in developing world countries for this kind of help.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² RushOnline.com; April 26, 2004. The talk-show host, Rush Limbaugh, is tagged by the western media as a “nutcase” who should not be taken seriously. Sometimes he steps over the line of credibility, but I trust his analysis of current events more than the mainline liberal media—CBS, ABC, NBC, CNN, Aljazeera, and BBC. Fox News is the only conservative news media in the west. I cannot get it on DSTV which only carries the liberal media.

¹⁷³ Ian Leggett, *Uganda—the Background, the Issues, the People*, pp. 60,62; words in brackets mine

¹⁷⁴ Hubbard and Duggan, p. 81

The problem is that NGOs have broadened beyond their primary usefulness as relief agencies and have become, instead, long-term mechanisms for economic development. A need is discovered, and then the NGO designs a “village development project” to solve this need—non-profit, of course.¹⁷⁵ I once saw an advertisement on DSTV—if you could call it an ad—in which a dairy farmer in Africa was milking his cow. When the milk pail was almost full, someone comes into the barn and kicks it over, spilling all the milk. It was evident from the ad that the pail-kicker was an NGO. No one wants to purchase milk when he can get it free of charge from an NGO. NGOs have seen the need for milk for child nutrition in many rural villages and have designed projects to provide free milk. In the process, they have often overlooked the local dairy farmer whom they have put out of business with free milk. Hubbard and Duggan mention the case of a group of business students who traveled to Kenya to help with a Millennium Development Village (brain-child of the United Nations). The technology program of this Village had designed a lantern which could be produced and sold locally. Finding a local entrepreneur nearby who sold a similar lantern for much less, the students suggested to the Millennium Development Village that they simply market the cheaper lantern to other rural villages, thereby helping the local entrepreneur sell more lanterns. No deal. The technology program wanted to produce and sell its own lantern, even at a higher cost.¹⁷⁶

The same could be said for NGOs who specialize in drilling rural water wells. Could they, instead, simply train Africans to dig the wells, provide long-term financing for the necessary equipment, and thereby foster (promote) hundreds of well-digging microenterprises? Those who learn to dig wells efficiently and at the least cost to rural villages would succeed. Those who were inefficient, or who did not develop the skills of maintaining and repairing their wells would go out of business, leaving more business for the better entrepreneurs. Those who failed could then find some other kind of business to pursue in which they had a comparative advantage. That’s the way business works. Instead, money is pumped into a non-profit village project. If the project fails, no problem—just pump more money into it because it’s for a good cause. Projects funded with OPiUM (“Other People’s Money”) do not have to succeed because the generous people funding it, as a general rule, are not going to hold anyone accountable. Those who want to see what their money bought will see exactly what the project managers want them to see, whether it is accurate information or just “smoke and mirrors” (a metaphor for deceptive reporting). The only possible way to observe what is actually happening is to visit the NGO unannounced.

These village development projects are the darlings of NGO aid. You can make a donation from the comfort of your home and then take a trip to visit the village well you paid for. The villagers will welcome you gladly. Nobody mentions that ten years ago there was another well somebody paid for that rusted solid after two years because nobody knew how to fix it or had the money to do so. Celebrities take these tours with cameras along, so we can all watch and then do the same ourselves. But is that the route to prosperity? Does Bono entrust his music tours or album production to NGOs? Does Angelina Jolie star in movies made by NGOs? When Bill Gates founded Microsoft, did he make it an NGO? NGOs are fine for charity, like refugee relief, but they do not provide the engine of prosperity.¹⁷⁷

One exception to this failure is the Grameen Bank established by Muhammad Yunus of Bangladesh with the help of the Ford Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation—both American NGOs. Microfinance loans from the Grameen Bank have funded thousands of small business enterprises in

¹⁷⁵ Hubbard and Duggan, p. 81

¹⁷⁶ Hubbard and Duggan, pp. 81-82

¹⁷⁷ Hubbard and Duggan, p. 82

many countries, but that is just the point. Yunus' idea succeeded because it strengthened the private business sector in developing countries; it did not compete with it.

Why then do NGOs continue, considering the many failures? Four reasons are offered by Hubbard and Duggan.¹⁷⁸

(1) The charitable motive to give poor people what they need. This motive is good and proper, but there comes a time when helping actually hurts people.¹⁷⁹

(2) Self-propagation. If NGOs were disbanded, thousands of people would lose their jobs, both expatriate and indigenous employees of NGOs, and even professionals living in western nations who provide administration, education, and funding. Many people will work very hard to preserve their jobs even if they know that little long-term benefit is being accomplished. Therefore, we can see the difference between NGOs and businesses, which must produce a desired service or product at a reasonable cost or else go out of business. NGOs generally keep going since no profit is necessary.

(3) Lack of support in western nations for a strong business sector in developing countries. Some of the elite in western nations—especially the academia in major western universities—still harbor a fascination with socialistic ideas that have utterly failed in the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and North Korea. They would, therefore, prefer giving charity—especially OPiUM, “other people’s money”—to risking their own money in African businesses.¹⁸⁰

(4) Lack of business alternatives for using billions of dollars in aid. Stated another way, “We’ve got all this money, but where do we spend it?!” or “Throw enough mud on the wall, and some of it is sure to stick.” It is more difficult to fund thousands of small business-sector ventures, less difficult to put the money in colossal (big) government and NGO programs, even those which haven’t worked for decades. Rather than spending no money at all, we keep funding the same broken systems. On the other hand, if western governments would quit taxing corporations and wealthy individuals excessively, then maybe a few of these corporations and individuals would be willing to risk their newly acquired tax refunds on start-up African businesses. Of course, this is contrary to western liberal politicians and media who try their best to convince the public that these “greedy” corporations and rich people should be taxed more, not less—having the end result of draining more profits, thereby reducing jobs. As a group, politicians have a gift of producing the opposite results from the ones they intended.¹⁸¹

H. The Failure of US Domestic Welfare Policy

¹⁷⁸ Hubbard and Duggan, pp. 85-86

¹⁷⁹ For further reading, see Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor and Yourself*

¹⁸⁰ One need not look to the burgeoning (fast-growing) economy China for an example of socialistic utopia and the superiority of central planning. After the death of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping came to the helm in 1978. In his youth, Deng had strongly believed that communism would bring prosperity to China, but fifty years later in the 1970’s it was obvious that he and his generation had been sadly mistaken. The evidence was not far away—poverty stricken North Korea with its starving millions and prosperous South Korea with its billions of dollars of exports. Still a philosophical communist, Deng gradually moved away from pure socialism by allowing more freedom in the private sector. The results are there for all to see. (Hubbard and Duggan, p. 42).

¹⁸¹ At the same time, laissez faire capitalism is not the full solution to poverty. Christian principles applied to capitalism is the solution. For a balanced approach, see Richard C. Chewning, ed. *Biblical Principles and Business—The Foundations. Christians in the Marketplace Series*

Corruption and misallocation of funds is not the sole monopoly of developing world governments. African national leaders should learn from the negative example of US domestic policy. In 1982 the total welfare bill in the US came to \$403 billion, supposedly used to help the 35.3 million poor people living there. Had the \$403 billion simply been divided among the 35.3 million poor, each individual would have received \$11,133 annually, and a family of four would have received \$44,532 annually. The official US poverty level per family in 1982 was \$9,287 annually which means that the US spent over four times as much on poverty than would have been necessary to raise every poor family out of poverty for that year (\$44,532 minus \$9,287=\$35,245 in excess). Where then, did the excess money go? According to a noted African-American economist, Thomas Sowell, most of the money to fight poverty in the US is pumped into the salaries of administrators, consultants, and staff-workers who are paid generously to administrate the programs. It has become increasingly clear that the primary beneficiaries of such programs are not the poor, but bureaucrats.¹⁸² Other “beneficiaries” who should be mentioned are the liberal politicians who use transfer payments (welfare) and other social programs (more welfare) to buy votes from manipulated citizens.

Before the “War on Poverty” (initiated by President Lyndon Johnson) began in the US in the mid-1960’s, low-income earners were already making good progress in their own individual “War on Poverty” without government assistance. Between 1950 and 1965, the percentage of poor Americans was cut in half from 30% to 15% *before* federal welfare programs took effect. The rapid escalation (rise) of poverty programs began about the same time that poverty had reached its lowest levels. As government spending on poverty officially began, a strange thing happened. Instead of continuing the reduction of poverty through government spending, the percentage of poor Americans actually increased. In 1980 the level of poverty stood at the same percentage it did in 1968 even though federal spending on poverty had increased 400% during that same period. In 1982, the percentage of families under 25 years old who were poor stood at 26.1% as opposed to 13.2% in 1968.

By 1982, over a trillion dollars had been spent to eliminate poverty. The only thing accomplished was an established dependency on welfare payments very similar to dependency on drugs. Remember OPiuM—“other people’s money”. The more one gets, the more he wants. The biggest “junkies” are the Washington bureaucrats who “get high” on OPiuM—elected by people too manipulated to understand what’s going on.¹⁸³ The end result of the “war on poverty” was that more and more families in America became unemployed and less educated. The illegitimacy rate for children also increased as the news got around that unmarried mothers were being paid liberally for each illegitimate child—more illegitimate children, more welfare payments.¹⁸⁴ Government funding of the poor, which is always mismanaged and poorly supervised, actually creates more poor people.¹⁸⁵ Not only does it create more demand for assistance, it takes money away from the producer who could be using the money to create more jobs in the private sector. Due to these abuses, welfare reform was instituted in the 1990’s, but under a government system which cannot adequately supervise the distribution of funds, abuses continue.

¹⁸² Nash, p.177

¹⁸³ As Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s right hand man quipped, “Tax and tax, spend and spend, because the people are too damn dumb to understand.”

¹⁸⁴ Welfare payments to unwed mothers have basically emasculated low-income males who are no longer needed either by their mistresses or their illegitimate children. They are nobodies who strut their false masculinity on the streets of crowded cities selling drugs and women, and robbing others of hard-won income.

¹⁸⁵ Nash, pp.177-78

I. Trusting in Princes

I have gone to some lengths with these illustrations to emphasize one important point. If we look to our own governments or the governments of other nations, or the combined efforts of the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, NGOs, or celebrities like Bono, Geldof, and Oprah Winfrey to solve our economic problems, we will be disappointed.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD Than to trust in princes. (Psalm 118:9 NASB)

Do not trust in princes, In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation. (Psalm 146:3 NASB)

When Samuel the prophet was getting old and it was clear that his two sons were not walking in the ways of the Lord, the people of Israel asked him to choose a king to rule over them. Samuel was appalled at the request—tantamount (equal) to rejecting the Lord's rule over them. He granted them their wish according to the Lord's instructions, but he did not mask the serious mistake they had made in wanting a king like that of other nations.

He said, "This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place *them* for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots.¹² "He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties, and *some* to do his plowing and to reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.¹³ "He will also take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers.¹⁴ "He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves and give *them* to his servants.¹⁵ "He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants.¹⁶ "He will also take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys and use *them* for his work.¹⁷ "He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants.¹⁸ "Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."¹⁹ Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, "No, but there shall be a king over us,²⁰ that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." (1 Samuel 8:11-20 NASB)

Trusting in princes—also known as government solutions—means heavy taxation and servitude (v. 17)¹⁸⁶, forced conscription in the army (v. 11), confiscation of property and cronyism (v. 14), and a host of other problems. Sinful people would rather trust in governments rather than in God and the personal effort that God blesses. I am reminded of a motto placed above the door of the General Auditor of the State of Mississippi thirteen years ago which read, "In God we trust; everyone else we audit." We can trust God to be completely true to His word which tells us how to prosper in a biblical way. We can also trust the Bible to tell us what it means to be truly prosperous. Prosperity depends first upon God who must bless our labor. It depends, secondarily, upon our own efforts to work harder in accordance to biblical standards of work to provide for ourselves and our families. But there is still another factor which must be taken into consideration before a nation or individual can succeed economically, working smarter.

Summary and Conclusion

I have spent a lot of space dealing with micro and macro-economic issues—economics related to the individual and the national economy. This is not what you generally get in typical textbooks on systematic theology. Why have I done this? First, because anthropology explores the question of man's

¹⁸⁶ Servitude to the government since the first few months of your wages are spent on excessive taxes.

dominion over the earth, the most basic and fundamental task of man. It is a task that will continue after Christ returns to consummate His kingdom in the new heavens and new earth. We must understand, further, that salvation is the means to the end of restoring man to this original, creation mandate—also known as the cultural or dominion mandate. The Bible begins in the garden and ends in the garden-city. Thus, man’s priestly cultivation of the earth is the grand “inclusion”¹⁸⁷ of the Bible with everything in the middle of the Bible providing the story of how God brings us back to the original purpose.

Second, because economics is the study of applied anthropology, if you will. As God’s image-bearers, we are builders and creators. The line of Cain could not escape the intuitive urge to have dominion, although they failed to apprehend the proper purpose of dominion—as does the line of Cain (unbelievers) today. Yet, even believers are mostly in the dark about the relationship between their work and their faith. Their work is simply the means to provide for their families, not God’s ordained means of promoting the kingdom of God on earth.

Third, because other textbooks on systematic theology will not explore these topics. And even if they did, they would not contextualize them for the African reader.¹⁸⁸ I could have covered other subjects like the origin and nature of sin, Pelagianism, etc, but these topics can be explored from published systematic textbooks, some of which are now accessible for free on the internet.¹⁸⁹ But the old systematic theologies seem locked into the standard topics common to all. I have dealt with topics pertinent to the African context, and I hope I have enlightened my readers on some of the individual and national sins which keep Africa poor—a substandard work ethic, lack of initiative in using abundant natural and human resources, tribal wars, and governmental mismanagement and theft. (If the reader will pursue these topics further by reading books listed in the bibliography, he will be further enlightened.) If these are not subjects for theological discussion, perhaps I have missed the purpose of systematic theology, after all. And if missing the mark is the price of relevancy, I will continue to miss the mark in any future installment of systematics. Economics, then, is a subject that is deeply theological. It explores the moral failures of individuals and nations, God’s curse upon the earth when He is disobeyed, and His blessings if His moral laws are obeyed. Having offered this justification, we will proceed to some solutions in Lesson Five.

Lesson Four Questions

1. What perspective do the “better-than” proverbs give us on wealth and poverty?
2. Explain this statement: Wealth or poverty follows predictable economic patterns according to an individual’s or nation’s obedience or disobedience to the laws of God governing economic life.
3. In two or three sentences, summarize the teaching of the Proverbs on hard work.
4. Should a nation or individual expect instant prosperity? Explain.
5. Does the NT record agree with Proverbs on the importance of work? Explain.
6. What is the most valuable asset or resource of any country? Cite historical proof of this fact.

¹⁸⁷ For an extensive explanation of “inclusion”, see McNeill, *Biblical Interpretation—Interpreting NT Epistles or Biblical Interpretation—Interpreting OT Narratives*

¹⁸⁸ I don’t think my African students would be interested in reading a theological interpretation of the Great Depression of the 1920’s in the US.

¹⁸⁹ I would suggest that the reader check for free copies of John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* off the internet. Louis Berkhof’s *Systematic Theology* or his shorter work, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, are older works that are classics on this subject and may also be available for free. A newer work, *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem, is more helpful but not available for free.

7. Explain the relationship between population growth and prosperity.
8. How much foreign aid would be necessary per year to increase the per capita (per person) income of 1.4 billion people to \$1000 per year? How does this figure compare with the total current foreign aid budget per year? Based on these calculations, would it make a significant difference to double, triple, or increase foreign aid to ten times the current level?
9. Explain how foreign aid promotes despotism on the African continent.
10. Name and explain four reasons NGO's continue despite their many failures.

Lesson Five—Wealth and Poverty in Biblical Perspective (Part II)

Introduction

Working harder for financial progress is not enough; one must work smarter—more intelligently—by investing time and money in formal or informal education.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, one's education need not be a literary education from an African university, but vocational education producing practical skills. Ayittey argues that there is too much emphasis on literary, professional education in Africa. There should be increasing opportunities for vocational education producing practical skills like electrical contracting, carpentry, and agriculture.

Saving money is essential for the capitalization of business enterprises. But saving money requires the sacrifice of immediate gratification—the purchase of present goods and services (cell phone time, braided hair, expensive weddings). Diversification is necessary for people to find their comparative advantage in the market place and to increase the profitability of goods and services which are not in excessive supply relative to demand. These economic concepts will be explained along with the Biblical principles supporting them. Cultural traditions often prevent us from saving for the future or diversifying our labor.

Foreign direct investment is based on the corporate morality of a nation. Can a company realistically invest capital in a country where there is little prospect of adequate profits but a big probability of corruption and confiscation of capital? Does the judicial system honor property titles and contracts? Is the work ethic of the available work force sufficient to expect high productivity? All of these things are ethical issues determining the prosperity of a nation. National prosperity is not a card game or a dice game based on luck. Prosperity follows predictable patterns based upon the word of God. Apparently wealthy Africans are not “betting” on their own economies either since 40% of all legitimate wealth made in Africa is invested overseas, not in Africa.

Tithing is recognition that God alone owns our wealth. Wealth is given to us in this life as a stewardship to use for His glory and the good of others. Finally, the family life of a nation is a good indicator of national wealth. The short-term plans of self-gratification (short horizons) characteristic of single men are changed into long-term plans (long horizons) for the future welfare of a family by married men who love their wives and children.

¹⁹⁰ Obviously, then, by “smarter” I am not advising someone to get all dressed up, unless your job demands it.

J. Working Smarter

Beisner says that not only must a nation work harder to rise out of poverty; it must “work smarter”. Working smarter—that is, more intelligently—is a biblical principle.¹⁹¹

If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen *its* edge, then he must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of giving success. (Ecclesiastes 10:10 NASB)

Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days.² Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth. (Ecclesiastes 11:1-2 NASB)

Both of these texts speak of working smarter. A sharp axe cuts wood more efficiently than a dull one. Diversifying one’s investments is smarter than investing everything in a single venture which may fail.¹⁹² This would also apply to the diversification of crops and crop rotation. If one crop fails, another one may succeed. Successive generations of Americans rose to higher income levels progressively through education. Education, whether formal (at an institution) or informal (at home or on the job), is valuable because it helps us become more efficient in our work; and efficiency means more production of goods and services (and more money) for the time spent working. Who should be opposed to that? We illustrated this point earlier. With the use of agricultural equipment like tractors and combines, the American farmer produced enough food in 1982 to feed himself and 61 other people.¹⁹³ Today the figure is probably much higher.

1. Education and the use of more efficient methods of production

Another illustration is personal. Many years ago I made cabinets of all kinds. For a long time, I put off buying pneumatic nail guns powered by compressed air to make my work more efficient. Finally, when I mustered the courage to spend \$2000 for the equipment and begin using it, I could have kicked myself. Over the many years that I had been making cabinets and doing other carpentry jobs, I could have made more than enough money with the equipment to have purchased it many times over. It took a little bit of education (about nail guns) and the willingness to risk the money in order to reap the benefits. For years I had been working harder, but now I was working smarter and making more money with less work. I could have gone a step farther by hiring others to work for me while I contracted for more work, thus making money on their labor. Making money on another person’s labor is an acceptable practice. There is no point of hiring someone whose wages will merely use up the available profit with no return to his employer. The owner/entrepreneur must make money on his employee’s labor to justify hiring him. In the parable of the talents, Jesus likens himself to an investor who expects a return on his money (Matt. 25: 14-30). The master is angry with the slave who simply returns the original investment. In effect, this was theft since the master could have at least earned minimal return on his money from the bank.

¹⁹¹ By “smart”, I am not referring to one’s manner of dress.

¹⁹² Ecclesiastes 11: 1-2 is not talking about charity, but maritime (sea) trading. Qohelet, the preacher, is advising his readers to divide their venture capital among seven or eight ships rather than putting their goods on one ship which may sink. See McNeill, “Ecclesiastes” where I also cite other commentaries with this interpretation.

¹⁹³ Beisner, p. 86

Working smarter does not necessarily mean getting a formal education so you can land a government job. Africa and the US do not need *more* government workers, but *fewer*. What is needed is a skilled work force producing an increasing supply of quality goods and services.

Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before obscure men. (Proverbs 22:29 NASB)

A skilled worker will find employment with men who can afford his labor at a high price. He will not be limited to working for people who either will not pay him at all (fraud) or who will pay him only minimally for shoddy workmanship. The skilled worker takes pride in his labor, and his diligence eventually pays off with better customers or clients. He may also choose to work directly for the consumer rather than an employer, but he must be disciplined in his work habits to be able to do this. On a national scale, a large skilled labor force places the nation “before kings” in that its high-quality goods and services place the nation at a more competitive position in the global market, even if the goods are primarily agricultural commodities. But if the producers of such agricultural products go the next step in processing some of these commodities into consumer goods, so much the better.¹⁹⁴

Quality vocational education, rather than university education, could provide millions of Africans with the necessary skills to better their lives. Ayittey questions the practice of multiplying graduates with professional degrees when there is no market to employ them.

...the content of education needs to be overhauled. The hippo generation [the African generation who believed that the state can solve the problems of Africa] overemphasized the literary type of education: the acquisition of university degrees and instruction in such subjects as history and the arts. The emphasis should rather be placed on vocational education to teach students such skills as cart-making, horse/donkey breeding, welding, brick-making, sewing basketry, auto mechanics, etc. Instead of building more universities, African governments should be building more vocational schools. The advantage is that a graduate from a vocational school, with little capital can immediately employ himself or herself. *The university graduate, on the other hand must often wait for the government to employ him.*¹⁹⁵

Ayittey is not saying that literary education is unnecessary. He himself is a highly educated man. (I am presently attempting to give you additional literary education.) However, most people in any nation, not just the nations of Africa, will be employed in the business sector, not the government or academic sector; and most people will be employed producing goods and services which are used every day. There is not much room behind the corporate desk, but lots of room in the market place for those who have marketable skills. Personally, I have enjoyed my education; and I am pursuing more education both formally and informally. Yet, my building skills have provided most of my family’s needs for the last thirty years.

Working smarter does not necessarily mean getting a formal education at all, even a formal vocational education. Often it means bettering yourself through informal educational methods like self-motivated reading and consulting with people who know more about a certain occupation than you do. It includes on-the-job training. Any form of education requires risks in terms of the time one spends researching a topic or learning a new trade. It may also require the risk of money in paying someone, a teacher or consultant, for the benefit of his expertise. Education also requires the humility to admit that you do

¹⁹⁴ A recent coffee producer in Ethiopia decided to go the next step in selling roasted coffee on the international market. This processing produces more profit and more jobs for Africans (*Aljazeera*).

¹⁹⁵ Ayittey, *Africa Unchained*, p. 390, emphasis mine

not know everything that can be known about the skill in question. Sinful pride is a great hindrance to learning new skills or gaining new information.¹⁹⁶

Much of the agriculture in Uganda is still accomplished by using the same methods hundreds of years ago, simple hand-held farm implements. On a recent trip to Eldoret, Kenya in 2012, I was pleased to see Kenyan farmers cultivating 40 to 50 acres of farmland with tractors, provoking the question: Why not in Uganda? The hard work of the laborer who tills the land is admirable, but working smart is also admirable. Walking to town will get you there, but you save time for more productive labor by riding a motorcycle or bicycle—assuming you don’t need the exercise. While few Africans can afford a tractor or the up-keep of a tractor, many already have cattle which could be trained to pull heavy implements like plows and cultivators that have been in existence for thousands of years (1 Kings 19: 19). Maybe I’m missing something here; please help me out. Maybe there is a good reason why many Africans with cattle don’t use *any* of them for plowing the soil, but I can’t think of one. On the other hand, African men will not hesitate to use their wives to cultivate the soil. Eighty percent of the farming done in Sub-Saharan Africa is done by women.¹⁹⁷

One rule of economic progress is that you must walk before you can run. That is, you have to use the opportunity you have before you can move on to the next opportunity. Could it be that the typical African farmer is not working as smart as he could be? And could it be that with several years’ worth of using cattle to plow the fields—which could be much larger fields—he could make enough money to eventually afford a tractor? It is not a sufficient reason for rejecting a proven method just because you have never done it that way before, and your father and grandfather before you. “My culture” is not an automatic answer to every question. Based on that reasoning, we would still be crossing the oceans by boat rather than by airplane. (Remember my own mistake for not using nail guns years sooner than I did. This decision cost me lots of income, as well as worker satisfaction.)

2. Saving money for capital investment

Another aspect of working smarter is saving money for the purchase of labor-saving tools like nail guns, air compressors, and farm implements. If we only live for today, we will never set aside the surplus of today to “capitalize” our labor and make it more efficient. The need for planning—planning for capital investment—is found in the natural world and observable among mankind.

Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise,⁷ Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler,

⁸ Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest. (Proverbs 6:6-8 NASB)

A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous. (Proverbs 13:22 NASB)

Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days.² Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth.³ If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth; and whether a tree falls toward the south or toward the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies.⁴ He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap.⁵ Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones *are formed* in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.⁶ Sow your seed in the morning and

¹⁹⁶ Yet, I have discovered the hesitancy of skilled workers to pass on their skills to others through apprenticeship programs. Electricians, plumbers, and carpenters in the US don’t learn their skills primarily in vocational schools, but from other skilled professionals who are willing to hire them and teach them.

¹⁹⁷ George Ayittey, *Africa Unchained*, page not known

do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good. (Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 NASB)

He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, But he who pursues worthless *things* lacks sense. (Proverbs 12:11 NASB)

The ant does not consume everything it finds to eat at once, but stores it up for a future day when it is most needed. Likewise, a good man does not consume all the money he makes during a boom period. He knows that additional tools will enable him to become more efficient in his labor. He also knows that his frugality may be able to capitalize the business endeavors of his children and grandchildren so that they will not have to start at the same economic level as he did.

A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous. (Proverbs 13:22 NASB)

Ecclesiastes 11: 1-6 is primarily about planning. We can't control the weather or the future. This is not our job. Our job is to be as productive as we can by "working hard" (sowing morning and evening) and by "working smart" (dividing our investments, or land use, among many possibilities, knowing that all of our investments or crops will likely not succeed).

A common complaint everywhere is that there is never enough money. Of course not; the ground is cursed, and scarcity is a fact of life. Most of us live with limited resources to be sure, but if we sat down and calculated how we spent our money the previous two years we might be surprised. In the US, families who have little income will sometimes spend extravagant sums on weddings and funerals, much more than they can actually afford. I have found that this is also a common practice in Uganda. The money spent on a wedding that will soon pass could have been spent on a child's education, a new method of agriculture, or a different product for sale giving someone an advantage in the market place. Such future-oriented thinking could have long- lasting benefits. With all due respects to the bereaved and the dead, a funeral will also soon pass; and the large sums of money spent on the arrangements and feeding relatives for several days will not bring back the dead, comfort the bereaved, or prevent an evil ancestral spirit—a religious belief based on superstition, not fact. I believe God would rather have us spend our money for the support of the **living** rather than the **dead** who no longer need our use our support. Considering the cultural traditions, I realize that this could be offensive to many Africans; but we must be willing to question our cultural practices in the light of biblical values. I personally do not follow many of the practices of the US simply because they are only cultural, not biblical.¹⁹⁸

On a less traditional level, saving money could mean giving up some things we like, but don't actually need. African women look very attractive with their braided hair, but I also know that braided hair-do's are very costly relative to their incomes and the incomes of their husbands. So is cell-phone use, yet many Africans are willing to forego future income for the present gratification of talking with their friends during the day. Giving up present gratification for the purpose of future productivity and income is a common characteristic of the wealthiest people in the world.¹⁹⁹ Contrary to much popular

¹⁹⁸ My aunt was ashamed of the burial casket I selected for my father's funeral. It was the cheapest casket among the dozen or more shown to me by the funeral home director. I simply did not want my mother paying bills on a casket years after my father's death. The living need money; the dead do not. And my father's spirit did not come back to haunt us. Moreover, Fran and I spent a little over \$1000 on our daughter's wedding, less than many African weddings I have been asked to contribute to—and refused.

¹⁹⁹ For very interested reading on the saving practices of millionaires, see Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko, *The Millionaire Next Door—The Surprising Secrets of America's Wealthy*

opinion, most of the wealthiest people in the world did not start off wealthy. They made their wealth through wise decisions, hard work, and saving. They were willing to postpone the present enjoyment of their money in order to produce more wealth later—called “delayed gratification.” In other words, their horizons were long, not short. By saving 5,000 Ush per week on air time, you will have saved 260,000 Ush in a year and half a million Ush in two years, money that could be used to start a small business. But most people will never consider doing this.

Part of the reason for not saving is a short horizon having little orientation to the future. This short horizon appears to be part of African culture which focuses on the immediate need rather than needs emerging in the future—capitalization of businesses, educational needs, future illnesses which inevitably arise. Money now in possession that could be saved for the future is immediately spent on something we want but do not need. The Africans who are now getting ahead of the pack financially are those who plan for the future.

3. Diversification—absolute and comparative advantage

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul teaches us that all of us are necessary in the body of Christ. The human body is made up of many parts. It is not one big eye or one big ear. In order for the human body to function properly, it must have all the parts—hands, eyes, ears, etc.—which perform different functions. When the human body is missing one or more of these essential functions, it can still live, but it is handicapped. Analogously, Paul says, all of us in the church are not eyes. Not all of us are ears, or feet, or hands. To function properly, the church must be blessed with a variety of different people who are gifted in different ways and capable of performing different functions. When these different functions are not performed, the church can still survive, but it is handicapped, much like the human body.

All believers have at least one spiritual gift which should be utilized for the good of the whole body. Though many, we are still one body; thus, the unity (sameness) and diversity (differences) of the body of Christ. This unity and diversity is founded upon the unity and diversity of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all three who are God but serve a diversity of functions in the plan of creation and redemption.²⁰⁰ Since God created all of life and gave mankind the Dominion mandate, the principles of unity and diversity are evident in creation as a whole, not simply within the church. Moreover, God created all men in His image, not just believers; therefore, the principle of unity and diversity governs everyone’s life, not simply Christians. Yet, the church provides the paradigm or model for the way a society should function, everyone finding his place of work according to the gifts and desires God has given him or her. The general society should be able to look at the church and see the way that unity and diversity operates—with mutual cooperation and minimum competition among the members of Christ’s community. No one in the body of Christ should be asking, “Who among us is the greatest?” (Matt. 18: 1).²⁰¹ Rather, we must be asking ourselves, “How can we serve the body of Christ?” (Mk. 9: 35).

When I came to Uganda, I already knew that there were others who could do evangelism and church planting better than me. My gift is teaching, and this is what I enjoy doing most. So, I teach, depending on others to perform their function in God’s church. Diversification in the market place is also necessary for people to prosper. When most people in the market place are doing the same work and

²⁰⁰ God the Father set the redemptive plan in motion. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son... (Joh 3:16 NASB). The Son lived a perfect life and died in our place. The Spirit applies the work of the Father and the Son by regenerating and sanctifying each believer. This is actually called the “Economic Trinity”.

²⁰¹ For an extended discussion of this passage see McNeill, “Synoptic Gospels” and my sermon “Living Responsibly in the Community of God’s People.”

selling the same products, the price of goods and services are driven downward. If matoke²⁰² can be bought almost anywhere, the price is naturally going to be cheap relative to other food items that are less available but equally desired. This is nothing more than the law of supply and demand. When the supply increases, the demand (and the price) decreases. Everyone knows this from experience.

The advantage of a competitive market is that it forces people to find their best source of income, something economists call the comparative advantage.²⁰³ If someone cannot compete in the market selling matoke, then they need to find something else to grow or produce, like millet, clothes, or furniture. To give a personal example, my wife had a very difficult time several years ago finding salad lettuce or broccoli in the vegetable markets in Mbarara, Uganda. We thought we were just going to have to do without salad or broccoli our whole time in Uganda—unthinkable! Finally someone told us about a woman who grew lettuce, and we bought all our lettuce from her for many months. She is now making more money selling cleaning products—and driving a car rather than a motorcycle. This enterprising woman found a need (niche) in the market place and filled it. We now have another Ugandan man who delivers our broccoli and salad lettuce on a bicycle. I ask him why he didn't grow cauliflower as well. "You can get this in the markets," he replied. "I grow vegetables that are *not* available in the markets." Working smart. Why should he grow and sell something that everyone else is selling?

I have used the term "comparative advantage" twice already. What is *comparative* advantage? Let's first talk about *absolute* advantage. Absolute advantage is the economic principle of specializing in a marketable activity which you can do more efficiently than others—that is, the thing at which you have an advantage over other people. For example, perhaps Peter can build brick kilns faster than Moses, but Moses can make bricks faster than Peter. It would be to Peter's absolute advantage to spend his time building kilns and to Moses' advantage to spend his time making bricks. In this way, more bricks get made and more kilns built in a certain period of time. This principle applies to countries as well. Farmers in North Dakota could grow bananas by using expensive green houses, but it would not be to their absolute advantage to do so since they can grow wheat more efficiently and economically without the use of greenhouses. Consequently, food distributors in the US don't buy bananas from North Dakota but from the Dominican Republic where bananas grow best. US bread producers, however, don't buy their wheat from the Dominican Republic, but from North Dakota.²⁰⁴

But going back to Peter and Moses, what if Peter can build kilns *and* make bricks faster than Moses? This leaves Moses with no absolute advantage either in making bricks or building kilns. Does Moses have any options? Yes, he does. For one thing, he might find some absolute advantage in making or upholstering furniture, or some other trade. The market helps us find a place where we can serve the consumer. If we get paid adequately, this proves that we are performing a needed service at an acceptable market price. We can also continue testing the market by raising our prices to see if the consumer agrees with us that our product or service is worth more. We may also explore more efficient methods of production that provide the same product at a lower price. If we succeed, we might be able to sell a greater quantity of the product with increasing profits.

If we fail to get paid adequately, this proves that we are not performing a needed service and that we need to look at other alternatives—a different product or service, different methods of production,

²⁰² For readers who are not Africans, matoke is a banana which is peeled and steamed before consumption. This species of banana is commonly grown in Uganda and is the staple diet of much of its population.

²⁰³ Beisner, pp. 93-95

²⁰⁴ Beisner, p. 93

different suppliers of raw materials, etc. However, Moses may also be able to stay in the brick business. What if Peter can actually make more money spending *all* his time building the kilns while buying the bricks from Moses, even if Peter can do both tasks faster than Moses? What if Peter can make 300 bricks per day while Moses can make 275 per day, and Peter can build a kiln in 2 days while it takes Moses 4 days. Although Peter has an *absolute* advantage over Moses in both making the bricks and building the kilns, he realizes that his absolute advantage over Moses is *comparatively* less in making bricks than building kilns. In 20 days, Peter can make 3000 bricks (300x10 days) and 5 kilns (10 days/2 days per kiln). Moses can produce 2750 bricks and 2 and a half kilns. While Peter can make more money than Moses in each activity, he will make *comparatively* more money spending all his time building kilns, an activity in which he has a greater absolute (competitive) advantage over Moses. Thus, Peter has a *comparative advantage* in an activity in which he has the *greater* absolute advantage. Moses, on the other hand, has *less absolute disadvantage* in making bricks than in building kilns. This leaves Moses with a *comparative advantage* in making bricks—an activity in which he has a lesser absolute *disadvantage*. If they just want to make more money, Peter will build the kilns and Moses will make the bricks.²⁰⁵ Still confused?

Comparative advantage = less absolute **disadvantage** in producing a good or service.

In other words, compared to the skill of building brick kilns, Moses has less **disadvantage** in making bricks. Peter realizes that his absolute advantage in making kilns is greater than his absolute advantage in making bricks, so he “subs out” the task of making bricks to Peter so he can make more profit doing something in which he has greater absolute advantage. Both workers win, even Moses, who is not as skilled in either brick-making or kiln-making.

To use an example in the church, suppose the pastor (call him George) can preach and counsel with greater skill than another elder, Henry.²⁰⁶ Yet, George can preach with greater absolute advantage than he can counsel. Henry can counsel almost as well as George. In fact, if he had the time, George could teach other pastors to the benefit the broader body of Christ. What does he do? Recognizing the need to use his gift of preaching and teaching to its maximum potential for the church, George decides to hand over all the counseling to Henry, who can counsel almost as well as George, and who will probably surpass George in counseling as he gains additional experience and self-education through reading. Henry has a *comparative advantage* in his counseling although he has no absolute advantage in either preaching or counseling. Some people are given extraordinary gifts, but they can’t do everything in the church. It is to George’s advantage that he maximize the potential of his greatest gifts, preaching and teaching, while yielding his less absolute advantage in counseling to Henry.

This is basically how division of labor develops and how complex economies emerge from simple economies. Long ago, people produced almost everything they consumed—food, clothes, houses, soap, etc. As it became clear that others were more skillful in producing clothing than food, those who

²⁰⁵ See Beisner, p. 94, for another example. On the other hand, making money is not the only important thing. Enjoying one’s labor is also important. Although Peter could make more money by specializing in kilns, he may enjoy the variety of making the bricks as well. I made the same decision. Anyone specializing in dry wall installation, or electrical work, or plumbing, or trim carpentry, or painting, could have accomplished the work more efficiently, and often with greater quality, than I. However, I get bored easily with monotonous tasks. I like variety, so I learned all these skills in a modest way. I could never have worked on an automotive assembly line, doing the same monotonous tasks each day, week after week and month after month, and I am beginning to wonder whether assembly line work could be altered to provide more diversity for the laborer without reducing productivity. I would suspect that research has already been done on this subject.

²⁰⁶ Evaluation of preaching skills is much more subjective than making bricks. “Who’s the best preacher” is generally not a helpful question, but I will use it only as an example.

produced food would trade their food for clothes. Finally, money came to be used as the medium of exchange instead of trading everything. Everyone had to discover their niche (comparative advantage) in the market place—even if they didn't understand the term.

With regard to countries, one nation's **absolute advantage** may be greater in producing some goods than in others, and its absolute **disadvantage** less in other goods. It may decide to purchase some goods or services from another country rather than produce the goods and services itself, although it has an absolute advantage in producing **all** these goods and services. This leaves more time and labor-hours available to produce goods and services in which they have a **greater** absolute advantage than the product or service they have forfeited to another foreign producer. The foreign producer, on the other hand, has a comparative advantage in producing the good or service the other country has decided not to produce.

Only if the degree of one country's absolute advantage over another is the same in every item of production would it be economically more efficient for it to produce all its own products rather than to concentrate on some and trade for the others.²⁰⁷

A long time ago, African men learned how to make money by transporting passengers from place to place on motorcycles. This was a good idea and still makes money, except that now the sidewalks and streets are clogged with motorcycles, many of which are not in use much of the day. It seems that the supply of bodaboda drivers has out-stripped the demand and probably most of them are not making much money considering the overhead of fuel and mechanical repair to their motorcycles. In Kampala, I have seen motorcycles with a type of trailer attached to them for the purpose of transporting food, drinks, or other large items. These drivers have found a comparative advantage of letting other bodaboda drivers carry passengers, while they transport merchandise.

Diversity in the labor market allows us to find our absolute and comparative advantage. Many young men are missing out on an opportunity to learn a marketable trade like carpentry, welding, bricklaying, or plumbing—all of them hard work which many do not want, but skills which are in much less supply and provide more economic security in the long run. Your absolute disadvantage in a particular skill need not be permanent. You can change your situation by putting in time and education. Put simply, a person needs to think creatively about what people need and want and what he can realistically provide at a competitive price. This will take sacrifice of time and money as well as the risk to try something new.

Competition is a fact of life, and we will never be able to avoid. However, under the principle of diversification and finding one's comparative advantage, we will find many areas of cooperative employment in which we are working together with others to become more productive with the strengths God has given us. In this way, competition need not be a negative thing, but an advantage to everyone attempting to find their place in life. When God closes one door, he always opens another. We just need to knock on a lot of doors without giving up in despair.

K. Incentives and disincentives for foreign direct investment

²⁰⁷ Beisner, p. 95

In any modern economy—and particularly in the African economy—the investment of foreign capital is a necessary factor for economic progress. There is a difference in foreign aid and foreign investment. Foreign investment is private, voluntary, and under the control of the individual or corporation that makes the investment. Private individuals or corporations are naturally more careful than government bureaucrats in how their money is spent and whether or not it achieves their goals—making a profit. It doesn't seem to disturb government bureaucrats if millions of dollars get lost in the shuffle or if those dollars don't accomplish the intended goals as long as bureaucrats get paid a high salary. There is always more money to tax away from hard-working taxpayers. But for the private investor, if some enterprise does not work (make a profit), he will move his money to something else which does work. It could be that another investor can succeed in the very same enterprise in which the first one failed because of greater knowledge and expertise in that particular enterprise. In this way, different capital (money) is moved around to different businesses which provide diversity in the market place. Again, absolute and comparative advantage is at work.

For a businessman to risk money in any country, he has to weigh the risks and costs involved in doing business in that country.

For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him" (Luke 14:28-29 NASB).

There are many risks and costs to take into consideration. How much will the host government tax the earnings of one's business? Exorbitant taxation is just another form of legalized theft, and whether the theft is by an individual or by a government makes no difference. It is still theft. Will the government rules be changed after the business is capitalized and operating? If there is no predictability about the legal rules of operating a business, the risks of doing business go up which, in turn, discourages direct investment. Whether an individual lies or whether the government lies, it is still lying.

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." (Exodus 20:16 NASB)

What is the availability of a trained workforce or a trainable workforce? Is the workforce reliable; that is, are workers in the habit of coming to work regularly and on time and working regular working hours?

"A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest "—¹¹ Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man. (Proverbs 6:10-11 NASB)

A company who employs such people will also come to poverty. A predictable work force is also a necessity. Is the country politically stable, and what are the odds of it staying that way? Is the legal system dependable enough to protect the business against fraud, common theft, and violations of contract?

Does the nation have a history of securing property rights for expatriates (foreigners) who purchase property within the country; or does it, instead, have a history of nationalizing the assets of private companies and individuals—like Idi Amin did in Uganda by evicting Asians and nationalizing their business assets worth more than £500 million? (British investments totaling more than £250 were also nationalized.) Museveni, on the other hand, allowed Asians back into Uganda, permitting them to reclaim their property and businesses. His decision resulted in \$1 billion worth of investments between

1995 and 2005.²⁰⁸ Just recently (May, 2012) Argentina nationalized a Spanish oil company. On *BBC* and *Aljazeera* news, cameras showed people in the streets cheering and celebrating the nationalizing of this company. Other companies operating within Argentina were not cheering, nor were foreign companies that were considering doing business in Argentina. If you were the president of a large company wanting to spend hundreds of millions of dollars doing business within Argentina, would you go ahead with your plans? “You shall not steal” must be applied to nations as well as individuals.

A few years ago, a large foreign manufacturing company considered locating in Uganda but found that taxes would eat up too much of the corporate earnings to make the move profitable. Thus, Uganda lost an opportunity for many manufacturing jobs because of high taxes. Many corporations are leaving the state of California (US) because of high taxes and are moving to the neighboring states of Oregon, Nevada, etc. where taxes are lower. Corporate taxation is another cost of doing business which must be considered before a company decides where to locate a business. Excessive taxation forces a company to increase the price of products and services to the consumer, but if these prices go too high, the company will not be competitive with other companies providing the same goods and services. For any competitive business, prices must necessarily be kept to a minimum to keep customers coming back who are constantly surveying the marketplace for the same or similar product at a lower price.²⁰⁹ Government bureaucrats in most countries (the US included) don’t seem to understand that corporations go into business to make money, not to pay taxes. Unless there is a good probability of making a reasonable profit, corporations will not be willing to commit millions of dollars to establish businesses.

I am reminded of a passage of Scripture in Ecclesiastes.

If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. ⁹ The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields. (Ecclesiastes 5:8-9 NIV)

The writer is acknowledging the existence of a network of corrupt officials going all the way to the king. Verse 9 is spoken ironically (sarcastically) to say that the person who should be protecting the property rights of his citizens is the very one from whom they must be protected.²¹⁰

Another problem with doing business is the government bureaucracy which hinders the start-up and operation of businesses. Each year the World Bank *Doing Business Report* tracks ten elements which determine the difficulty or ease of “doing business” in a particular country or city. Considered together, these ten elements will present a reliable yardstick (measurement) helping corporations choose where to do business and which countries to avoid. The ten elements are as follows.²¹¹

1. Starting a business.
2. Dealing with licenses.
3. Employing workers.
4. Registering property.
5. Getting credit.
6. Protecting investors.
7. Paying taxes.
8. Trading across borders.

²⁰⁸ Ayittey, *Africa Unchained*, p. 309

²⁰⁹ Beisner, p.97

²¹⁰ Craig G. Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, p. 218

²¹¹ Hubbard and Duggan, p. 12

9. Enforcing contracts.

10. Closing a business.

In 2008, Singapore—whose economy has been booming for many years—ranked first on the list for ease in starting and operating a business. The Democratic Republic of Congo ranked last. As an example of the difficulty in doing business in Kinshasa, Congo, the *Doing Business Report* indicates that 89 tax payments are required annually resulting in 106 working days filling out the necessary paperwork and hours of waiting in lines. Such useless activity eats up 65.4 percent of a business' profits.²¹² The biblical principle, “You shall not steal”, applies to a person's or a company's time as well as its money, because in the business world, time *is* money. Obtaining a permit to build a house in Egypt requires getting permits from 30 other government agencies.²¹³ Getting a license to import a commodity in Ghana requires approval from the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Finance, and the Bank of Ghana.²¹⁴ In 2004, starting a business took 153 days in Mozambique and 155 days in Congo. Registering a business took 21 procedures in Nigeria, 19 procedures in Chad, but only three procedures in Finland. In 2004 it took three years in Angola to enforce a contract. Even renewing a simple driver's license in Kampala, Uganda required two trips and driving to three different government buildings along with the usual queues (long waiting lines). The World Bank says that of all the countries in the world whose governments create hindrances in operating businesses, 80% are in Africa.²¹⁵ “You shall not steal” applies to stolen opportunities. Governments steal opportunities from citizens through excessive bureaucracy. And why does excessive bureaucracy exist? To confiscate more money from citizens.

Business loans in Uganda and Kenya are upwards of 25%.²¹⁶ Doing business across borders in Africa involves exorbitant customs taxes (and bribes), not to speak of the many hours transport trucks have to wait in line. Coming back to Uganda from Kenya, I was three days overdue and had to pay an additional 1,500 Kenya shillings for road use, the price stated by a hired agent who navigated me through the maze of government officials. (He probably lied.) Entering Kenya, it took 2 hours to navigate the different offices, and one hour leaving. This was for a private car. I have no idea what the truckers are paying, but the waiting game at the border is just the end of a much longer wait. World Bank's *Doing Business Report* shows that it requires 35 days to export goods across a border in sub-Saharan Africa because of all the paperwork and fees.²¹⁷ Is it any mystery why multinational corporations are generally not choosing to “do business” in Africa relative to other countries?

Another related question: Is there trust in the market place allowing investors the freedom of mind to risk hard-earned cash? Rapid economic growth is characteristic of nations in which there is a high level

²¹² Hubbard and Duggan, p. 19

²¹³ I've been to Cairo, whose landscape is cluttered with unpainted, dreary-looking high-rise apartments. The reason: the government charges exorbitant property taxes on “completed” buildings; therefore, astute property owners never paint (“complete”) their buildings to save on taxes.

²¹⁴ Ayittey, *Africa Unchained*, p. 183

²¹⁵ Martin Plaut, *BBC Africa* analyst; Sept. 8, 2004; cited in Ayittey, *Africa Unchained*, p. 184

²¹⁶ By comparison, bank rates of 15% brought the US economy to a standstill in the late 70's. It is not possible to support a strong business climate with high interest rates. The money that would have been used to purchase tools, buildings, and labor is absorbed by high interest payments.

²¹⁷ Hubbard and Duggan, p. 20

of trust for **strangers**, not just for family members and close friends.²¹⁸ Trust is the “social capital” of rich countries in which strangers can do business with one another with minimum risk.²¹⁹

The larger radius of trust, the less you worry about cheating in business transactions. A low-trust society such as Mexico features a strong insider/outsider mentality. The slang term for your buddies is *cuates* (your twins). You would do anything for your *cuates*, but ripping off a stranger is okay. You are amazingly courteous to a social acquaintance, but anonymous interactions tend to be rude....

Trust affects virtually every dimension of doing business. Malagasy grain traders carry out inspections of each lot of grain in person because they don't trust employees. One third of the traders say they don't hire more workers because of fear of theft by them. This limits the grain trader's firm size, cutting short a trader's potential success. In many countries, companies tend to be family enterprises because family members are the only ones felt trustworthy. So the size of the company is then limited by the size of the family.²²⁰

What about the availability and reliability of the workforce? There is no question that Africa has a wealth of potential workers. Most of these men and women would be unskilled labor, but that is not necessarily a problem. Many manufacturing jobs hire people with little or no experience and since the wages in Africa are low by comparison to developed countries, this gives Africa an absolute advantage in attracting companies which could make profits by keeping labor costs down. Further, wages and salaries would eventually rise as new businesses entered African nations to compete for available labor. The question is whether the work force in Africa is willing and ready for a 40-50 hour work-week with regular hours. The laborer in the US must be on time day after day, month after month, and year after year, to keep his job. Otherwise, it will be given to someone else who will. Typically, he is given a 15 minute break in the morning, thirty minutes for lunch, and maybe a 15 minute break in the afternoon. Sometimes he has less. The rest of the time is spent working which is necessary for the company to make a profit and survive in a competitive market economy. If the company does not make profits, it goes out of business; and the laborers lose their jobs. It's as simple as that. This is not slave labor, and the worker can quit his job any time he wants, but while employed he must be committed to “working hard” for his company, which in essence is working for his family—and for God.

Ronald Nash maintains that personal and societal values play a crucial role in determining a nation's wealth. He recounts the story of a group of Christians who started a number of businesses in the Caribbean either in the late 70's or early 80's. Local men and women were trained to manufacture products which would be sold by these businesses. The eventual plan was to turn over the whole operation to the local workers so that they would actually be working for themselves the whole time they were working for the company. It sounded like a good plan except for the unexpected behavior of the workers. They didn't show up for work on time, and they stole from the business which amounted to stealing from themselves.²²¹

Fran and I have had our own personal failures in microfinance. Several years ago we agreed with a local church in Uganda to contribute 100,000 Ush per month (at that time, about \$50 US) in seed capital for church members who wished to start businesses. After their businesses started making a profit, the

²¹⁸ See Ex. 20: 16, where “neighbor” must be interpreted according to the extended revelation of the “Good Samaritan” in Luke 10: 30-37.

²¹⁹ William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden—Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*, p. 79

²²⁰ Easterly, p. 80-81

²²¹ Nash, p. 193

money must be repaid so others could also benefit from the recirculated capital. The monthly contributions continued for about eight months for a total of 800,000 Ush—not a lot of money but sufficient to start two or three microenterprises if the money was paid back. A year or so later, after coming back to Uganda from our furlough, we were asked by the fund administrator to continue our monthly contribution. We asked him how much of the money had been repaid. “None,” he said. Thus ended that particular experiment in micro-finance.

We tried another experiment with a young man in Kampala with the same result. Six months ago, we attempted to help four other Ugandans with 200,000 Ush or 500,000 Ush loans at no interest. Once the businesses were showing profits, half of this money was to be repaid to fund other micro-loans. To my knowledge nothing long-term has been accomplished with any of those loans. Only one person has offered to pay us back. Our conclusion is that, as a general rule, bazungus (white people) cannot make loans to Africans. The loans must originate from other Africans who put their savings into a small pool with other peers—like a savings and loan. In this way, the debtors are held accountable to other Africans for repayment. Fran and I are essentially out of the micro-loan business, but we are much wiser. The upshot of this story is that a healthy economy, micro (individual) or macro (national) cannot be supported in a climate lacking integrity. The sad thing is that most of the people we have helped are professing Christians.

Another factor influencing foreign direct investment is the legal system which would also include the police force in protecting the basic human rights of life and property. In the US, most companies have to budget for predictable levels of loss due to theft. Eventually, the consumer has to pay higher costs for this theft since the company must pass these costs on to consumers to remain profitable. Much expense is involved in surveillance systems (cameras), guards, fences, etc. The same problems exist in Uganda with a lot of money being spent on fences, gates, guards and so on. Then there is the additional problem of employee theft within the company. If such costs are unmanageable, a company either goes out of business or moves to another location where such costs are lower. In Jackson, MS (USA), for example, countless once-profitable businesses have moved out of the crime-ridden southwestern part of the city to other areas with less crime and more effective law enforcement. By moving, these businessmen have sent a message to the crime-ridden communities and their law enforcement agencies that it was not worth the risk doing business in southwest Jackson.

To attract business, a country must have a reputation for a police force which can rarely be bribed and is conscientious about enforcing the law and preventing theft and murder. On a more sophisticated level, a country must have a court system with judges who cannot be easily bribed (Micah 3:11; 7:3; Isa. 5:23; 1:23; Ecc. 7:7; Prov. 17:23; 1 Kings 21 with 1 Kings 22:29-40 and 2 Kings 9:27-37; Ex. 23:8; Dt. 10:17; 16:19; 27:25). The legal system must also be careful to uphold legal contracts and titles essential in establishing the rights of property owners and businesses (Dt. 19:14; Gal. 3:15; Prov. 23:10-11). Any illegal moving of a boundary is theft and any manipulation of a legal contract by either addition or subtraction to take away another’s legitimate property rights is also theft. Another issue is that of mob “justice” which sends the message that law enforcement and the judicial system are ineffective in controlling crime.

L. Domestic investment and capital flight

Apart from the capital flight of African leaders who acquire their money illegally, do wealthy Africans who make their money *legally* invest their earnings in Africa?

According to one UN estimate, “\$200 billion or 90 percent of the sub-Saharan part of the continent’s gross domestic product (much of it illicitly earned), was shipped to foreign banks in 1991 alone” (The New York Times, Feb 4, 1996; p. A4). Capital flight out of Africa is at least \$20 billion annually. Part of the capital flight out of Africa represents wealth created legitimately by business owners who have little faith in keeping it in Africa....

At the Commonwealth Summit in Abuja, Nigeria on December 3, 2003, former British secretary of state for international development, Rt. Hon. Lynda Chalker, revealed that 40 percent of wealth created in Africa is invested outside the continent.²²²

Ayittey has asked the question many foreign investors are asking,

If Africans themselves won’t invest in their own countries, why should foreigners? Even Nigerians are unwilling to risk locking their capital into long-term investments. “The Manufacturing Association of Nigeria says that 700 out of its 1,500 members have closed their doors since 1987” [due to lack of investment capital] (The Economist, 21 August 1993, Survey, 7). Do foreign investors know more than Nigerians or the locals? And have African governments drawn up investment codes to spur domestic investors?²²³

M. Tithing and Dominion

Working harder and smarter are only secondary reasons for a nation’s affluence. The primary reason is God’s blessing (Deut. 8:18; Psalm 127:1). Unless God intends to prosper a nation, it will not prosper. He can easily destroy the work of our hands through natural disasters like earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, fires, draughts, floods, crop failures, or through man-made disasters like war or national abortion. The US is now \$16 trillion in debt after two protracted wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He can destroy our wealth through economic disasters like the Great Depression of the 1930’s which erased the wealth of millions in the United States. Even recently in the US, the dishonest accounting schemes of companies like Enron of Houston, Texas and WorldCom of Clinton, MS have erased the life-savings of thousands of unsuspecting Americans who trusted the integrity of these companies. Share holders in Martha Stewart’s multibillion dollar company have lost millions because she lied to federal investigators about the sale of another stock. Solomon gives us fair warning when he says,

Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings, like an eagle that flies toward the heavens (Prov. 23:4-5).

Yet, the Bible says wealth can also be the blessing of God for being in relationship with Him and for being obedient to His law (Deut. 28:1-14).

It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, And He adds no sorrow to it. (Proverbs 10:22 NASB)

A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children (Proverbs 13:22a NASB)

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.³ He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. (Psalm 1:1-3 NASB)

²²² Ayittey, *Africa Unchained*, p. 324

²²³ Ayittey, *Africa in Chaos*, p. 214

Great wealth is in the house of the righteous, But trouble is in the income of the wicked. (Proverbs 15:6 NASB)

Earthly wealth may be an outcome of our relationship with God, but it is not the goal of this relationship. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Lazarus was poor in material terms, but the rich man had no relationship with God. While it is true that there are many wealthy in this world who do not acknowledge the Lord, the Bible presents their wealth as only temporary, and one day they will perish (Ps. 73). We must not envy such people whose wealth is being stored up for the righteous in the future eon (Prov.13:22b; 23:17). Wealth can be a blessing used to do much good in the world, and God gives it to the righteous for the purpose of honoring Him with this wealth (Prov.3:9).

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.¹⁸ Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,¹⁹ storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. (1Timothy 6:17-19 NASB)

Nothing in these passages or any other passage in the OT or NT indicates that it is a sin to be wealthy. Money is not the root of all evil. “The love of money is the root of all sorts of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). John Wesley, a great preacher of the 1700’s who earned considerable wealth from his published books and sermons once said, “Make all you can [legitimately] and give away all you can.” He practiced what he preached since he would live only on a fraction of what he made, giving the rest away. As we illustrated above, wealth can be taken away if we presume that by our power or wisdom we have deserved our wealth and can spend it whatever way we wish (Deut. 8:15-17). With wealth comes responsibility (Luke 12:42-48).

Unless we honor God with our wealth, He will not honor us. Christians differ among themselves concerning the requirement of the tithe in the NT. There is no specific NT mention of its requirement, but 10% of one’s income seems to be a good place to start.²²⁴ However, in the affluent West, I doubt whether someone making \$300,000 to \$1,000,000 per year or more has fulfilled his obligations to God with only 10%.

From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. (Luke 12:48b NASB)

Even if the man making \$300,000 is taxed at the rate of 40%, is he honoring God by consuming the remainder of \$180,000? Let’s say he saves one-half of his after-tax income. This leaves him \$90,000. As a believer, how much does it take for someone to be materially satisfied? However, this would assume that he is spending the remainder on luxuries or entertainment. A person with this much income may be taking many risks developing enterprises which employ people who would otherwise not have a job, or he may be heavily invested in the stock market, in which case his investments are capitalizing a number of businesses. Yet, it seems to me that he should also consider helping local entrepreneurs who need start-up capital. Such questions can be complicated, and they will not be dealt with here.²²⁵ Any way you approach the subject, the Bible clearly teaches that wealth is not for the ultimate purpose of personal consumption and extravagance; and that principle alone would eliminate the consumption-oriented behavior of many professing Christians—western and African.

²²⁴ So also John M. Frame, *DCL*, p. 801

²²⁵ An excellent book which explores such issues is Randy Alcorn’s *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*.

Tithing in the OT reflected the understanding that everything one owned belonged to God. Ten per cent of one's crops or flocks was required for the upkeep of the tabernacle and to sustain the priesthood (Ex. 23:15-16; 34:22; Lev.19:23-25; Dt.18:4; Num.15:20-21; 18:12). Additional amounts may have been required for support of the poor, up to a total of 23 percent.²²⁶ Failure to tithe was the same as robbing God (Mal. 3:8-12; Hag. 1:2-6). The general misunderstanding is that our prosperity is man-made rather than the blessing of God upon our labor (Dt. 8:17-18; 1 Cor. 4:7). As we have seen, God can take away our prosperity as easily as He gave it through drought, financial disasters, sickness, etc. Seeds of prosperity can be put in the ground, but God must cause them to grow, and we are just as dependent on God for financial increase as we are spiritual increase (1Cor.3: 6-7).

The principles of giving in the New Covenant do not seem to be grounded in the tithe.²²⁷ Jesus mentions it only once (Matt.23:23; Luke 11:42), and it is mentioned in Hebrews 7 but with no clear evidence of continuity. The Pharisees would tithe even on the herbs in their gardens, yet this tediousness in tithing did not excuse them before Jesus who could see through their hypocrisy. The same Pharisees also refused to help their own parents in old age (Mk. 7:9-13), one of the obvious "weightier provisions of the law" mentioned in Matt. 23:23 which dealt with "justice, mercy, and faithfulness." When we get to Acts and the NT epistles, not once do we encounter strong admonitions on tithing even when the situation may have called for the immediate response of the tithe. For example, when Paul was serving the Corinthian Church, he did not invoke (put to use) the commandment to tithe in order to receive a salary from the church. When exhorting the Corinthians to make good on a promise to help the suffering church in Jerusalem, he never once ordered them to collect the tithe according to the specific requirements of the OT (2 Cor. 8-9; cf. Rom. 15: 25-26; Dt.14:28-29; 26:12-13). Instead, Paul appealed to the sacrifice of Christ.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9 NASB)

He even says earlier that he was not issuing his request for relief aid as a command, but was appealing to the sincerity of their love for the people in Jerusalem (v.8). The reason that Paul petitions the Corinthians rather than commanding obedience to the law of the tithe seems to be apparent in the ninth chapter. Here, Paul presses the Corinthians toward a higher motivation for giving than a grudging obedience. Rather, he urges them to examine their motives for giving.

Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7 NASB)

For the Lord to receive our gifts, they must be given cheerfully from the motive of love, for this is the way Jesus gave Himself—not out of grudging obedience to the Father, but out of loving obedience to the Father and because He loved us. Paul also promises the Corinthians that God will be no man's debtor but will reward bountifully those who give bountifully (v.6), a reference to Proverbs 11:24 (cf. Luke 6:38.).

²²⁶ Alcorn, pp.173-174. There is some ambiguity about the tithes of the third year which were deposited in each town for the upkeep of the poor, aliens, orphans, widows, and Levites who did not have land to grow crops (cf. Deut. 14: 28-29). I'm inclined to believe that this was not an additional tithe but the normal tithe of the third year used exclusively for these groups of people.

²²⁷ So also Frame, *DCL*, p. 801

Provision for pastors (elders) is established in 1 Timothy 5 (as well as provision for those who could not care for themselves—vv. 1-17). For the care of elders, Paul uses an OT principle which is grounded in dominion (v.18; cf. 1 Cor. 9: 1-14). Even animals should receive the benefit of their labor when helping man reap the fruits of the earth. Arguing from the lesser to the greater, Paul applies this principle to the pay of elders who oversee the spiritual condition of their flocks. Pastor/elders are also exercising dominion because an understanding of the Bible is essential to our work of dominion. In the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20), Jesus commands us to make disciples which includes “...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you....” As we exercise dominion, we must be familiar with how Jesus’ ethical **standards** (the Scriptures), **motive** (love for God and others), and **goal** (the glory of God and the propagation of his kingdom) apply to every task. As we do this, the earth will be gradually transformed into the kind of place it was meant to be before Adam fell, a transformation which will not be completed until the new heavens and earth. Nevertheless, godly dominion and restoration are in process now and are not postponed until the future return of the Lord Jesus.

"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.¹⁰ 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:9-10 NASB)

"And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, 'Do business with this until I come back.' (Luke 19:13 NASB)

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NASB)

We should not limit the “good work” of 1 Timothy 3: 17 to good works of evangelism, teaching, preaching, and mercy ministries. Our good work is whatever we do in Jesus’ name.

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. (Colossians 3:17 NASB; emphasis mine)

For this reason, generous giving to the church is essential to dominion because it is used to support the teaching ministry of the church and the consequent mission of the church—a mission that includes the everyday labor of all its members.²²⁸ But again, Paul does not appeal to the law of the tithe either for the payment of pastors, for the care of poor widows, or for the relief of the poor (vv.4-5; 2 Cor. 8-9).

On the subject of tithing Paul is not the only NT writer who is silent. Neither James nor John makes use of this principle even though their admonitions could have easily incorporated the commandment to tithe.

But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?¹⁸ Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:17-18 NASB)

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace,

²²⁸ The buildings we could actually do without, although they are convenient—to a point. The early church grew for three centuries without sanctuaries. They met primarily in private homes.

be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that?

¹⁷ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. (James 2:14-17 NASB)

I admit from the outset that this is an argument from silence, but one should at least wonder why such an important aspect of God's ethical standards in the OT is given such scant treatment in the New Covenant. As with any other OT commandment receiving further explanation in the NT—the sixth and seventh commandments, for example—it is safe to say that the commandment of the tithe **has not been eliminated** but rather **elevated** both in motivation and standard.²²⁹ If we have brothers and sisters in critical need, we are not encouraged to help them to the extent of the tithe, but to the extent of our ability. The love of God requires this of us.

I have long held that many Christians in the affluent west have hidden behind the tithe in an effort to give a bare minimum to the work of the Kingdom of God. As the prophecy of Haggai indicates, the people were convinced that the time to rebuild the temple had not come, but the time to build nice homes and enjoy the “good life” was *always* convenient (Haggai 1: 4). Today, God is not so much interested in building physical temples or church buildings except as they promote the kingdom of God on earth. Dear to God's heart is His own kingdom, a kingdom of righteousness for which Jesus instructs us to pray in the Lord's Prayer. If this kingdom is dear to our own hearts, we will give to it sacrificially. Again, the tithe (ten percent) is a good place to start, and if most church members would give this amount there would be more than enough money to accomplish the task of the church, even in low-income countries. The common problem in the church is that professing Christians are more interested in their own personal kingdoms than in God's kingdom—precisely why Jesus commanded us to seek His kingdom first, regardless of our financial situation (Matt. 6: 24-34, note the context of v. 33).

The average percentage of giving in most US churches is only about 2 to 3% of personal income. In my denomination, the PCA, the figure is much higher but probably well below the ten percent level. As a result, the work of the kingdom of God is postponed while we pursue personal interests rather than the interests of Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:19-21). What then, is the real problem? Is it that we have not adequately taught the law of tithing? This is possible; but in my opinion, the reason is that we have not adequately taught a higher motivation of giving. Once again, the tithe in the OT was representative of the whole. Everything we own belongs to the Lord which means that everything we own is His to use if He wants it, including our very lives.²³⁰ This is why the poor saints in Macedonia (Thessalonica and Philippi) were willing to give sacrificially to the saints in Jerusalem even when they were not much better off financially than the people they were helping (2 Cor. 8:1-5, emphasis on v. 5). They gave themselves first to the Lord Jesus; and after they did this, they could more easily give their money. The real issue was not the percentage of giving, something that never comes up in the text, but the total commitment as the fruit of love.

If any NT text illustrates the principle of total commitment or sacrifice, it is the story of the poor widow in Luke 21:1-4 and Mark 12:41-44. In this story Jesus takes an opportunity to teach His disciples an important lesson. They were no doubt impressed at the large sums of money being given to the temple treasury by rich people.²³¹ It is just as important to note what Jesus did *not* say as what He did say. Jesus did not say that these wealthy people were giving less than the required tithe. He simply said

²²⁹ See “D. The Continuity of the OT Moral Law”, and “E. The Moral law of God Progressively Revealed” discussed below.

²³⁰ See the parable of the unrighteous steward (Lk. 16: 1-13) Jesus calls the mammon of this world “that which is another's”. In other words, the money we use belongs to God. We are only stewards, not owners.

²³¹ In the US, wealthy church members are often given much attention and voted into church offices on the basis of their financial success rather than their spiritual leadership.

that they were giving “out of their surplus” which means their gifts cost them little personal sacrifice. The widow, on the other hand, gave “out of her poverty”. Clearly, Jesus is not so much concerned with the amount as He is the commitment. While being unimpressed with the contributions of the rich, He was moved by the personal sacrifice of this poor woman.

It is not the amount that one gives to the cause of God that matters most, but the spirit in which the gift is bestowed. And when this spirit is right a man will spontaneously give as much as he possibly can, however much it may cost him. Whosoever, therefore, imagines that he is giving in the right spirit but only makes a small contribution from his abundance is deceiving himself.²³²

I am convinced from this text and others that a constant appeal to the tithe for New Covenant giving is inadequate. The new standard is personal sacrifice and total commitment to God, His kingdom, and His people. A poor person giving only five percent of his income is making a bigger sacrifice than a wealthy person giving ten percent. The five per cent could have been used to buy an extra loaf of bread, while the wealthy individual can easily purchase whatever he wants with the remaining 90% or even 50% after taxes. However, as Geldenhuys points out, if we are totally committed, we will not be looking for excuses to give less, but opportunities to give more, regardless of how little we have. This was the attitude of the Macedonians mentioned in 2 Corinthians 8 and the attitude of the poor widow. This should be our attitude as well.

The problem of giving in the church has never been lack of money, but lack of will and commitment to Christ. This is true in the US, but it is also true in less developed countries. The same Christians who readily donate their money for weddings and parties²³³ will not give it to the work of Christ. African pastors are paid irregularly or not at all despite clear biblical teaching (1 Cor. 9: 1-14; 1 Tim. 5: 17-18). Paul’s appeal to the Corinthians (a more affluent church) was reinforced by the sacrificial giving of small, poverty-ridden churches in Macedonia. It might be said that Paul was using positive peer pressure (call it spiritual blackmail if you wish) to shame the Corinthians into making good on their previous pledge to the church in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 9:3-5; Rom. 15:25-27). The praise Paul has for the Macedonian churches is proof that churches don’t have to give large sums to please God; they only have to be totally committed with what they have (2Cor 8:12).

The world is already a radically different place from what it was thousands of years ago. Christianity has changed the world for the better; yet, we could have done a better job of changing the world than we have done if the church had been totally committed to this task financially and otherwise. The warning and promise of Malachi are still relevant for the church.

"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. ⁹ "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! ¹⁰ "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. (Malachi 3:8-10 NASB)

M. Family and Faith

In his book, *Wealth and Poverty*, George Gilder has identified two other necessary factors in the production of wealth in any society—family and faith. “The short-sighted outlook of poverty stems

²³² Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 520-521

²³³ So that their generosity might one day be returned to them. See Luke 14: 12-14.

largely from the breakdown of family responsibilities among fathers.” Single men are generally short-sighted in their sexuality and seek the pleasures of the moment, whereas women look to the future of their offspring and have “glimpses of eternity within their wombs.” Prosperity is possible only if the short-term sexual urges of young men are tempered by this long-term maternal interest which sees the future of society not in the immediate satisfaction of sexual desires, but in posterity (children).

This is what happens in a monogamous marriage; the man disciplines his sexuality and extends it into the future through the womb of a woman. The woman gives him access to his children, otherwise forever denied him; and he gives her the product of his labor, otherwise dissipated [lost] on temporary pleasures....It is love that changes the short horizons of youth and poverty into the long horizons of marriage and career. When marriages fail, the man often returns to the more primitive rhythms of singleness. On the average, his income drops by one-third and he shows a far higher propensity [tendency] for drink, drugs, and crime. But when marriages in general hold firm and men in general love and support their children...lower-class style changes into middle-class futurity.²³⁴

Gilder’s analysis confirms what my wife has told me for years. God gave men wives to “civilize” them. His conclusions are supported by Scripture which says that the woman was given to man to be his helpmeet for the purpose of exercising dominion over the earth. Men would not pursue this task efficiently were it not for the civilizing and domestic influences of their wives who encourage them to look ahead to the future and not to the present. Further, males have a God-given drive to provide for their families and protect them. The universal fulfillment of this urge is testimony to God’s common grace given to all men, making the exceptions especially egregious²³⁵ (1 Tim. 5:8). Yet, I must say sadly that the pattern of married male behavior in Africa—according to any impartial witness—more closely resembles the disconnectedness of single male behavior. Having sired their children, African fathers generally leave them to the mothers. As the Ethiopian business woman said, “Mothers save for their children’s education; the men get drunk and fall out.” Again, there are many exceptions, and most (not all) the men I know are the exception, diligently working to provide for their families. But the general characterization of African men as disconnected from personal involvement with children is fair. In fact, the concept of the **nuclear**²³⁶ family is vague in the African context where family responsibilities are shifted to a wider extended family.²³⁷

Gilder continues by saying that the main problem among the communities of the American poor, white or black, is the dominant behavior of single and separated men who have no families to provide for. These disconnected and “unrelated” males whose lifestyles are impulsive and often showy (“cool”) in the eyes of younger admirers, provide the unholy role models for future generations. “The result is that male sexual rhythms tend to prevail, and boys are brought up without authoritative fathers in the home to instill in them the values of responsible paternity: the discipline and love of children and the dependable performance of the provider role.” In lower income families and their communities, the family structure is weak and “the men’s links to children and future are too often insufficient to induce work and thrift.”²³⁸ Moreover, in the US, wrong-headed government welfare solutions have made the problem worse than it should have been.

²³⁴ George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty*, pp. 70-71; words in brackets mine

²³⁵ Standing out in a negative way, like a sore thumb

²³⁶ The nuclear family consists of father, mother, and children, not grandfathers, grandmothers, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

²³⁷ Nyirongo, p. 135

²³⁸ Gilder, p. 71

...the pattern is often not so much a necessary reflection of economic conditions as an arbitrary imposition of policy—a policy that by depriving poor families of strong fathers both dooms them to poverty and damages the economic prospects of the children.

In the welfare culture money becomes not something earned by men through hard work, but a right conferred on women by the state. Protest and complaint replace diligence and discipline as the sources of pay. Boys grow up seeking support from women, while they find manhood in the macho circles of the street and the bar or in the irresponsible fathering of random progeny.²³⁹

The second factor in Gilder's analysis, faith, is an equally important part of the foundation of a successful economy. To sustain a healthy work ethic in a hostile, sinful environment plagued by continuous failures, a person must somehow believe that his hard work will be worth it in the long run. Every day the worker is confronted by the dishonesty and betrayal of others in the market place and in the government. He is, therefore tempted to live for the present moment rather than delay his gratification (pleasure) to the future by living frugally (without excess waste) and wisely. But for the society as a whole to prosper, cooperation with others is not a luxury but an absolute necessity which requires, in Gilder's words, "faith in man, faith in the future, faith in the rising returns of giving, faith in the mutual benefits of trade, faith in the providence of God..."²⁴⁰ Faith in the latter element, God's providence, adequately qualifies the first, faith in man. Faith in man is not suggested in an absolute sense, as if man is the real key to prosperity. Rather, we must believe in the work of God's common grace given to man which enables him to cooperate with others with some measure of honesty and integrity in the market place (see the earlier discussion).

Summary and Conclusion

This lesson has considered the various means of working more intelligently (smarter) for a more profitable economy, both personally and nationally. Working smarter involves the use of education developing more efficient means of production, saving for capital investment in education and tools, and diversifying one's investments of time, ability, and money to provide a good or service which either is non-existent or in small supply relative to (compared with) demand.

We have also discussed the incentives and disincentives of foreign direct investment. The corporate morality of a people and its government will determine how attractive this nation will be to multinational corporations and to its own entrepreneurs. When wealthy Africans are not investing in the economy of their own nations, something is seriously lacking in opportunity or security.

At the end of the day, we must always understand that it is the Lord who owns our wealth. We are therefore obligated to make a return to Him as a symbolic gesture that all we have is His. When believers fail to give to the kingdom of God, they steal from the hand that supplied their needs.

The strength of a nation's families is a good barometer for the nation's wealth. Married men who are conscientious about providing for their wives and children are generally more prosperous than single men whose wealth is dissipated on short-term pleasures.

Lesson Five Questions

²³⁹ Gilder, p. 115

²⁴⁰ Gilder, pp. 70-72

1. Why is working harder not sufficient to bring long-term prosperity?
2. What does the Bible imply about skilled labor?
3. How does a person capitalize any business endeavor?
4. Why is diversification necessary for individual and national prosperity?
5. Are the economic concepts of comparative and absolute advantage biblical? Explain. Incorporate the cultural mandate of Genesis and other supporting texts into your answer.
6. What are the factors which affect foreign direct investment in a particular country?
7. What biblical principle is implied in the law of the tithe?
8. Is tithing (the tenth) still the biblical standard of giving, or has this standard been elevated to a new standard? Give exegetical support. If you have a different view from my own, please state your position, also with exegetical support.
9. According to Gilder, what is the relationship between marriage and poverty?
10. What has been the consequence of welfare solutions granting income to unmarried women?

Lesson Six—Marriage and Family in Biblical Perspective

Introduction

Gilder's observations above serve to underscore (emphasize) the importance of marriage in the exercise of dominion. This does not mean that single individuals do not participate equally in this task, and the

history of man indicates that some of the most productive people who have ever lived have been unmarried, including the apostle Paul.²⁴¹ Nevertheless, for most of mankind, Scripture indicates that “it is not good for man to be alone”. Marriage is the common status for most people and also the healthiest. As Gilder observes, “It is love that changes the short horizons of youth and poverty into the long horizons of marriage and career.” For maximum productivity, most men need the responsibilities of marriage and family to drive them on in their dominion pursuits as they look ahead into the future rather than dissipating their energies on short-term pleasures. We will take this as our point of departure for our study of marriage and family. It is an appropriate sub-topic in our study of anthropology, and misunderstandings are comprehensively harmful for any culture.

V. Marriage and Family

A. Marriage not Defined by a Sexual Relationship or Procreation

Marriage was not designed solely for the purpose of procreation, although procreation is an important aspect of marriage and a major task of the creation mandate (see above). Men and women could have easily produced offspring without marriage and in many ways have done so more prolifically through promiscuous sex in the slums of inner cities teeming with illegitimate children. If the sole meaning of marriage is found in producing children, then marriage is reduced to the biological act of mating—a mere animal urge. This also does injustice to married couples who cannot have children due to biological complications. They are no less married than those who have many children, contrary to much African opinion.

Marriage is also not defined by the sexual act. The Bible speaks of illicit (unlawful) sexual relationships between two unmarried people or adulterous relationships involving people married to someone else. But it never says that the sexual union between such people constitutes a marriage. The Bible also does not teach that the unlawful sexual union dissolves the existing marriages of adulterers. The offenders are still married to their lawful spouses even though they have engaged in unlawful sexual relations with another. Adultery is not polygamy. “Sexual relations...do not make a marriage and do not break a marriage.” If they did, then it would be necessary to remarry any couple if one of them had committed adultery, sought forgiveness and received it from the other spouse. No such remarriage is necessary since they are still married by a covenant arrangement.²⁴²

Some marriage practices indicate that sexuality is considered the sum total of marriage. For example, 57 percent of Ethiopian women are married before they are 18 years old, and it is not uncommon for nine-year-old girls to be married against their will to older men. At its worst, such marriage practice implies the sexual perversion of older men who are pedophiles, men who abnormally prefer sex with children rather than adults.²⁴³ At the very least, such practice indicates a disregard for the real meaning and purpose of the marriage relationship—companionship. How can an older man have meaningful companionship with a child, or even with someone as old as 15 or 16?

²⁴¹ See the earlier discussion of the relationship between the creation mandate and the Great Commission. Single men and women can make disciples, the spiritual equivalent of producing children.

²⁴² Jay E. Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*, p. 6

²⁴³ There may be cultural interests in this arrangement of which I am unaware; nevertheless, the practice makes me suspicious of perverted sexuality, the same perverted interest which entices wealthy American businessmen to go on “sex tours” overseas.

Child marriages can be common in Muslim states such as Bangladesh (89% Muslim) and Afghanistan (99.85% Muslim).²⁴⁴ In Bangladesh and Afghanistan, more than half of teenage girls are married. Ayatollah Khomeini, who took control of Iran after its president was ousted in 1979, said that marrying a girl before her first menstrual period was “a divine blessing” and that fathers should do their best to marry their daughters off to someone before the first period.²⁴⁵ Predictably, along with child marriage comes a high incidence of domestic violence.

In Egypt 29 percent of married adolescents have been beaten by their husbands; of those 41 percent were beaten during pregnancy. A study in Jordan indicated that 26 percent of reported cases of domestic violence were committed against wives under 18.²⁴⁶

Hinduistic India doesn't fare any better. Husbands sell their wives' sexual favors to other neighbors to support their gambling and drinking addictions. Confirmed female deaths related to dowry payments were over 8,000 in 2010 alone, and suicide rates among women in India are 21 times the world average. Bride immolation²⁴⁷ by dissatisfied grooms stands at one every hour. With such a low view women, is it any wonder that a disproportionate number of females are aborted each year, leaving the country with 37 million more men than women.²⁴⁸

Many African men consider the possibility of divorce if their wives are thought infertile. Another option is polygamy. This is due to a low view of women who are considered the property of the husband to produce more property, children, or to produce sexual gratification. Her desires are rarely considered.

B. Covenant of Companionship

1. Definition of marriage

Marriage is a covenant of companionship between a man and a woman who commit themselves to one another as long as the other lives.

It is time for Christians to make crystal clear what God has said about this matter. There has been too much guessing, philosophizing and psychologizing instead. There is no need, and no excuse, for any of this: God has spoken clearly. His word is so explicit that there is no room for speculation and doubt.

God's own answer to the question is found in Genesis 2:18. “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper who approximates [or corresponds to] him.” In other words, the reason for marriage is *to solve the problem of loneliness*. Marriage was established because Adam was alone, and that was not good. *Companionship*, therefore, is the essence of marriage. We shall see that the Bible explicitly speaks of marriage as *The Covenant of Companionship*.²⁴⁹

2. Other texts supporting this definition

²⁴⁴ Percentages according to Jason Mandryk, *Operation World—The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation*

²⁴⁵ Robert Spencer, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*, p. 69. Spencer derives this figure from The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF: Child marriages must stop, March 7, 2001, <http://www.unicef.org/newsline/01pr21.htm>.

²⁴⁶ Spencer, p. 69; quoting Andrew Bushell, “Child Marriage in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *America*, March 11, 2002, p. 12.

²⁴⁷ Burned alive

²⁴⁸ *World Magazine*, March 22, 2014.

²⁴⁹ Adams, p. 8, emphasis and words in brackets his

Marriage defined in terms of companionship is supported elsewhere in Scripture. Solomon admonishes his son to gain wisdom (Prov.2:2) which will deliver his son from the strange woman and the adulteress “That leaves the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God” (Prov. 2:16-17). We find the prophet Malachi chastising the returned Jewish exiles for their practice of easy divorce (Mal.2:13-16). Two principles come to the forefront in both these passages. Marriage is presented in terms of companionship and in terms of a covenant arrangement, a sacred trust to fulfill certain obligations. Obviously, one of the obligations in the marriage is to remain faithful to the marriage partner, not like the adulteress who seeks out an unlawful relationship with another man. In the prophecy of Malachi, some of the Jewish men were divorcing their older Hebrew wives to marry younger foreign women (vv. 11 and 14). But since marriage is a covenant arrangement contracted in the presence of God, God takes notice of this treachery and condemns it.

3. Practical implications of covenant companionship

a. Intimate fellowship

Providing companionship for one’s marriage partner is an obligation having far-reaching, qualitative implications for marriage. It is not merely a relationship of lawful sexual intercourse and procreation, as we have already seen. If this were true, then the quality of the marriage would be irrelevant, and each spouse could pursue a separate, independent life within the boundaries of fidelity. Marriage is more than this and requires that each spouse give up a measure of his or her independence to pursue life together as one unit. Adams calls our attention to one important phrase in the Genesis account which has been interpreted by many to be a reference to sexuality, but is instead primarily a reference to companionship.

For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24 NASB)

The “one flesh” is often taken to mean the sexual union of man and woman, and Paul’s use of “one flesh” in 1 Corinthians 6:16 would appear to support this interpretation.²⁵⁰

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! ¹⁶Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, “THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.” (1 Corinthians 6:15-16 NASB)

However, further examination of Paul’s statement lends support to the interpretation that “one flesh” refers primarily to the **community of fellowship** between man and wife, a community including sexual intercourse, but going much deeper. Paul says that our “bodies are members of Christ” which has nothing to do with sexual union but refers to the community of life between the believer and Christ. There is a mystical union between the believer and Christ made possible through His incarnation and the work of the Holy Spirit joining things on earth with things in heaven. Moreover, this community of life does not exclude the body; it **includes** the body, a fact contrary to the Greek dualism that Paul is contradicting.²⁵¹ Sexual immorality with a prostitute, then, is the unholy exchange of community

²⁵⁰ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 259

²⁵¹ Dualism maintains a distinction between the body and the spirit. It does not matter what you do in the body as long as the spirit is not affected. Paul maintains that this dualism is erroneous. The union of the body with Christ in His resurrection has refuted dualism once and for all (cf. Fee, p. 260).

with Christ for community with a harlot.²⁵² There is no possibility of a common life with Christ in His death and resurrection (1 Cor. 6: 13-14) and, simultaneously, a common life with a prostitute in sexual intercourse. The two relationships are incompatible and mutually exclusive,²⁵³ the very reason Paul says that those who persist in sexual immorality will not inherit the kingdom of God.

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul is making no attempt to explain the marriage relationship comprehensively. He merely singles out one aspect of this relationship, sexual intercourse, and uses the Genesis text to show that the sexual act in marriage consists in an intimate bonding of man and woman. Although this intimate bond is not fully replicated in casual sexual union with a prostitute, there is a cheap imitation of it which involves the **whole person**, body and soul.²⁵⁴ The one who engages in this relationship will not escape the spiritual scars consequent to it—"the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body" (v. 16b). (The word "join" (NASB) is *kallao*, the root of the same word used in Genesis 2: 24 (*proskallao*) in the Septuagint (Greek version of the OT). Literally the word means to be "glued together"²⁵⁵).

When Paul speaks of the members of Christ and the members of a prostitute, he does not intend to draw an exact parallel. Rather, he contrasts the sacred fellowship of the believer with Christ and the sinful lust of the person who has relations with a prostitute.²⁵⁶

This interpretation of "one flesh" is further supported by the Genesis text.

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:23-24 NASB)

Man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife in a one flesh relationship.²⁵⁷ Sexual intercourse does not fulfill the requirements of the analogy Moses is making between a man's relationship with his parents and that with his wife. There is no sexual relationship between a man and his parents, but there is a deep psychological and social relationship which must now be subordinate to a much deeper psychological and social relationship with his wife (see my comments below). Commenting on Paul's use of Genesis 2: 24 in 1 Corinthians 6: 16, Calvin says,

It is not certain in what sense he accommodates to his design the quotation which he subjoins from Genesis 2: 24. For if he quotes it to prove that two persons who commit fornication together become one flesh, he turns it aside from its true meaning to what is quite foreign to it. For Moses speaks there not of a base and prohibited cohabitation of a man and a woman, but of the marriage connection which God blesses. For he shows that that bond is so close and indissoluble, that it surpasses the relationship which subsists between a father and a son, which, assuredly, can have no reference to fornication.²⁵⁸

On the surface, it seems that Calvin has overlooked Paul's singular emphasis on the **sexual aspect** of the one flesh experience, for this is the problem he is addressing. Yet Calvin explains subsequently,

²⁵² Paul could have addressed sexual immorality with others as well, but he is specifically addressing the culturally acceptable practice in Corinth of consorting with prostitutes. He deals with incest in 1 Cor. 5.

²⁵³ See also Charles Hodge, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, pp. 104-105.

²⁵⁴ So also Calvin, *1 Corinthians*, p. 218

²⁵⁵ Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, p. 199

²⁵⁶ Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, p. 197

²⁵⁷ As the translators have indicated, v. 24 is an authorial comment from Moses. Adam had as yet no personal knowledge of parenthood.

²⁵⁸ John Calvin, *1 Corinthians*

For as fornication is the corruption of a divine institution, it has some resemblance to it; and what is affirmed respecting the former, may to some extent be applied to the latter; not that it may be honoured with the praises due to the former, but for the purpose of expressing the more fully the heinousness of the sin.²⁵⁹

In Corinth, casual sex with a prostitute was not considered significant; but Paul says it **is** significant. This kind of union was intended to be limited to the marriage relationship as a visible expression of spiritual and psychological oneness. Sexual immorality of any kind ruins this picture, but especially casual sex with a prostitute. In the context of Genesis, man was alone, and God was intent to do something about his loneliness. As Calvin has asserted, one flesh implies primarily the marriage connection surpassing the relationship between father, mother, and son, not mere cohabitation. The relationship involves the comingling of two personalities and two lives into one, something not accomplished through casual sex. For this reason, promiscuous men and women looking for casual sex always leave the sexual encounter empty and dissatisfied. Sex alone was never meant to fill the void of companionship. Brute beasts are satisfied with brute sex, but humans made in the image of God need intimate companionship.

“Becoming one flesh” involves the complete identification of one personality with the other in a community of interests and pursuits, a union consummated in intercourse.²⁶⁰

“One flesh” echoes the language of v. 23, which speaks of the woman’s source in the man; here it depicts the consequence of their bonding, which results in one new person. Our human sexuality expresses both our individuality as gender and our oneness with another person through physical union. Sexual union implies community and requires responsible love within that union.²⁶¹

The creation of woman was for the express purpose of providing man with a “helper appropriate for him” or “suitable for him”. Such a helper could not be found among the animal kingdom since man as God’s image-bearer must have someone like him (and, therefore, like God) who could be related to him in a meaningful way. My dog, “Bear”, is a great companion that follows me around all over the house, but we never have any intelligent conversations together. Remarkably, until the woman was created, man was considered “alone” even in God’s presence. God is imminent (near to us) but also transcendent, beyond man’s comprehension. Man needed someone else corresponding to his likeness, another earthling in God’s image. This is consistent with the fact that the Triune God has intimate fellowship with Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all three being the essence of God—the ontological Trinity. Although fellowship with man is important to God, it is not equal with the fellowship inherent in the godhead. Moreover, lack of fellowship with man cannot diminish God in any way.

The marriage union is the closest, most intimate of all human relationships. Two persons may begin to think, act, feel as one....God’s revealed goal for a husband and wife is to become one in all areas of their relationship—intellectually, emotionally, physically. The Covenant of Companionship was designed to fill this need.²⁶²

After marriage vows are completed, the husband and wife no longer have an independent existence but a shared one. This does not mean that the individuality of either is absorbed into the other, but that now they should be functioning together as one unit and heading in the same direction with shared

²⁵⁹ *1 Corinthians*, p. 218

²⁶⁰ H.C Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, p. 137

²⁶¹ Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis*, p. 223

²⁶² Adams, p.17

goals. They should be open to one another, vulnerable to one another, and honest with one another. Genesis 2:25 says, “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” Physical nakedness is not the primary meaning of this text. They were the only two people in the world and could not have been conscious of physical nakedness. Rather, their physical openness to one another without shame is metaphorical, representing their emotional, psychological, and spiritual transparency to one another.²⁶³ So also Waltke.

[Nakedness] is something akin to the feeling of vulnerability. This works both ways: the unawareness of nakedness symbolizes openness and trust in the marriage relationship; however, the awareness of it indicates fear of exposure in an unsafe environment. Spouses do not want to commit themselves to a state of nakedness when they feel they will be put to shame and hurt in that relationship. We seek to cover ourselves up so that we cannot be abused, victimized, or criticized. Clothing is a symbolic barrier that protects us from the slings and arrows of others.²⁶⁴

Cooperation was the norm, not an unholy **competition** common after the fall in which each one maneuvers for a position of advantage over the other to accomplish his or her selfish goals. Before the fall, the sexual act was a means of satisfying the other person rather than an act of selfish self-gratification by the male or a tool used by the female to manipulate her husband. Adam and Eve’s life together was patterned after the Trinitarian life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They were one in essence (ontologically both the image of God), but distinct in function and personality. Yet, even in their distinct functions and personalities, they were not detached and distant, but participated with one another whole-heartedly in their peculiar roles in dominion.

One of the greatest joys of my life has been working alongside of my wife, Fran. We made the mutual decision after our first child was born that she would work at home and not pursue a career in medical technology, although she already had the training. We spent many years together remodeling houses for resale, three years together raising emus,²⁶⁵ and have now been working together in Africa for more than ten years. I have never made much money and have lost money on “feathered” business ventures, but we have always worked together as a team, not as competitors. I would not trade the many working hours we have shared for the bigger bank account, bigger house, and nicer car we could have had with two salaries.

Considering the benefits Fran and I have had together, it saddens me that so many African husbands and wives work in separate cities and towns considerably distant from one another to support their families. They are paying a very high price for the additional income. Under such arrangements, there can be only modest fulfillment of companionship obligations. They will have limited opportunities to talk with one another, plan together, dream together, laugh together, or worship together. Seeing each other on the weekend—sometimes only once a month—presents the tempter, Satan, with abundant opportunities to lure husbands and wives into unlawful sexual relationships simply because sexual urges are insufficiently met and self-control is lacking (1Cor.7:5). The children from this marriage are deprived of seeing mother and father relate to one another as husband and wife, thus also depriving them of a model of healthy marriage and the picture of Christ and His church (Eph. 5:22-33). Temporary separation of husband and wife may be necessary for economic survival, but it should never be “normal” or inevitable on a long term basis. “When there seems to be no way, God will find a

²⁶³ Adams, p. 18

²⁶⁴ Waltke, p. 263

²⁶⁵ Emus are big, flightless birds native to Australia. They are also virtually brainless, and anyone attempting to raise these creatures will inevitably lose some of his own brain cells—his religion, too, if he is not careful.

way”—if we commit to the biblical obligations of marriage. Whatever gains may be made economically through this abnormal arrangement will certainly be lost in the quality of the marriage relationship and the emotional, psychological, and spiritual development of the children. The damage done to African society as a whole after many decades of this practice—along with the isolation of boarding schools—only time will demonstrate.²⁶⁶

Almost everyone, Christian or non-Christian, has at least a basic understanding of the commandment, “You shall not commit adultery”. But many Christians do not understand the obligation of companionship clearly implied in Genesis 2:18-25: You shall help your wife or husband not to be lonely as long as you both shall live. Christians should be sensitive to lonely people—married, unmarried, widowed, or divorced. Loneliness is psychologically devastating. In the perfect world of the Garden of Eden where man enjoyed unmarred fellowship with His Creator, God, not man, complained, “It is not good for man to be alone.” God alone is our ultimate possession (Ps. 73: 25), but His design is for most of us to share our lives in intimate community with another human being. When that community is not realized, either because of singleness or a flawed marriage; or if it is interrupted by death, the loss can be overwhelming.

b. Mixed marriages between Christians and non-Christians

It is precisely this need for harmony and intimacy that prompts the apostle Paul to forbid forming mixed marriages between believers and unbelievers.

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership has righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? (2 Cor. 6:14-15 NASB; emphasis mine)

A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. (1 Cor. 7:39 NASB; emphasis mine)

It is possible for two unbelievers to have a reasonably successful marriage since their goals in life may be similar: making a lot of money, having a nice home, and raising economically successful children. But how can a true believer and an unbeliever share the same goals?²⁶⁷ The believer will want to give money to the church and the Lord’s work, while the unbeliever will wish to spend his money strictly on his own family and his own pleasures. The believer will want to rear his children in “the nurture and admonition of the Lord”, but such nurturing is of no concern to the unbeliever. On the most important issues and decisions of life, there will be conflict, confusion, and strife. Rather than pursuing life together, they will be in perpetual competition.

Lately I have been hearing stories of believers forming romantic relationships with Muslims with the intention of being married. The premise is that both the Christian and the Muslim believe in God. But Allah is not the God of the Bible. He is not the Trinitarian Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—one God in three persons. Therefore, if we believe that there is only one God, the Trinitarian God of the Bible, then Allah does not exist except in the minds of Muslims. This is not being insensitive to Muslims since they must also deny the existence of the Trinitarian God to be consistent with their beliefs. Both religions cannot be true, and any other conclusion is a denial of the Christian faith. Christians who

²⁶⁶ I now realize that boarding schools are a natural progression of normal African society in which children are commonly sent to live with a grandparent or an uncle or aunt.

²⁶⁷ Shared goals may be possible between an unbeliever and a nominal Christian (in name only) but not with a believer who is conscientious about obeying Christ.

believe that a marriage alliance with a false religion will enhance their walk with Christ are deceiving themselves; they are becoming unequally yoked with unbelievers (1 Cor. 7: 39). What faith will they teach their children? Will the children be Christians or Muslims or a syncretistic mixture of both which is neither Muslim nor Christian? Nothing less than Christian children will be satisfying to the genuine Christian parent, and nothing less than Muslim children will satisfy the Muslim parent.

c. Priority of marriage to all other relationships

The community of life between husband and wife overshadows all other important relationships—including relationships with parents. Moses wrote that man would leave his father and mother and cleave (or “cling to”) his wife—not just sexually, but emotionally and psychologically. This meant that from the inception of the marriage, a new family unit was established which possessed a separate and individual existence to that of his father and mother and her father and mother. In other words, his primary allegiance or loyalty was no longer to mother and father but to his wife; and her primary allegiance was to him. Honoring father and mother continues for life (Mk. 7: 9-13), but the husband establishes his own authority structure by “leaving and cleaving” to his wife. The wife is not under the authority structure of her father and mother, or her husband’s father or mother, but her husband’s authority. If we can think of the roof of a house as the authority structure of the home, the husband and wife have both walked out from under the roof of both sets of parents and walked under a new roof (a new authority structure) provided by the husband. He, in turn, is under the authority of Christ (1 Cor. 11), and his authority over his wife may not go beyond the boundaries of biblical law. He can ask nothing of her which violates her conscience before Christ. Her submission must be “as to the Lord” which would be impossible in violation of His law.

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. (Ephesians 5:22-24 NASB; emphasis mine)

On the other hand, if the husband is still under obligation to obey his father, his wife is essentially under submission to her husband’s father, not her husband. In the same way, if the husband must submit to his mother, his wife is essentially under the authority of his mother.

We should note from the text, however, that even though primary allegiance to one another is required of both, the command is directed to the man, not the woman. The reason for this is possibly two-fold. First, it is assumed that the woman is leaving the authority structure of her father and mother and putting herself under the authority structure of her husband. Moses, the author of Genesis, is writing to a Jewish culture fully immersed in a patriarchal society with male headship. Secondly, the directive to the man recognizes the common friction which will arise between a woman and her husband’s family. Historically this seems to be the case in American families, and it appears more pronounced in African families in which the wife is sometimes severely mistreated by the husband’s mother, whose relationship to her resembles that of a master and servant. I have been told that African women are commonly beaten by their husband’s mother.²⁶⁸

The text in Genesis 2 is sufficient objection to this injustice. It is a serious breach of trust—and covenant—between husband and wife which can be mended only with great difficulty. His primary

²⁶⁸ Nyirongo, pp. 123, 112, where he says that the wife is expected in the initial months of marriage to do most of her mother-in-law’s domestic work.

allegiance belongs to his wife, not his mother. He is his wife's protector, and the community of life he has with her implies that whenever she is mistreated, he is mistreated.

So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;²⁹ for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, (Ephesians 5:28-29 NASB)

In the African context, mistreatment includes legal prejudice against wives who have been prevented from inheriting their deceased husband's property. I have learned from African students that it is common for the husband's family to acquire his property after death, leaving the wife with nothing. This is a serious violation of the biblical priority of the marital bond. The husband must cleave to his wife, not his biological family.²⁶⁹ The wife's inheritance of her husband's property is a practice based upon the increasing legal rights of women—rights which have their roots in Christianity. If one believes that the Muslim faith has played an important role in women's rights, let him live in Afghanistan or Saudi Arabia to get a first-hand experience of Islam.

d. Living with one's wife in an understanding way

The apostle Peter warns husbands that their prayers would go unheeded unless they lived with their wives "in an understanding way" and granted them the honor which was their due as "fellow heir[s] of the grace of life" (1Pet. 3:7). In the Greco-Roman social context it was an easy thing for husbands to exploit their wives physically and sexually. The husband could obtain an easy divorce, and since the wife would have a much more difficult time supporting herself financially, her husband wielded a substantial amount of emotional power over her. This weaker social position may be Peter's meaning when he says that the woman was "weaker" (v. 7). He was not implying that she was weaker spiritually, intellectually, or even emotionally. Often, women prove themselves stronger than men in all three areas, even responding to severe emotional trauma (e.g. the death of a child) better than men. It is also possible that Peter is making note of the obvious, that women are physically weaker than men and are, therefore, vulnerable to the husband's physical and emotional abuse.

It is more likely from the context, however, that Peter is referring to the woman's subordinate position to her husband's authority making her more vulnerable to his mistreatment.²⁷⁰ Further, this admonition may also imply that a woman has greater emotional sensitivity to harsh and unfair treatment. Because of their very nature, women can be more easily hurt by harsh words than men would be. This is not a spiritual weakness; it is actually a woman's strength giving her the ability to empathize with hurting people and sympathize with their struggles—a very important reflection of God's image in women.²⁷¹ Yet, in terms of her susceptibility or exposure to her husband's physical and social power, it is a "weakness", a gap in her armor of self-protection.

While this [emotional sensitivity] is something that is also a great strength, it nonetheless means that wives are often more likely to be hurt deeply by conflict within a marriage or by inconsiderate behavior. Knowing this, Christian husbands should not be "harsh" (Colossians 3: 19) or fill their marriage relationship with criticism and conflict, but should rather be positive and affirming, living together in an understanding way

²⁶⁹ European women were not allowed to inherit their husbands' estates until the 19th century.

²⁷⁰ So also James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, p. 156, and Wayne Grudem, "Wives Like Sarah, and the Husbands Who Honor Them"—1 Peter 3: 1-7 in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood—A Response to Evangelical Feminism*; p. 206; John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds.

²⁷¹ When a small child is hurt, he normally runs to his mother, not his father. The child knows who will give him more compassion!

and bestowing honor on their wives.²⁷²

Peter wanted Christian husbands to recognize that although women were in a very vulnerable position to them socially, emotionally, physically, and in terms of biblical authority, they nevertheless shared an equal status spiritually. They must treat them, therefore, “according to knowledge” (*kata gnosin*)—either knowledge of the ways of God or knowledge about the nature of women, or both may be implied.²⁷³ God was no respecter of persons, and if the husband exploited his wife, God would take notice and avenge her mistreatment by hindering the husband’s prayers.²⁷⁴ Some commentators interpret “prayers” as the joint prayers of husband and wife together²⁷⁵, but Peter is not at this moment speaking to wives, but husbands; thus, “your prayers” refer to the husbands’ prayers alone.

So concerned is God that Christian husbands live in an understanding and loving way with their wives that He interrupts His relationship with them when they do not do so! No Christian husband should presume to think that any spiritual good will be accomplished by his life without an effective ministry of prayer. And no husband may expect an effective prayer life unless he lives with his wife

“in an understanding way, bestowing honor” on her. To take the time to maintain a good marriage is God’s will; it is serving God; it is a spiritual activity pleasing in His sight.²⁷⁶

If the continent of Africa is generally lacking in many of God’s blessings, could it be here where the problem lies? Commenting candidly upon the lack of spousal love in African families, Nyirongo says,

...marriage exists for mutual support, love and fidelity between husband and wife. On the other hand, the family exists for the nurturing of children and for the normal development of society in general.

Such a view of marriage and family is not acceptable to the African. To the African a marriage without children is not a marriage and the wife is not equal to the husband; her role is simply to bear children and to satisfy her husband’s sexual desires. Related to this is the fact that children are not necessarily brought up by the blood parents—they may leave their parents to live with an uncle or grand-mother. In a nutshell: because the African family lacks a true identity and mutual support and love between parents, it has no true cohesion. It is for this reason that family quarrels and divorce are common in African homes. Though outwardly the family may look peaceful, inwardly it lacks true Biblical love. This is not surprising since it is only by surrendering our lives to the Lord and following his divine family principles that we are able to build strong families.²⁷⁷

C. Wife abuse—Violation of Covenant Commitment²⁷⁸

I once was pastor of a church in a small, rural community in Arkansas (USA) of 9,000 people. This little town had a shelter for battered women who needed protection from their abusive husbands. On any given week, this shelter (a small house) was occupied by an average of five women, many of whom were young and pregnant, too afraid to go home to their husbands. One can only wonder how many women need protection in large US cities (and African cities) with millions of inhabitants.

²⁷² Grudem, p. 206, words in brackets mine

²⁷³ Grudem, pp. 207-208

²⁷⁴ So also Davids, *1 Peter*, p. 123; and Grudem, p. 208

²⁷⁵ Hurley, p. 156; Simon Kistemaker, *1 Peter*, p. 125

²⁷⁶ Grudem, p. 208

²⁷⁷ Nyirongo, p. 137

²⁷⁸ See Appendix D, in which I argue that severe verbal and emotional abuse is grounds for divorce.

Many husbands think that by abusing their wives verbally or physically they are proving their authority in the home. They are really proving their own stupidity. Abusing your wife is like abusing yourself (Eph. 5:28-31), and who would do this except someone mentally deranged or psychotic—or someone who hates himself? Perhaps the key to wife abuse lies here. Many husbands hate themselves for one reason or another, and this hatred is directed to their wives. Marital problems in the US often have their roots in the husband's inability to provide adequately for the family. In a developing world where unemployment and low income are especially problematic, poor self-image and fear of failure can often elicit abusive behavior.

Samuel Waje Kunhiyop presents nine reasons for domestic violence against women in Africa.²⁷⁹

(1) Heading the list is the “demonstration of power and control.” Cultural tradition holds that the woman is the husband's property, and in order for him to establish and confirm his authority as

the “lion” (Kunhiyop's term) in the family, he resorts to abusive tactics to control her and the children.

(2) The second reason for wife abuse is the wife's “denial of sex”. Since she is considered his property—bought with the dowry—the husband assumes that he can have sex with her anytime he chooses without her consent. This is an abuse of power which is commonly accepted in Africa and in many other cultures, but it constitutes marital rape. Although it is rarely, if ever, prosecuted, we cannot imagine Peter or Paul condoning this abuse of power. Any church worth the designation, “church”, would not tolerate marital rape among its male members. It is an offense which should be subject to severe discipline and excommunication if necessary.

(3) Kunhiyop also mentions “jealousy and possessiveness” as another reason for domestic violence. Once again, as the husband's “property”, the wife is not allowed to speak to another man in private. This same jealousy is common in every cultural expression of wife abuse, including that in the US. It is immensely hypocritical since many abusive husbands are sexually unfaithful to their abused wives—one of many double standards.

(4) Fourthly, “learnt behavior” is also a reason for wife abuse. Children learn from their fathers even when they are not conscious of being taught. If a boy grows up watching his father abusing his mother, it is far more likely that he will grow up to be an abusive husband, perpetuating the cycle of abusive behavior.

Estimates suggest that between 50 and 75 percent of the men who batter their wives experienced or witnessed abuse in their own childhood home. One family research laboratory has argued that young boys who have watched their father beat their mother have a 1000 per cent greater likelihood of violence in adulthood than boys who never undergo this painful childhood experience.²⁸⁰

(5) Domestic violence is also more common in “polygamous marriages” in which wives compete with one another for the affection of their common husbands. This occurs when one wife falsely accuses another wife of serious behavior such as trying to poison her husband. The husband may react to this accusation with a severe beating.

²⁷⁹ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, pp. 244-245

²⁸⁰ Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark, *No Place for Abuse*, p. 33

(6) Wife abuse also occurs in Africa through “social tolerance of violence.” Women are not encouraged by parents, relatives, or friends to leave abusive relationships especially when young children are involved who may be left behind with their abusive father (due to unfair laws). Doubtless, the wife’s questionable financial situation has much to do with her reluctance (hesitation) to leave. The church should get involved to protect and give financial assistance. By having a safe place to go and food for their children, battered wives and mothers will be more likely to leave abusive relationships. Their children, in turn, will be better off with a single parent than a home atmosphere damaged with abusive speech and beating.

(7) Much of the domestic violence in Africa—and in the US—is the result of “lack of sanctions on those who perpetrate domestic violence.” As a general rule, abusive husbands either escape punishment altogether, or they get an innocuous (painless) slap on the hand, all the encouragement they need to continue the cycle of abuse. While it is a criminal offense for a man to attack someone in public, he can abuse his wife privately in his own home with impunity (without punishment). The first public act is called aggravated assault resulting in jail time; the second act behind closed doors is called “bad temper or lack of self-control” and results in hospital time for the wife. This judicial idiocy is by no means limited to Africa but is also common in the US where abusive husbands are too rarely punished. (Are the judges and police also abusive husbands?) Even evangelical churches don’t seem to know what to do with abusive husbands, still less what to do with battered wives.

(8) Kunhiyop also lists “physical and emotional weakness of women” as another reason for domestic violence in Africa. As stated above, women exhibit more vulnerability to emotional abuse than men because of their sensitive nature as women. This is the way God made them, and it is not a spiritual weakness, but part of their constitution or make-up which puts them in a weaker position relative to men. Women commonly have difficulty resisting abusive men, and many cases of battered women are not reported to the police or anyone else for fear of reprisal. This is not cowardice, but failure of the legal system. The real coward is the abusive husband who picks his fights with someone he can conquer—his wife or girlfriend.

(9) The last major reason for domestic violence in Africa which Kunhiyop lists is “alcohol abuse.” In his concluding section on domestic violence, Kunhiyop advocates a pro-active response.

The starting point for our response to domestic violence must be the recognition that all violence against women and children is morally unjust. They are human beings created in the image of God, and as such they are not inferior to men. They are entitled to be treated with respect.

This truth needs to be communicated to boys and girls at a young age. Boys need to be educated about the fact that they are in no way superior to women. They need to be taught that women are to be respected and treated with dignity. Young girls, too, need to be trained to know that they are not inferior to their male counterparts. They must be taught to assert their equality to men and to report acts of aggression against them and their children. Reporting involves recognizing that domestic violence is not a private offence but a criminal one. As such, it must be reported to the police, who must act to restrain the perpetrator and prevent future violence. In a traditional setting such as a village, it should be reported to the elders who can easily and effectively restrain the man from abusing his children or wife. It is advisable to also report the matter to the pastors and elders of the church. Violence is perpetuated by silence. When reported, it can be monitored and checked.²⁸¹

Wife abuse and Islam go hand in hand. The Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences determined that more than 90% of married women in Pakistan have suffered beatings, have been sexually abused, or at

²⁸¹ Kunhiyop, pp. 247-248

least have been struck by their husbands. Offenses range from poor cooking to giving birth to a female rather than a male.²⁸² Pakistan is 95.8% Muslim.²⁸³ Four male eye-witnesses are necessary to prove rape, and since a woman's testimony in court is worth only half as much as a man's (Quran 2: 282), many rape victims do not bother reporting the crime. In cases where four witnesses are not available to the victim, her charge of rape then becomes an admission of adultery. Seventy-five percent of imprisoned women in Pakistan are victims of unproven rape.²⁸⁴ Understandably, rape becomes commonplace in countries like Pakistan.

In recent news reports, an Afghani teenage girl was shot by a member of the Taliban for promoting the rights of girls to attend school. She barely survived.²⁸⁵ In February, 2004 Islamic extremist burned down eight girls' schools during a five day period.²⁸⁶

For those readers who are looking for a life's calling, may I suggest a ministry to battered women and children which includes compassion as well as judicial activism in getting just laws passed in parliament demanding prosecution of abusive men and legal protection of abused women and children. And may God be with you, for such a ministry will be strewn with frustration and disappointment with "the system" which often propagates abuse and supports the abuser. Another possible ministry is that to abusive husbands who recognize their destructive behavior and want help. Even wife-abusers are not beyond the hope of salvation.

D. Singleness

The question may be asked: If God gave man marriage as the solution for loneliness, should everyone get married? Is it a sin not to get married? The answer to this question can be found in 1 Cor.7 and Matt. 19:12. A detailed explanation is not necessary for our purposes, but we will attempt to cover the main points of each text.

First, singleness may be necessary in light of impending (future) crises. This appears to be the grounds for Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 7:26 when he says, "I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is." Whether one was married, divorced or single, in view of some difficult circumstances ahead, Paul advised everyone to continue in his present status. He further elaborates on this impending crisis in vv.29-31, but there are not enough details in the text to give us certainty about what this crisis is. Most likely, Paul is speaking of difficulties in Corinth which would surely arise with the introduction of the gospel into a thoroughly pagan culture. Or it could be that the Holy Spirit was giving Paul future insight into the persecutions of Christians during the early Roman Empire. Whatever it was, until the present distress had subsided, those who were newly married would be subjected to pressures and stress which would not be favorable to a healthy beginning of marriage (v.28). Postponement would be advisable if, and only if, they had the necessary self-control to contain their sexual desires (v.9).

Second, Paul recognized that marriage required an investment of time which drew one's energies away from the gospel ministry, undoubtedly the reason Paul never married (vv. 32-35; "undistracted devotion to the Lord"). There is not the slightest hint in his advice that single persons are more spiritual than

²⁸² Spencer, p. 70

²⁸³ Mandryk, *Operation World*

²⁸⁴ Spencer, pp. 74-76

²⁸⁵ *Aljazeera*, *BBC*, et al. reported on all the major news media.

²⁸⁶ Spencer, p. 73

their married counterparts, the error of Roman Catholicism. Rather, his statements are purely practical. The married man or woman must seek to be a companion to his or her spouse, and this necessarily requires that they be sensitive to each other's physical and emotional needs. If God grants them children, even more time must be allowed for their children, including more time spent working to provide for their food, clothing, and shelter ("the things of the world", vv. 33, 34). Single people don't have these responsibilities and can allow more of their time to the work of the Lord ("the things of the Lord", vv. 32, 34). Paul is not implying the "sacred/secular" dichotomy of Roman Catholicism which divides work into the "holy" and the "mundane"; otherwise, he would be contradicting himself when he says,

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. (Colossians 3:17 NASB)

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, (Colossians 3:23 NASB)

In Paul's mind, all work is an act of worship. Rather, Paul is recognizing that a single person does not have the distractions in his (or her) life that a married person has. "Whatever you do" for a vocation, you can do this work "for the Lord" more hours per day and with more single-mindedness than the person who must budget sufficient time to "please" his wife (or her husband) and nurture children (1 Cor. 7: 33-34). There are only so many hours in the day.

When Jesus speaks of "eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom" (Matt.19:12), He is not speaking of men who castrated themselves. Jesus is speaking of men like the apostle Paul who voluntarily forfeit the right to marry in order to devote all their time, energy, and resources to their specific calling in the kingdom of God. Forgoing marriage is voluntary. Paul was willing to "accept" this special calling from God while Peter and the other apostles married (1Cor. 9:5). Paul was not more holy than Peter because he remained single; he accepted singleness as a special calling to accomplish his mission on earth. The same can be said for countless other single Christians who have devoted their entire lives to their work in God's kingdom. On the other hand, singles who have not determined that this is their calling in life and desire to be married should continue seeking God's call in marriage. Failure to do so presents them with unnecessary frustrations limiting their potential usefulness to the Lord. While some have remained single to fulfill their calling, others—by far the majority—have married to fulfill their calling.

To summarize, neither marriage nor singleness makes a person a second-class citizen in the kingdom of God. Either state is acceptable depending on one's calling before God. The predominant opinion of our culture should not be allowed to obscure the Biblical teaching on singleness as a valid calling. The majority of God's people are called to marriage, but those who are not should be respected on equal status with married people and appreciated for their contributions to the church. As I have said previously, by teaching others to obey all that Christ has commanded us, single Christians can produce spiritual offspring, the equivalent of the first task given in the creation mandate, "fill the earth".

Summary and Conclusion

Marriage is a covenant of companionship to overcome the problem of loneliness. Even in the presence of God, man was alone until Eve was created. He needed someone who corresponded to him, who was like him. Sex, the most intimate form of human love, is included and is obligatory, but sex does not define the marriage. Husbands and wives who can no longer have sex due to old age, forced separation,

or medical conditions are still married. Moreover, marriage is not defined by its offspring. Childless marriages are still marriages.

The manner in which we define marriage will establish the standard of what constitutes a good marriage. If marriage is a covenant of companionship, then intimacy, openness, community of purpose, and cooperation are the primary goals, not independence. Husband and wife work together as one person (one flesh) moving in the same general direction to maximize their usefulness in the cultural/dominion mandate. Moreover, the goal of companionship will minimize the willingness of either partner to be separated from each other for the purpose of maximizing income. Although financial survival may necessitate this arrangement for some time, husbands and wives should never surrender to this separation over the long term, thus exposing themselves to unnecessary sexual temptations and failure to fulfill biblical role models to their children. The goal of companionship also implicitly discourages mixed marriages between believers and unbelievers who cannot think and work together as one person—as light has nothing in common with darkness.

Other than one's relationship to Christ, the marriage relationship has greater priority than any other human relationship past, present, or future. For this reason, the husband must leave the authority structure of mother and father and cling to his wife, forming an independent family. What this will mean is that he will not allow any allegiance to his biological family to take priority over his marriage relationship. He must protect his wife and their relationship. Failure to treat his wife in an understanding way not only has serious marital consequences, but also hinders his relationship to God, weakening also the family unit.

Kunhiyop outlines many of the social consequences of wife abuse in Africa, heading the list with the demonstration of power and control and the demand for sexual submission. The cultural problems of polygamy and the social toleration of violence in Africa aggravate the problem of wife abuse.

Singleness can be a valid calling before God, as the life of Christ, Paul, and thousands of other famous Christians have shown. Singleness should not be pursued as if it is a more holy calling than marriage, as Roman Catholicism erroneously teaches. It should be pursued by a Christian who believes his contribution to the kingdom of God will be enhanced by singleness.

Lesson Six Questions

1. If marriage were defined by the sexual act, what would be the consequences of this fact?
2. What basic problem is marriage designed to solve? Prove this exegetically.
3. Discuss exegetically the practical implications of the covenant of companionship. In other words, if this is what marriage is, then how does this affect what kind of marriage it should be?
4. Explain the meaning of Genesis 2: 25. What are the implications for the marriage relationship?
5. Cite Scriptural mandate against mixed marriages between believers and unbelievers. What are the practical problems which come up in mixed marriages? Is there anything wrong with “missionary courting” which says, “I’ll be able to convert him (or her)”?
6. Explain Genesis 2: 24 and its implications for marriage relationships and the relationship of the wife to the husband’s family. Does this text imply that the husband no longer has to honor his father and mother? Cite scriptural support for your answer.
7. What are some of the dangers of husbands and wives living apart to pursue jobs in different cities?
8. Explain 1 Peter 3: 7 and its implications for the marriage relationship.
9. What is the main emphasis of Matthew’s account (chap. 19)?

10. How must we apply the exceptional clause of Matthew 5 and 19—to the divorce or to remarriage, or to both? Explain.

Lesson Seven—Divorce and Remarriage in Biblical Perspective

Introduction

Since God hates divorce, many well-meaning Christians, including pastors, have concluded that God forbids divorce for any reason. As a half-way measure, some have counseled the legitimacy of divorce without the right of remarriage. Both positions are wrong and have led to unnecessary suffering on the part of those who are victims of abusive marriages. In this lesson, I will attempt to show that although divorce is occasioned by sin, divorce is not, by definition, sinful. If divorce was always sinful, there would be no need for God to regulate divorce; He would simply condemn it and forbid it under all circumstances. My purpose in this lesson is not to encourage divorce. Rather, I believe that by understanding the biblical justifications for divorce, we help prevent divorce by hindering the abusive behavior of spouses who believe they can behave as they please without suffering the consequences. For example, the regulations in Deuteronomy 24: 1-4 actually serve to discourage divorce and protect the rights of women, not the opposite. The Pharisees misinterpreted this law to their own advantage to make divorce easier, but Jesus shows them that they missed the point. The Church of Uganda forbids divorce for any reason. By doing so, it opens the door to spousal abuse—especially by men—who simply marry or live with other women, leaving their wives as virtual widows who have no recourse to divorce and remarriage. To this abuse, the church turns a blind eye without excommunicating the offender. As always, when we forbid what God allows, we eventually allow what God forbids.

VI. Divorce and Remarriage in Biblical Perspective

A. Divorce

God hates divorce (Mal.2:16) because divorce is always the result of sinful failure in marriage. It is God's desire for husband and wife to live together for the rest of their lives in harmony and provide a solid, stable environment for their children. Nevertheless, people are sinfully self-centered, and this gets in the way of the ideal of companionship God designed for marriage. For this reason, He has provided guidelines in the Scriptures which regulate the dissolving of a marriage relationship under certain circumstances. Jay E. Adams's *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible* is a short but very helpful guide in sorting out this very complicated subject. Much of the information below is a summarization of Adams with some additional findings. John Murray's *Divorce* is also helpful, but more technical.

1. Scriptural support for divorce

Contrary to much Christian teaching forbidding divorce for any reason, the Bible teaches that it is acceptable under certain conditions. In Matthew 1, when Joseph had discovered that Mary was already pregnant, he decided to put her away secretly (v.19). The word for "put away" is the same word used in Matthew 5:32 and 19:3 for putting away by divorce. In Jewish culture, the engagement of a man and a woman was as binding as marriage, and dissolving this relationship required formal divorce proceedings. The passage brings up many interesting questions. The first is whether divorce for sexual immorality had taken the place of death by stoning by the time of Christ. In the OT, if a married person or an engaged person had been proven morally unfaithful, they were put to death by stoning. In such circumstances, divorce would have been unnecessary (Dt. 22:22-24). Yet, it is clear from Matt.1 that Joseph could divorce Mary secretly for sexual immorality (at least what he thought was sexual immorality) and not incur (bring upon himself) the displeasure of God. In fact Matthew says that Joseph was a "righteous man" and did not want to "disgrace" Mary (v.19), implying that his course of action received the positive approval of God.

From other OT passages we know that what Joseph planned to do was not a course of action improvised on his own, but was a practice sanctioned many years before in OT Israel. For example in Jeremiah 3:8 God says that He had divorced Israel (the northern kingdom) for all the acts of adultery she had committed by going after false Gods (cf. Jer. 3: 1-2). The result of this divorce between God and Israel is found in Hosea 2:2 in which He says that Israel is no longer His wife and He is no longer her husband. If the practice of divorce for immorality had been illegitimate, God would not have made such statements about divorcing Israel. He does not act contradictory to His own law. The disadvantage we have with the subject of divorce for immorality is that there is no OT text indicating a change of procedure allowing divorce on the basis of sexual sin rather than divorce by execution (the adulterer stoned to death). We must come to this conclusion by deduction from the texts above as well as Isaiah 50:1.²⁸⁷ The writ of divorce mentioned in Jeremiah 3:8 and Isaiah 50:1 is also found in Deuteronomy 24:1. In this passage, Mosaic Law permits a man to divorce his wife on the basis of some "indecency in her." This "indecency" must have been something other than sexual immorality since Mosaic law required the death penalty for this crime.

2. 1 Corinthians 7

²⁸⁷ Cf. Adams, chapter 12

Adams takes his point of departure on the study of divorce primarily from 1 Corinthians 7 in which Paul deals with two different marital situations: marriage between two believers and marriage between a believer and an unbeliever. To the two believing spouses—members of the covenant—he says that they must not divorce one another. The phrase, “not I but the Lord” refers to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ on this very subject found in Matthew 19:3-9; 5:31-32; Mark 10:2-12; and Luke 16:18. The reader will notice that Paul does not include the exceptional clause, “except for immorality [unchastity]”, found in the two Matthean passages. Why he omits this clause, and why it is omitted in Mark and Luke, may be impossible to determine; but the fact that the exceptional clause is used in Matthew on two occasions is sufficient reason why it must be taken into consideration in our conclusions. For now, it is sufficient to say that Paul refers the Corinthians to the instructions on divorce that are given to us by the Lord Himself in the above passages, and that these instructions are addressed only to believers, not to unbelievers.²⁸⁸

The phrase “But to the rest I say, not the Lord” indicates that Paul is now going beyond the teaching of Christ on the subject of divorce. Jesus never intended to give us instructions on every issue pertaining to the Christian life but left many things to be taught by His apostles. This was one of them.²⁸⁹ The “rest” are those believers in the Corinthian church who were married to unbelievers (“if any brother [or sister] has a wife [husband] who is an unbeliever”). By making this statement, Paul qualifies the previous group in vv.10-11 as those marriages consisting only of believers. Notice that for the first group of people, the only legitimate option is to stay married (but see discussion below). Those believers who sin against these instructions by getting a divorce must “remain unmarried, or else be reconciled”. For the time being, we will not discuss the other option given in Matthew 5 and 19 in the case of sexual immorality, since Paul does not discuss it here. This does not imply, however, that Paul was ignorant of the exceptional clause, either from reading Matthew’s gospel (assuming it was already written and in circulation), or from direct revelation. “Not I, but the Lord” shows Paul was certainly aware of the Lord’s teaching on divorce.

For the second group consisting of a believing spouse and an unbelieving spouse, the instructions are somewhat different. If the unbelieving husband wishes to stay married to his Christian wife, she should not divorce him; and if the unbelieving wife wishes to stay married to the Christian husband, he should not divorce her. Apparently, there were believers in Corinth who did not know what to do about their marriages to unbelievers. Since their loyalty belonged ultimately to Christ, should they leave their spouses? Paul addresses this specific issue. By commanding them to stay married to unbelievers who wished to remain, Paul is not contradicting what he says about mixed marriages which have not yet occurred (2 Cor. 6: 14; 1 Cor. 7: 39). He is speaking only of those marriages which already exist between Christians and non-Christians. Special blessings belong to unbelievers living with believers. They will not only have better wives and husbands (hopefully), but they have more likelihood of hearing the gospel than they would if they were married to another unbeliever. Furthermore, the children of such marriages are also in a privileged position, having a mother or father who will provide a Christian example to them and will teach them the Christian faith (v.14).

However, if the unbelieving husband or wife wishes to leave the marriage, the Christian spouse is not “under bondage” to keep the marriage together in such cases but is permitted to let them leave the marriage (v.15). The reason for this is given in vv.15-16. There is no guarantee that the unbelieving

²⁸⁸ So also Charles Hodge, *1 Corinthians*

²⁸⁹ However, there are other ethical issues taught more clearly in the OT than in the NT (e.g. kidnapping, which is only slightly mentioned in the NT but given the death penalty in the OT (compare Deut. 24: 7 with 1 Tim. 1: 10)

husband or wife will ever be converted to the faith; and if not, their unwilling presence in the home would cause much strife and confusion. “God has called us to peace.” In other words, God wishes for us to have a measure of peace and tranquility in our homes, and this would be very difficult if an unbelieving wife or husband were held in the marriage against his or her will. (The same argument can be made for abusive spouses. “God has called us to peace.” See discussion below.)

Note well, however, that divorce is permissible only in those situations in which the unbeliever wishes to be released from the marriage. If he or she wants to remain in the marriage, the believing spouse must be willing to keep the marriage together if—and this is a big if—the obligations of the marriage covenant are being kept. The believing spouse is not commanded to stay married to the unbelieving spouse if covenant obligations are not being kept—for example, if the unbelieving spouse is unfaithful, etc. In other words, there are gaps of information in Paul’s instructions that he expects the reader to fill in. If such gaps are not filled, we come to the wrong conclusions.

Notice also that marital unfaithfulness or sexual immorality is not a necessary condition for divorce in the case of unbelievers who wish to leave the marriage. If unbelievers wish to leave for any reason then they should be permitted to leave and the believer who is abandoned is not “under bondage” to fulfill any covenantal obligations (1 Cor. 7: 15). They are free to remarry another. The reader should also notice that while Paul commands believers divorced from other believers to remain unmarried in order to be reconciled, there is no such command in the second case. If a believer is divorced from an unbeliever, he not only is not required to be reconciled to this person, he would not be allowed to remarry her (him) simply because believers should not marry unbelievers (v. 39; “only in the Lord”). The same thing would apply to the believing wife divorced by her unbelieving husband.

Why are the conditions different for the two sets of people? With the first group of Christian couples, there are many resources available to keep their marriages together. A Christian husband and wife will have the Bible, Christian friends, elders, prayer, and many other resources at their disposal to help them keep their marriage together. Hopefully, Christian couples will be willing to listen to their elders. Mixed marriages between a believer and an unbeliever have almost none of these advantages. In such cases, the unbeliever can appeal to the church to discipline the believing partner (if the believing partner is in the wrong), but the believing spouse doesn’t have this advantage since the unbeliever has no accountability to a church. Consequently, Paul does not require the same rigid standards for mixed marriages as he does for marriages between two believers.

Before we leave this passage, two other important considerations should be emphasized. First, the “leaving” in vv.10-11 should not be confused with separation without divorce. Although extenuating circumstances may call for a temporary separation, the context of this passage does not allow for this interpretation.²⁹⁰ The situation is clearly one in which a divorce has taken place, and the status of the two once-married persons is now “unmarried” (v. 11).²⁹¹ The divorce has broken the marriage covenant. One reason the wife of vv.10-11 is advised to remain unmarried is to leave the door open to the possibility of reconciliation which should always be the first possible option rather than divorce. By getting a divorce—for reasons other than sexual immorality—she has sinned, and by getting remarried she would compound her sin with the additional sin of adultery (Matt. 19: 9).²⁹² Moreover,

²⁹⁰ Extenuating circumstances may include spousal abuse endangering the life of the other spouse, alcohol and drug abuse, etc. Perhaps a temporary separation could be arranged to allow the abusive spouse time to get help.

²⁹¹ Adams, pp. 41-42

²⁹² See the discussion of the exceptional clause of Matt. 19 and Matt. 5 below

anyone who married her would be guilty of adultery (Matt. 5: 32). Of course, the same thing can be said of a Christian husband in this case.

3. Matthew 5, 19, Luke 16, and Mark 10

Thus far, we have not given Christians any options for a divorce from a *believing* spouse or the privilege of remarriage. They may permit the *unbelieving* spouse to divorce if he (or she) decides to leave (“let him leave”; v. 15). After the divorce, the deserted spouse may remarry; he or she is not “under bondage” to fulfill the covenant obligations of marriage. The believer in such cases, however, must not leave the marriage if the unbeliever wishes to stay (1Cor.7:12-13). Does this mean, then, that the believer may never initiate divorce under any circumstances? The answer to this question is no. A believer may initiate divorce under some circumstances. Even though Luke and Mark do not mention the exceptional clause—“except for immorality”—we find it in Matthew 5 and 19. This clause gives an exception to the rule that if a believer divorces his wife and marries another he has committed adultery (Matt.19), and a woman who is divorced by her husband and marries another man is guilty of adultery (Matt.5; see also Luke 16:18 and Mark 10:2-12 for other cases).

However, the rule of **no divorce for believers** has one exception noted in these Matthean texts. If the man divorces his wife for sexual immorality and marries another, he has not committed adultery by his second marriage. Further, the woman who is divorced for her sexual immorality and marries another man has not committed a second act of sexual immorality by marrying another man. Even though the exceptional clause is not found in Mark and Luke, we may safely assume that it applies to those cases as well. Mark and Luke simply assumed the reader’s knowledge of the exception. This is not a contradiction in Scripture, but a difference in the recording of the gospel writers. Just as the Sermon on the Mount receives a more complete account in Matthew than in Luke, the Lord’s teaching on divorce and remarriage receives a more complete account in Matthew than the other gospel accounts.²⁹³

It is important to understand that the main thought of the Matthean passage is committing adultery by remarriage to another; therefore, the exceptional clause would apply not only to the legitimacy of the divorce itself but also to the legitimacy of the remarriage. John Murray has made this point clear. Murray strongly insists that there is coordination between the putting away (divorce) and the remarriage which “must not be disturbed in any way.” In fact, Christ’s statement in Matthew 19 makes little sense without this coordination.²⁹⁴ If the phrase, “and marries another woman” is left out of v.9, the statement would read as follows: “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, commits adultery.” Without marrying another woman, the husband would not be guilty of adultery by divorcing his wife. Divorce and adultery are two separate things. His sin would be unlawful divorce, not adultery. But if this husband who divorces his wife for reasons other than adultery marries another woman, then he has committed adultery. Why? Because he should still be married to his previous wife whom he has unlawfully divorced. An examination of Mark 10: 2-12 will reveal that the charge of adultery is leveled at the husband or wife who divorces his or her spouse and marries another. Without marrying another person, no adultery has occurred, only unlawful divorce. In the Luke: 16: 18, the charge of adultery is also leveled at anyone marrying the divorced woman (or man). It is the marriage after the divorce causing the adulterous situation and not the divorce itself.

²⁹³ Loraine Boettner, *Divorce*, p.15

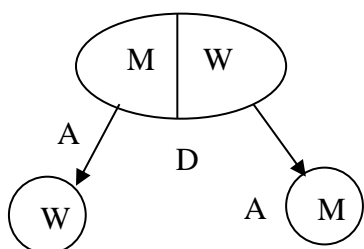
²⁹⁴ Murray, *Divorce*, pp.40-41

A further examination of Matthew 5 and 19 will reveal that Jesus was challenging the liberal (Hillel) misinterpretation of the Deuteronomy 24 passage. Notice in Matthew 19:7 that the Pharisees misquoted Deuteronomy 24, saying that Moses “*commanded* to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away.” Jesus corrects this misquotation in v.8 by saying that “Because of your hardness of heart, Moses *permitted* you to divorce your wives...” Commanding is one thing and permitting is another. The text in Deuteronomy does not put God’s stamp of approval upon the sinful practice of some men who divorced their wives for wrong reasons; it only acknowledges that the practice was taking place and **regulates it in such a way that hasty divorce would be discouraged**. If the former husband wished to remarry his wife whom he divorced for “some indecency” (other than sexual immorality), he would not be allowed to do so if she had been subsequently married to another man. The Pharisees in Jesus’ day, however, had wrongly concluded that just because Moses said it was **possible** to get a divorce for any reason, it was therefore morally **justifiable** to do so. But Moses never said this, and Jesus is making it clear that divorce between Christians for some trivial reason is a sinful divorce—allowed only because of the hardness of men’s hearts, and implicitly, the protection of unloved wives. Only if sexual immorality (*porneia*) is involved is divorce permissible (at least according to this particular text); otherwise, any marriage contracted by the husband or the wife following an unlawful divorce becomes adultery. Divorce came into the picture because of sin; but, as Jesus says, it was not this way in the beginning. He quotes Genesis 2:24 and then warns, “What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” That is, let no man separate by frivolous, unbiblical divorce.

Far from loosening the restrictions on divorce, Jesus was actually tightening such restrictions by challenging the misinterpretation of the passage in Deuteronomy. The reaction of the disciples to His words indicate as much, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry” (Matt. 19: 10). In other words, if it is this difficult to get out of an unwanted marriage, it would be better to remain single. Indeed, it would be better to remain single if someone is not truly serious about the covenant responsibilities.

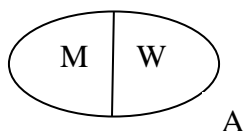
The following diagrams from Jay Adams will help us understand the different situations in which adultery can occur.²⁹⁵ I have supplied my own explanations.

Luke 16: 18



“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.” (Luke 16:18 NASB). The man who divorces his wife for unbiblical reasons commits adultery by marrying another woman. Furthermore the second man who marries this divorced wife also commits adultery.

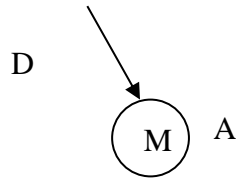
Matthew 5: 31-32



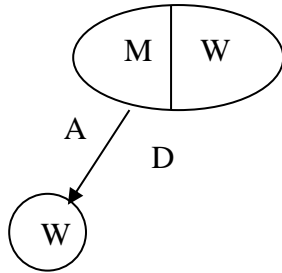
“but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” (Matthew 5:32 NASB)

The wife is divorced for unbiblical reasons. She commits adultery by marrying another man. The man who marries this woman also commits adultery by marrying an unlawfully divorced woman. Also, the former husband who divorces his wife for unbiblical reasons is guilty. He is implicated in his former wife’s adultery because he divorced her unlawfully, although not directly guilty of adultery.

²⁹⁵ Adams, p. 69



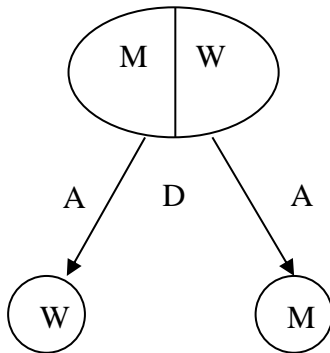
Matthew 19: 3-9



“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”(Matthew 19:9 NASB)

The man who divorces his wife for unbiblical reasons commits adultery by marrying another woman.

Mark 10: 2-12



“And He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her;¹² and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.” (Mark 10:11-12 NASB)

The man who divorces his wife for unbiblical reasons commits adultery by marrying another woman. The woman who divorces her husband for unbiblical reasons commits adultery by marrying another man.

I have substituted “unbiblical reasons” in the place of “sexual immorality” because I do not believe Jesus intended to give an exhaustive list of situations which made divorce legitimate. There were other OT reasons for divorce that Jesus did not mention in his teaching but never rescinded.²⁹⁶ Also, you will notice the lack of the exceptional clause in Luke 16 and Mark 10.

One interesting thing about these texts for our purposes is the culpability (blame) placed upon the husband for unlawful divorce and remarriage. He is guilty of adultery, and will lose wife and dowry in the process. This is not the usual procedure in African society in which husbands suffer no legal damage

²⁹⁶ Abolished

in adultery cases. “...wives expect husbands to have sexual relations with other women, provided that they do not show this openly or neglect caring for them.”²⁹⁷

4. Marriages between believers which become mixed marriages through excommunication

We should discuss one other situation. We have covered situations in which two believers are married. The only ground for divorce—according to the accounts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke—is sexual immorality. I will argue later that Jesus did not intend to cover all the grounds for divorce allowed in the OT, and we must not assume that His silence effectively eliminated them (cf. Matt. 5: 17-18).²⁹⁸ Grounds for divorce may include desertion in the form of lack of material support, physical or emotional abuse, and withholding conjugal love. Desertion is not specifically mentioned in the gospel accounts. Paul deals with desertion in 1 Corinthians 7 by saying that if the unbelieving spouse wishes to leave (desert) the marriage, the believer should let him leave. However, Paul also deals with the problem of desertion between believers by his allusion to Exodus 21 (see discussion below). The husband does not have the authority over his own body nor does the wife have authority over her body. Both husband and wife must learn how to please one another. Pleasing one another is not a suggestion, but a command that cannot be disobeyed without breach of covenant.

But what if a believing husband or wife does not please the other? What if, for example, the husband refuses to work to support his wife but instead spends all his time playing cards in the trading center. Or what if the wife withholds sex from the husband even if he is working hard to support her and the children? What if husband or wife literally abandons the other? If divorce occurs, Paul commands the believing husband or wife to remain “unmarried” or to “be reconciled”.

But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband ¹¹ (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife. (1 Corinthians 7:10-11 NASB)

The words, “not I, but the Lord”, indicate that Paul was speaking of the commands of Christ recorded in the gospel accounts. He does not imply that his commands were not equally authoritative. Paul keenly understood that his authority was derived from Christ (1 Cor. 14: 37-38). Jesus was speaking of marriage between believers, and Paul assumes the Corinthians are knowledgeable of the Lord’s teaching. However, does Jesus’ teaching leave believers in a state of uncertainty and perpetual singleness if there is desertion rather than sexual immorality? If the divorce is caused by sexual immorality, they have clear grounds for divorce and remarriage according to Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 5 and 19. But Paul implies that if a divorce occurs for some other reason—a reason that is not biblically justifiable—believers must remain unmarried or be reconciled to their former spouse. However, either of the believing spouses may not want reconciliation. What then? The uncertainty is resolved by Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 18: 15-20. If a believing husband or wife is not fulfilling his or her responsibilities in the marriage, the other believing party has recourse to the disciplinary process

²⁹⁷ Nyirongo, p. 116

²⁹⁸ See Appendix D—“Verbal and Emotional Abuse as Biblical Grounds for Divorce.” I do not believe that Jesus was presenting sexual immorality as the **only** lawful reason for divorce between two professing believers. There were other reasons in the Mosaic Law which occasioned lawful divorce. He was not giving an exhaustive list of reasons in Matt. 5 or 19. The context of Jesus’ response in Matt. 19 was the question of the Pharisees based on Deut. 24: 1-4 (cf. 19: 3, 7); thus, Jesus **limits** his response to this particular text without mentioning others.

of the church. The guilty party can be brought up on charges of desertion and, if unrepentant, may be declared an unbeliever and excommunicated from the church.

"If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (Matthew 18:17 NASB)

In this case, the professing believer—now treated by the church as an unbeliever ("a Gentile and a tax collector"—refuses to repent of his sins and by remaining disobedient, demonstrates his desertion of the marriage. Once the guilty spouse is excommunicated from the church as an unbeliever, the principle of 1 Corinthians 7: 15 applies, giving the believing spouse the liberty of divorce and remarriage for reasons other than sexual immorality.

Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. (1 Corinthians 7:15 NASB)

This is not playing "fast and loose" with the truth or twisting the Bible to say what we want it to say. The point is that God never puts the believer in an impossible situation. The truth never holds a person hostage. Marriage has biblical obligations which are not optional, and when those obligations are not met, the guilty party, not the innocent party, is punished. But in the practice of many pastors and denominations, the innocent party actually shoulders the weight of responsibility and punishment while the guilty party goes about his business with impunity. For an example, let's say a Christian husband leaves home for six months. He says he is tired of the marriage and wants to clear his head, but he gives no indication of coming back. Is his wife held hostage to this marriage simply because her husband claims to be a Christian? Some pastors would say yes. She must wait patiently until he decides to come back. I disagree. She has recourse to the church which may excommunicate this man—even in absentia (while absent)—for failing to fulfill his duties as a husband. He has essentially abandoned the marriage and after official, ecclesiastical excommunication, will be treated like any other unbelieving husband who wishes to leave the marriage (1 Cor. 7: 15). I have personal knowledge of a pastor in the Church of Uganda who has been living in the United States for eight years without his wife and children. I'm sure he sends money back home for their maintenance, but he has left his wife a virtual widow and his children virtual orphans. But the church would never give her the right to divorce—based on its "no divorce" policy.

5. Protection for women under biblical law

A slave holder who took his female slave as his wife was obligated to provide her with food, clothing, and sexual relations (Ex. 21: 10. We may assume that shelter was also part of this package). If he took another wife, he could not reduce any of these provisions which would impoverish her in her own home. You will notice that sexual intercourse was not the husband's only duty, but the duty to provide the basic necessities of life. If these basic necessities were withheld, the woman "shall go out for nothing, without payment of money." What this meant was that the woman could leave the marriage if these things were not provided by the husband, and she would be not be required to repay the cost of her purchase price as a slave. It is not our purpose here to answer all the questions which arise from this passage, including the question of slavery. What is pertinent (applicable) to our discussion is the protection of the woman under biblical law. Even a wife originally bought as a slave had certain legal rights which could not be violated. If they were violated, she could divorce, and the divorce would be very expensive to the husband. He would lose both his slave and her purchase price. Arguing from the

lesser to the greater, if such protection was afforded a former slave, then certainly the rights, privileges, and protection given a fully dowered wife were much greater, and this is the main point here.

The implication is that, if breach of contract to provide is applicable for bonded girls, it is applicable as grounds for divorce for endowered wives. St. Paul referred to this law in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, where the requirement of sexual relations and all “due benevolence” (or “obligations” BV) is specified. St. Paul spoke of the failure to meet the sexual responsibilities of marriages as defrauding the marital partner. (It can also be described, and has been, as a form of desertion.) The reference to Exodus 21:1-10 is clear; St. Paul spoke in the context of Biblical law.²⁹⁹

It is, therefore, arguable from Exodus 21: 10-11 that the failure of the husband to provide basic essentials to his wife is grounds for divorce. We would have to be very careful in the application of this principle, since only the needs of basic survival, not luxuries, are considered. In a worse-case scenario (situation), let’s assume that a husband is displeased with his wife, and he cuts her food allowance to the bare minimum necessary for survival, even to the point of malnutrition. No adultery has been committed by either party, and he does not openly wish to leave the marriage, although his behavior seems to prove otherwise. The scenario is admittedly bizarre in order to make a point. Does this woman have to endure his mistreatment on the basis on Matthew 5, 19, and 1 Corinthians 7: 11-12? Stated otherwise, would the legislation of the OT make more provision for the protection of this woman than the NT? Regardless of whether the husband declares openly his desire to stay with his wife, he has in fact deserted her, violated the covenant, and has given his wife grounds for divorce.

In Deuteronomy 22:13-21, a case law is given which protects a wife against the slander of her new husband who accuses her of sexual immorality before marriage. If she is found guilty, she is stoned to death, but if her father provides evidence of virginity, the accusing husband must pay her father 100 shekels of silver, forfeit his right to divorce her forever, and receive public corporal punishment. A shekel was equivalent to four Roman denarii which were equal to four days wages (during the time of Christ); therefore, 100 shekels of silver were equivalent to 400 days wages. It is hard to determine the exact worth when this legislation was given, but it was a considerable sum of money.

Thus, 100 shekels of silver was an extremely heavy fine and one which would virtually wipe out most husbands and make them in effect their wife’s servant or slave thereafter. The fine was paid to the bride’s father, and thus kept out of the control of the husband, who could nullify the effect of the penalty if the money were in his wife’s possession. Control of the wife would then lead to control of the money. The father-in-law would not be subject to such control and could administer the funds for his daughter’s and grandchildren’s welfare....the matter of slander within the family is a criminal offense, not merely a private matter. Damages are due the bride’s parents, and a penalty is imposed by the state, because the disruption of the peace of family life is a major breach of public peace and order. The centrality of the family makes slander within the family particularly dangerous to society....It is the duty of the husband to be, among other things, the protector of his wife and children. If he instead defames them, defames his wife in particular, it is an indication of both an inability to protect and to govern, and a sick mentality which invites shame and disgrace. The man has denied to his family a standard of godly conduct, which is a basic necessity of life.³⁰⁰

It would seem reasonable to conclude that if the civil magistrate in the OT protected a wife from slander (Dt.22) and impoverishment (Ex.21), it would also protect her from chronic physical abuse for the same reason: “disruption of the peace of family life is a major breach of public peace and order.”³⁰¹ The

²⁹⁹ Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 403.

³⁰⁰ Rushdoony, pp.591-92

³⁰¹ Rushdoony, p.594

importance of the family would also make wife abuse “particularly dangerous to society”, since the family is the foundation of any society. Weak families make weak societies, and strong families make strong societies. Jesus says that a “kingdom divided against itself cannot stand,” and this is most certainly true of any society in which wife abuse is a chronic, systemic problem. Strict penalties, similar to the ones above contextualized for modern society, will be necessary to minimize domestic abuse.

We would be missing the obvious if we do not include the application of the *lex talionis*, the law of retaliation—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Ex. 21: 22-25). In this particular passage, a pregnant woman is struck by a man who is fighting another man, and she has a premature, live birth. That this is not the miscarriage of a dead baby is clear from the statement, “yet there is no further injury” and “But if there is any further injury....” In other words, if the woman is able to give premature, live birth to the baby, and if neither the woman nor the baby is seriously injured in the ordeal, then the man who struck her accidentally has to pay some kind of fine established by the judge. But if either the woman or the unborn baby is seriously injured or killed, then the man will pay the appropriate penalty of life for life, tooth for tooth, etc.³⁰² Notice from the text that the man pays life for life even though the woman’s death or the baby’s death is an accident—*unintentional*. He did not intentionally hurt her or the baby, but if she or the baby dies, his life is forfeit just the same. However, it may be deduced from Exodus 21: 28-30 and Numbers 35 that since the abortion is accidental and not intentional, the individual would be able to provide a ransom for his life. Arguing from the lesser to the greater, it may be argued that the *intentional* abuse of one’s wife would receive at least the same punishment—eye for eye and tooth for tooth. Thus, if an abusive husband got some perverse enjoyment from beating his wife, the civil magistrate would exact the same punishment upon him—something which might extinguish his abusive behavior.

In vv. 25-26 which follow, if a slave owner knocks out the eye or the tooth of his male or female slave, he must let him or her go free on account of the eye or the tooth. Evidently, the slave owner was not permitted by law to physically abuse his slaves; doing so would be very expensive—the loss of his slave. Arguing from the lesser to the greater, if such protection was given a male or female slave, it goes without saying that at least the same protection was afforded the wife. If her husband was abusive, she was allowed to divorce him. This is not explicitly stated in the Law, but the burden of proof rests upon those who wish to prove that slaves had *more* legal protection against abuse than wives. The only reason wife abuse is left out of the Mosaic legislation is that laws against slave abuse would make such legislation unnecessary.

But let’s not relieve wives of all responsibility. What if a wife refuses to have sex with her husband, but wants to remain married to him for financial security? She has been disciplined by her church and has been excommunicated as an unbeliever. Is her believing husband biblically obligated to live the rest of his life celibate (abstaining from sex), or does he have recourse to divorce? In my opinion, the refusal to give her husband conjugal (sexual) rights is another form of desertion which gives him the right to divorce (Ex.21:10-11).³⁰³ But further, Paul’s allusion to this OT text in 1 Corinthians 7 implies that conjugal rights were not optional. They were required as a covenant obligation in marriage.

The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.⁴ The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. (1 Corinthians 7:3-4 NASB; emphasis mine)

³⁰² Rushdoony, pp. 263-264; also quoting Keil, Delitzsch, and Cassuto.

³⁰³ This is reasoning from the lesser to the greater. Women generally had less legal rights than men; therefore, if the Law gave women the right of divorce due to negligence of covenantal duties, then it would also give men the same right.

But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;³³ but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife,³⁴ and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.³⁵ This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord. (1 Corinthians 7:32-35 NASB)

The husband “must fulfill his duty to his wife” and vice versa (the other way around). These are not options; they are duties rooted in OT law and confirmed by the apostle Paul. “Pleasing” the wife would include conjugal love, affection, and providing for her and the children adequately. Pleasing the husband would include conjugal love and various domestic responsibilities, although women also worked outside the home.³⁰⁴

Africa has a good reputation for its lack of divorce. However, it may be seriously questioned whether this reputation is truly deserved. Is it a mask covering the ugly faces of many “marriages” (so-called) which are not living up to their covenantal obligations? Many husbands will not divorce their unwanted wives, but they will take another wife while leaving the unwanted wife with only material maintenance. The question of polygamy aside, this is not a biblical solution. Each wife requires conjugal rights, and these conjugal rights imply conjugal affection and love, not just raw sex (see Appendix D). God wants a marriage, not a mockery.

B. Remarriage after Divorce

The exceptional clause in Matthew 5: 32 and Matthew 19: 9 applies to both the divorce and the remarriage. In other words, the cause of sexual immorality legitimizes (validates) both the divorce and the remarriage of either partner, even the guilty partner. The person guilty of sexual immorality has not committed adultery a second time by marrying another person. Only the spouse divorced for reasons other than adultery (or other unbiblical reasons) commits adultery through remarriage. This may seem strange, but the reasoning behind this is that *believing couples* who are divorced for unbiblical reasons have no right to be divorced and should be reconciled.

Normally, adultery takes place while the marriage contract is still in effect. In the situation to which Jesus refers (Deut. 24) that contract has been broken for sinful reasons. There, while it is truly broken (and no rights, privileges or obligations of marriage are permitted or required at this point), nevertheless the divorced parties *have no right in God's eyes to be in a divorced state*. They are obligated to be reconciled in remarriage so that they can renew the contract and continue to pursue their vows. That is the point (cf. 1 Cor. 7: 10, 11). As Paul says, they must remain unmarried not only in order to be in a position to be reconciled...but...also *in order not to commit adultery*.³⁰⁵

We must remember that the passages in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are written for **believers**, not **unbelievers**. Mixed marriages between believers and unbelievers do not have the same restrictions (see above). Consequently, when divorced believers marry another person, their new marriage is considered adultery because they were obligated to reconcile with their former believing partner if at all possible.

³⁰⁴ For more discussion, see Appendix D

³⁰⁵ Adams, p. 67; emphasis his. For a subject as complicated as divorce and remarriage, I recommend that you read Adam's entire book, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*.

I insert this qualification since none of us live in a world where God's requirements are perfectly followed. It could be that the professing believer who demands a divorce for unbiblical reasons will not repent. He or she just wants out of the marriage—period. In this case the church must declare him or her to be an unbeliever according to Matthew 18, in which case 1Corinthians 7:15 applies instead of the synoptic passages (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). We are now dealing with a professing believer who has been judged as an unbeliever by a church court. The rules have now changed, and the divorced person is free to remarry regardless of the reason given for the divorce. The professing believer who has been excommunicated is out of the church and under God's judgment—assuming the church court has ruled according to biblical principles. Sin makes life complicated, especially if the church courts rule sinfully, and they often do.

If there is any doubt remaining about the freedom of divorced believers to remarry, 1Corinthians 7:27-28 should remove it. In this passage Paul expressly states that the one who has been released (divorced) from a wife has not sinned by getting remarried even during a troubled time for all married people (v.26, "present distress"). Because of this "present distress" Paul cautions such people against marriage and remarriage, but assures them that marriage is a biblical option. Those released from marriage by biblical divorce have "not sinned" if they remarry. To give further weight to the argument, Adams draws our attention to Ezekiel 44:22 which forbids a priest to marry a widow or a divorced woman, but only a virgin or the widow of another priest. The passage is instructive as much in what it does not say as what it says. By forbidding the priest from marrying a divorced woman, it clearly implies that marriage to a divorced woman by anyone other than a priest was permitted. If not permitted to anyone, the restriction would have been unnecessary.³⁰⁶

Generally, the Bible encourages remarriage. Young widows are encouraged to remarry to avoid being overcome by sensual desires for sexual relationships (1Tim. 5:11-12; 14-14). It was unnecessary for Paul to include young widowers in these instructions since their sexual urges would have been assumed. In light of the impending crisis facing the Corinthian church Paul advised everyone to maintain their present marital status, whether married or unmarried, but for those who had trouble controlling their sexual urges, he gave his permission for marriage or remarriage, for "it is better to marry than to burn"; that is, it is better to marry even in the face of a future crisis than to be consumed with sexual desires which could lead to fornication. It is also evident that the death of a spouse completely dissolved the marriage covenant and released the man or woman to marry another (Rom.7:2-3). There is absolutely no restriction in the Bible against the remarriage of widows or widowers.

Lastly, what about the remarriage of a woman to a man from whom she was previously divorced? Deuteronomy 24: 1-4 teaches that if a husband divorces his wife for some indecency (other than sexual immorality, since sexual immorality would have been punished by death), and she marries another man, she may not remarry the first husband if her second marriage ends in divorce or death. What should be understood is that Jesus describes this situation as an unlawful divorce permitted under the Mosaic law due to the hardness of men's hearts (Matt. 19: 8). If sinful men were not permitted to divorce their wives, even for unlawful reasons, the wives would be held hostage to an unloving, and perhaps abusive husband. Jesus tightens the restrictions permitted under the Mosaic Law, thus eliminating easy divorce for believers under the new covenant.

³⁰⁶ Adams, pp.84-85

He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." (Matthew 19:9 NASB)

It is significant, I believe, that Jesus did not say, "God permitted you to divorce your wives" for indecency, but rather, "Moses permitted you...." He goes on to clarify this by saying, "but from the beginning it has not been this way."

"It was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE';³² but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. (Matthew 5:31-32 NASB)

Therefore, the defilement in Deuteronomy 24:4 is caused by the adulterous remarriage of the woman to another man after being *unlawfully* divorced. The unlawful divorce results in adulterous remarriage. Had the divorce been occasioned by adultery—or some other justifiable breach of the marriage covenant discussed above—the remarriage to the original spouse would not have been adulterous, and the woman would not have been defiled. Hence, in this different scenario, she would be permitted to remarry her former husband upon the death of her second husband or if the second marriage is broken by adultery or some other biblically justifiable reason.³⁰⁷

C. Divorce and Church Office

Contrary to the teaching of many churches in the US and elsewhere, divorced persons can serve as elders (pastors) of churches. The principle texts in proof of this are 1Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 which require elders to be the "husband of one wife". Many church leaders have wrongly interpreted Paul's restrictions to mean that a man should have been married only once. But if Paul had wished to restrict the office of elder to someone meeting this requirement, he could have said so plainly with the phrase "married (*gameo*) only once." He didn't use this phrase but the one we find in the two passages above. Paul apparently did not want us to miss the point that an elder must have only one wife at a time. There is no indication in the least that Paul was not allowing previously married men to hold church office. If we wish to eliminate such men from office, we will also have to bar the office from remarried widowers whose wives have died, regardless of their qualifications. Furthermore, we will miss the restriction given, namely, that polygamists cannot hold church office.³⁰⁸

Certainly, a man who has been divorced and whose qualifications are being examined for office must have no outstanding (unpaid) obligations with regard to his previous marriage. He may have divorced his wife for her sexual immorality, in which case he should not be punished for her sin by being barred from office. But since unbiblical divorce can be a very complicated issue, there could be many obligations which must be cleared before he would be an eligible candidate. If he had previously committed adultery, he should have repented of this sin. If he has been involved in an unbiblical divorce from a believing spouse, he must be willing to be reconciled to her if possible (cf. 1Cor.7:10-11). If

³⁰⁷ Frame, *DCL*, p. 777. The same can be said of a husband divorced by his wife for adultery. Since the divorce effectively breaks the covenant relationship, neither he nor she is guilty of adultery if they remarry, and neither one is defiled by the remarriage.

³⁰⁸ Adams, pp. 80-81, 83 footnote.

she has already sinfully remarried, he must ask her forgiveness since he participated in the unlawful dissolution of their marriage. If he divorced an unbelieving wife who wished to keep the marriage together, he must ask her forgiveness. If she is still unmarried and wishes to be reunited with him, he must be willing to wait for and work toward her conversion to Christ since it is not biblical for him (a Christian) to marry an unbeliever, even if she is his former wife (See 1Cor.7:39, “only in the Lord”—at least, this is the way I see it for now).

You can see that sin complicates life; but any Christian, especially one who aspires to church office, must be willing to do whatever it takes to make things right. Elders must be “above reproach”, that is, they must have a reputation which is unassailable by those in the church and those outside the church and a reputation for integrity over a long period of time (1Tim.3). This does not mean he must be someone who has never done anything wrong. If that were true, there would be no legitimate candidates for the office of elder.

If one would strongly object to a divorced man being an officer in the church, he must also object to a former liar being an officer in the church (Peter), or a former thief (Matthew the tax collector), or a former persecutor of Christians (Paul), or a former psalm-writer turned adulterer (King David). This list of sinners could go on and on. Which sins should we put at the top of the list of those which permanently disqualify Christians from church office? The Bible does not disqualify anyone who has truly repented of his past sins and is now living an exemplary Christian life.

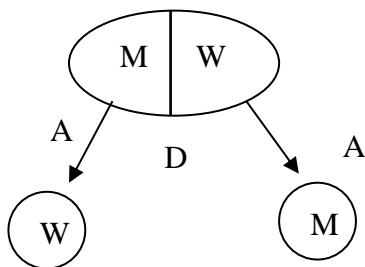
Summary and Conclusion

I hope we have seen from our discussion that the subject of divorce is complex, and we have barely scratched the surface of the relevant texts. It is therefore, simplistic to conclude from Mark and Luke that Jesus condemns all divorce because no exceptions are given in these texts. It is also simplistic to believe that Jesus was covering every biblical cause of divorce in Matthew 5 and 19. He was well aware of the material and sexual obligations of marriage from Exodus 21, a law he came to fulfill, not to abolish (Matt. 5: 17). In Matthew 5 and 19, He was merely addressing the specific question posed by the Pharisees from Deuteronomy 24. Remarriage after a biblical divorce is permissible and should be encouraged unless there is a possibility of reconciliation with the former spouse (assuming the spouse is Christian). In all cases involving divorce, the conditions of the divorce should be carefully researched to determine any outstanding obligations to the former spouse. Otherwise, the divorced spouse or the divorcing party could be committing adultery through remarriage. Such research is also necessary regarding candidates for church office. If outstanding obligations are met, then there is no reason to deny a divorced man for church office. The requirement of “husband of one wife” means one wife at a time, not “married only once.” We should not hold up divorce as the most egregious sin in the church.

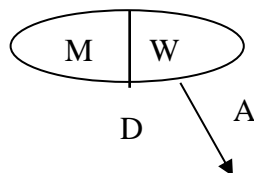
Lesson Seven Questions

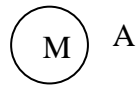
1. Did Jesus give us every conceivable justification for divorce in His teaching? Explain.
2. What other justification for divorce does Paul give in 1 Corinthians 7 that is not found in Jesus' teaching?
3. Why are the conditions for divorce different in mixed marriages between believers and unbelievers than in covenant marriages between two believers?
4. Where do we find the “exceptional clause” for divorce and what is its significance?
5. Explain the following charts in your own words.

Luke 16: 18

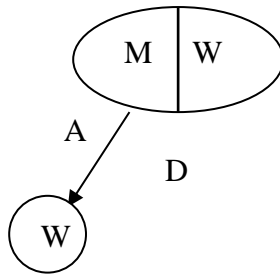


Matthew 5: 31-32

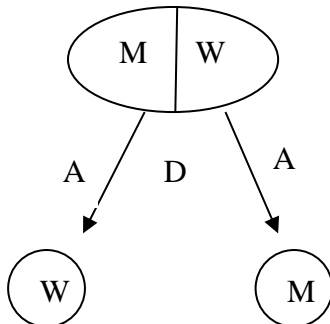




Matthew 19: 3-9



Mark 10: 2-12



6. How do marriages between believers become mixed marriages? What are the implications for divorce?
7. Discuss the material and sexual obligations of marriage found in 1 Corinthians 7: 3-4 and 33-34. What OT passage is Paul referring to in these texts? From the OT text, what kind of argument can be made in favor of using this text as grounds for material maintenance of a wife?
8. What are the implications for remarriage found in 1 Corinthians 7: 27-28?
9. What are the implications for remarriage found in Ezekiel 44: 22?
10. How do we know that Paul did not forbid widowers from holding church office?

Lesson Eight—Polygamy in Biblical Perspective

Introduction

Polygamy is also a complicated subject, especially since there appears to be no explicit commandment condemning the practice either in the OT or the NT. I will defend the position below that Paul forbids polygamists from becoming elders or deacons in the church, but that this prohibition implies the admission of existing polygamists into church membership—otherwise, the restriction upon church officers is unnecessary. What does the church do about polygamists who wish to bring multiple wives into the membership of the church? Does the church demand the husband to dismiss all of his wives but one? I will attempt to give biblical answers to these questions.

On a more fundamental level, does the Bible condemn polygamy as sin? I will argue that it does not condemn polygamy as sin, although it teaches monogamy as the original and ongoing ideal of marriage. In order to be consistent, if we take the position of polygamy as sin, we must deny polygamists communing membership in the church. We must also accept the biblically inconsistent idea of tragic moral choice, in which the Christian polygamist must remain married to more than one wife to avoid unbiblical divorce and abandonment; yet, he must “sin” by giving all of his wives sexual love. We will conclude with a survey of some of the rulings of the Anglican Church in Africa

VII. Polygamy, Church Membership, and Church Office

A. Polygamy and Church Office

Instead of disqualifying divorced men from office, Paul disqualifies polygamists. Since some commentators do not agree that this is the emphasis of the text, I will spend some time defending the position that Paul's specific emphasis in 1 Timothy 3: 2, 12 and Titus 1: 6 is the necessity of monogamous marriage for elders and deacons. The difference among commentators seems to hinge on whether they believe polygamy was common or uncommon at the time of Paul's writing.

Adams maintains that polygamy was common, thus necessitating the restrictions of monogamy for church leaders as distinguished from common members.

The OT permitted polygamy, but it was never the ideal....But in the NT, while a polygamous convert was allowed to enter the body without putting away his wives (on the principle stated and reiterated in 1 Cor. 7: 17, 20, 24), he could not become an officer. The life of an officer must be exemplary and God wanted the example of monogamous marriage held before the church.

But we are told by advocates of the anti-marriage viewpoints that there was no polygamy in NT times. The facts prove otherwise; they are wrong. Polygamy not only continued among the Jews, but also among the Greeks and Romans (and who knows where else?).

Many of the early converts of every church that Paul began were Jews of the dispersion. Josephus twice mentions polygamy in his day. In A.D. 112, the *lex Antoniana de civitate* made monogamy the law for Romans, *but specifically excepted Jew!* Later, in A.D. 285, Diocletian found it necessary to rescind the exception, but in 393 Theodosius found it necessary to enact a special law against polygamy among the Jews since they persisted in the practice. Even that did not put an end to it; polygamy among the Jews continued until the eleventh century.

But that isn't all. Greek marriage contracts indicate the existence of polygamy in New Testament times. One such contract, from 92 B.C., reads,

It shall not be lawful for Philiscus to bring in another wife besides Appolonia. This marriage contract makes it clear that, apart from such a prohibition, polygamy was an altogether likely option. The law enacted in A.D. 112, mentioned above, also indicates the presence of polygamy in the Roman world. That the clause against polygamy in the marriage contract just cited was not a rare exception is shown by a similar one in another contract from 13 B.C.:

Ptolemaeus...shall not...insult her nor bring in another wife.³⁰⁹

Thus, the Christian Jews living in Ephesus (the location of Timothy's ministry), and Crete (the location of Titus' ministry), would be relevant recipients of Paul's exhortations concerning monogamous marriage.

Hillman is also cited by David Gitari.

Eugene Hillman, in his carefully argued book on polygamy, says that the key New Testament passages on marriage (Matthew 5:27-32; Mark 10:2-12; Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:2-16; Ephesians 5:22-33) repudiate adultery, divorce, polyandry and consecutive polygyny but "simultaneous polygamy is not considered at all in these passages, although the New Testament writers certainly must have known that this customary form of marriage existed among their Jewish contemporaries, even as it existed during the time of Jesus".³¹⁰

Calvin held the same position. In his commentary on 1 Timothy 3: 2, he argues,

³⁰⁹ Adams, pp. 81-82, emphasis his (citing Eugene Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, pp. 20-21; also citing Hunt and Edgar, *Select Papyri*, I: 5-7, 11.

³¹⁰ David Gitari, "The Church and Polygamy", p. 6 in *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies*, 1984, 1: 3; see sagepublications.com

The only true exposition, therefore, is that of Chrysostom, that in a bishop he expressly condemns polygamy, which at that time the Jews almost reckoned to be lawful....polygamy was *exceedingly prevalent* among them; and therefore with great propriety does Paul enjoin that a bishop should be free from this stain.

...Accordingly, what had been once done, and could not be corrected, he *reluctantly endures, but only in the common people*. For what was the remedy for those who, under Judaism, had fallen into the snare of polygamy? Should they have divorced their second and third wives? Such a divorce would not have been free from doing wrong. Since, therefore, the deed was done, and could not be undone, he left it untouched, but with this exception, that no bishop should be blemished by such a stain.³¹¹

Likewise, Barnes argues that the prohibition against polygamy for church leaders...

...is the most obvious meaning of the language [of 1 Tim. 3: 2], and it would doubtless be thus understood by those to whom it was addressed. At a time when polygamy was not uncommon, to say that a man should “have but *one wife*” would be naturally understood as prohibiting polygamy....There was a special propriety in the prohibition, if understood as prohibiting polygamy. It is known that it was extensively practiced, and was not regarded as unlawful. Yet one design of the gospel was to restore the marriage relation to its primitive condition; and though it might not have seemed absolutely necessary to require of every man who came into the church to divorce his wives, if he had more than one, yet, in order to fix a brand on this irregular practice, it might have been deemed desirable to require of the ministers of the gospel that they should have but one wife. Thus the practice of polygamy would gradually come to be regarded as dishonourable and improper, and the example and influence of the ministry would tend to introduce correct views in regard to the nature of this relation.³¹²

Grudem does not believe polygamy was common among the Jews of the 1st century, but that it was still practiced. Consequently, he believes Paul saw the need to address the question in his qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3. After disputing the interpretation of some that Paul forbade divorcees from becoming elders, he then supports the interpretation that Paul forbade polygamists from becoming elders.

Polygamy was possible in the first century. Although it was not common, polygamy was practiced, especially among the Jews. The Jewish historian Josephus says, “For it is an ancestral custom of ours to have several wives at the same time.” Rabbinic legislation also regulated inheritance customs and other aspects of polygamy.

Therefore, it is best to understand “the husband of one wife” to prohibit a polygamist from holding the office of elder.³¹³

Another systematic theologian, John Frame, concurs with Grudem that the instructions to Timothy were intended to limit church office to monogamists, but implicitly allowed polygamists to church membership.

Some churches have taken the position that polygamists professing faith should not be accepted as church members, nor admitted to the sacraments. Yet these cultures do seek to give pastoral care to such people. By this policy, they seek to defend the biblical view of the family and to give a clear witness to their culture of their faith in Christ.

While admiring the motivations of this policy, I must say that it is unscriptural. The New Testament was written in a culture that tolerated polygamy, and its own stance is clear. Polygamists were denied church office (1 Tim. 3: 2), but there is no evidence that they were denied church membership or sacraments. The

³¹¹ Calvin’s Commentaries, *1 Timothy*, pp. 77-78; emphasis mine.

³¹² Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes, 1 Timothy*, pp. 142-143, emphasis his, words in brackets mine

³¹³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology—An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 917

implication, rather, is that there were some church members who might have been considered for church office except that they were polygamous.³¹⁴

Thus, by explicitly limiting church office to men who were husbands of one wife, Paul implies that there were other husbands in the church who had more than one wife. Had polygamists been denied church membership, it would not have been necessary for him to exclude them from church office, since this exclusion would have been assumed. Furthermore, by elevating monogamy as the only form of marriage suitable for church leaders whose marriages must be above reproach, Paul implicitly taught that monogamy was the only form of marriage that non-married Christians should pursue.

Yet, there are some commentators who believe that Paul is emphasizing the need for sexual fidelity among elders and deacons. Hendriksen, for example, says,

Accordingly, the meaning of our present passage (1 Tim. 3: 2) is simply this, that an overseer or elder must be a man of unquestioned morality, one who is entirely true and faithful to his one and only wife; one who, being married, does not in pagan fashion enter into an immoral relationship with another woman.³¹⁵

In similar fashion, Towner believes that

...the broader interests of the passage suggest that fidelity in marriage (understood to be monogamous and acceptable in the eyes of the community) is meant. This would assume the inappropriateness of any form of sexual immorality or marriage/remarriage in breach of accepted patterns, though sexual immorality as such is not the sole concern.³¹⁶

Instone-Brewer also interprets Paul's requirement as faithfulness to one's wife.³¹⁷ Rushdoony, Wright, and Matthew Henry line up with Calvin, Adams, Barnes, Grudem, and Frame maintaining that the text forbids church office to polygamists while not denying the obvious necessity of marital fidelity.³¹⁸ The issue cannot be decided by majority vote, but why do so many theologians believe that Paul was requiring monogamy rather than emphasizing sexual purity? Possibly for the same reasons I will offer here: First, because sexual fidelity was required of **every** member and would not need special emphasis for elders and deacons. Secondly, and more importantly, because of the language: "husband of one wife", a phrase that says nothing explicitly about sexual fidelity—unless of course we read it into the text.

As I said earlier, the difference of opinion seems to hinge on whether or not one believes polygamy was practiced at the time of Paul's writings, a difference that may be very difficult to resolve. (Historical arguments over infant baptism have also proved indecisive for hundreds of years.) Towner argues that it would have been unnecessary for Paul to bring up the prohibition of polygamy in Christian circles.³¹⁹

On the contrary, I believe that it would have been unnecessary for Paul to mention sexual fidelity as a requirement for elders and deacons when such basic obedience would have been assumed. Was sexual

³¹⁴ Frame, *DCL*, p. 754

³¹⁵ William Hendriksen, *1 Timothy*, p. 121.

³¹⁶ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*

³¹⁷ David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, pp. 227-228.

³¹⁸ R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 362-363. Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, p. 351, footnote; Matthew Henry, *1 Timothy*, p. 818

³¹⁹ Towner, p. 250, footnote

faithfulness not required of **all** men (and women) in Christian congregations? Though sexual immorality was unbridled in ancient Greek culture and a constant danger to the church, it would not have been tolerated as normative in the church. In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul expressly forbids sexual immorality (*porneia*; 1 Thes. 4: 2-8); and we may reasonably assume that persistent sexual immorality, short of credible repentance, would have been disciplined by the church—as Paul demands in 1 Corinthians 5. But setting aside the extreme case of incest in 1 Corinthians 5, surely fornication and adultery would have been more threatening to the life of the church than the undisciplined behavior of busybodies and sluggards who refused to work. Yet, Paul insisted that such busybodies be shunned by the rest of the congregation if they didn't change their ways (2 Thes. 3: 6-15). We may also assume that the advice to continue treating a sluggard and busybody like a “brother” (2 Thes. 3: 15) would not apply to those who had resisted the initial stages of discipline and persisted in idleness and sin. Any public sin in the body of Christ could reach a point at which excommunication was necessary, in which case the individual would not be treated like a brother (Matt. 18: 17).

Would it not be more plausible that Christians previously taught by Paul assumed the necessity of sexual faithfulness, especially considering the prevalence of Paul's clear teaching about sexual purity (1 Cor. 6: 9, 15-20; Gal. 5: 19-21; 1 Thes. 4: 2-8; Eph. 5: 3; Col. 3: 5; 2 Cor. 12: 21)? Paul clearly warned the churches that persistent adulterers and fornicators would not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6: 9; Gal. 5: 19), thus making it clear that sexual purity was not an added extra for super-Christians or church officers. The author of Hebrews corroborates³²⁰ Paul's teaching on this subject (Heb. 13: 4). Moreover, assuming that Grudem, among others, is correct that polygamy was still practiced but not common among the Jews, is it not also plausible that Paul would need to offer brief comment on an important issue that had thus far received no attention in his letters?

Furthermore, Paul is not writing this epistle to the general congregation in Ephesus; he is writing it to his close protégé and child in the faith, Timothy. Would it be necessary for Timothy, of all people, to be instructed on the necessity of sexual purity for **elders and deacons**—even the need for leaders to shun the very appearance of sexual indiscretion (1 Thes. 5: 22)—considering the prevalence of this teaching in the Pauline epistles? On the other hand—assuming that my interpretation is correct—we find polygamy addressed only twice in the Pauline corpus, here and in Titus 1: 6 and nowhere else in Paul or the entire NT. In the absence of any other explicit reference to polygamy, wouldn't Timothy need some brief mention of the subject?³²¹ Quoting several sources, Gitari notes the absence of any explicit condemnation of polygamy in the NT.

Karl Barth says, “We can hardly point with certainty to a single text (of the New Testament) in which polygamy is expressly forbidden and monogamy universally decreed.” Edward Schillebeeckx maintains, “Nowhere in the New Testament is there any explicit commandment that marriage should be monogamous or any explicit commandment forbidding polygamy.” John McKenzie says that “the teaching of Jesus on marriage is limited to his affirmations of its indissolubility.”³²²

Looking at the text, why does Paul use the phrase, “husband of one wife” in the first place (1 Tim. 3: 2; Titus 1: 6)? In all but one of the other requirements for elders, Paul uses Greek modifiers translated

³²⁰ confirms

³²¹ Admittedly, the lack of NT teaching on the subject may be evidence that polygamy was not widely practiced, in favour of those who maintain this position. However, it does not prove that polygamy was non-existent, nor does it prove that the church assumed the sanctity of monogamy taught in the OT, especially when so many notable saints practiced it without censure.

³²² Gitari, p. 6

by the NASB as “above reproach”, “temperate”, “prudent”, “respectable”, “hospitable”, “able”, “not addicted”, “gentle”, “peaceable”, “free”. The only other expression besides “husband of one wife” that uses a Greek noun as the primary qualifier is “not pugnacious” (not argumentative; *plektes*), a word that also may be translated “not a bully” or “not a striker”. So, why didn’t Paul use another adjective, “faithful (*pistos*) to his wife”, when *pistos* would seem to have served the purpose of expressing marital fidelity much better than “husband of one wife”? A man can continue to be “the husband of one wife” while being unfaithful in the marriage relationship. Sexual relations with another woman does not constitute a marriage, but adultery; moreover, divorce, not adultery, actually dissolves the marriage covenant. Otherwise, husbands and wives would have to remarry after an adulterous relationship. If polygamy was not an issue when Paul wrote, why would it be necessary for Paul to insert a numerical description, “of one (*mia*) wife”, for a virtue better described with “faithful”—unless, of course, he was making a statement against polygamy? Nowhere else in the NT does Paul use this numerical description. As stated earlier, by forbidding polygamy to elders and deacons, Paul implicitly establishes monogamy as the standard of marriage toward which all unmarried Christians should strive; yet, he stops short of condemning polygamy as sin. If monogamy is the requirement for church leaders, whose practice should be a model for imitation, then everyone who was single or monogamous must aspire to this standard. This leaves the church with existing polygamous marriages contracted by those who were polygamists before conversion, a situation I will address below.

On the other hand, if we concede that Paul is emphasizing fidelity in marriage, what do we have left in the NT as an explicit statement against polygamy and which establishes polygamy as a substandard form of marriage soon to be discontinued in the life of the church? One may argue that 1 Corinthians 7: 2 clearly advocates monogamy as the only form of marriage.

But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. (1 Corinthians 7:2 NASB)

In this text, “wife” is singular. However, does the use of the singular explicitly condemn sexual relations with more than one wife? In this particular text, Paul is not emphasizing monogamy, but faithfulness (“because of immoralities”), an interpretation confirmed later in the statement, “...it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*” (v. 9, NASB). The word “one” does not occur in 1 Corinthians 7: 2 as it does in 1 Timothy 3: 2 and Titus 1: 6. Likewise, Jesus’ quotation of Genesis 2: 24 does not explicitly condemn polygamy in the OT, although it certainly implies the monogamous ideal from the beginning of creation.

Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful *for a man* to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" ⁴ And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, ⁵ and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'?" ⁶ "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." ⁷ They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND *her* AWAY?" ⁸ He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. ⁹ "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." (Matthew 19:3-9 NASB)

A casual reading of this text will indicate that Jesus’ response to the Pharisees has no direct reference to polygamy, but rather condemns illegitimate divorce and remarriage—the very question posed at the beginning by the Pharisees.

Christians who practiced polygamy were not allowed to hold church office since God's ideal "in the beginning" was for one man to "cleave to" one woman and become "one flesh" with her. It is never said in Genesis that man must be joined to two women, or three, four, five, or twenty, but that he must be joined to his wife. The first recorded polygamist was wicked Lamech (Gen.4:19), implying that polygamy was the product of the fall. Like divorce, polygamy entered the human race because of sin; also like divorce, polygamy was permitted by God but never commanded.³²³

B. Polygamy and Church Membership

It is significant that Paul restricted church office to monogamists (husbands with only one wife). If church membership was restricted to monogamists, it would have been unnecessary for Paul to even mention this restriction for elders.³²⁴ If a polygamist could not even belong to the general membership of the church and take communion, then it would go without saying that he could not hold church office. Therefore, the very mention of this restriction for elders implies that existing polygamists were allowed as communing members of churches.³²⁵ They simply could not hold church office because their marriages did not represent the ideal of monogamy given to us in Genesis 2:24.³²⁶ Church officers must have exemplary lives mirroring the ideal of marriage lest this ideal fail to take root in the church. It is especially important in African contexts where polygamy is still practiced on a limited basis. This did not mean, however, that polygamous marriages are necessarily second-rate marriages. It is theoretically possible that a polygamous husband could be a better husband to three wives than a monogamous husband to one wife. Monogamy, although the ideal, does not guarantee good marriages. Monogamous husbands and polygamous husbands alike have to work hard at making a good marriage, and the polygamous husband will have to work twice as hard—or three times as hard if he has three wives.

The Biblical record leaves us in no doubt about the danger of partiality in polygamous marriages. The sensitive reader almost weeps with poor Leah when she says, "Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me" (Gen 29:32b NASB; see also 1 Sam. 1: 1-7; Deut. 21: 15-17). Walter Trobisch relates the story of an African man, Francois, whose widowed mother was passed along to his polygamous uncle.

Otto [the monogamous husband] died and Martha became a widow. That is a terrible fate in Africa. When a wife dies, it isn't so bad for a husband. He has lost his property. A property can be replaced if necessary. But a widow is like a property that has lost its owner. She is helpless.

Martha was now a widow with her child Jacques.

Normally, Moise, as the older brother [Francois' oldest uncle] and next in line to Otto, would have had to marry Martha [according to the levirate marriage custom also mentioned in the Bible—Genesis 38 and Ruth 3-4]. But that wasn't possible. He was a Christian, and a catechist. He could have only one wife. That is the law of the church. It is hard. The law of our customs and traditions would be more merciful. Because Moise was a catechist, he didn't dare to be merciful.

³²³ Adams, pp. 68-69. The same could be said of slavery, but treatment of this subject, although relevant, would take us too far afield in our discussion.

³²⁴ This, of course, assumes the correctness of my argument so far.

³²⁵ This does not imply that existing monogamists in the church could contract a second marriage without church censure. The line was drawn with existing polygamous marriages contracted before conversion.

³²⁶ Adams, p. 81. It should be noted that almost all translations use the word, "they" rather than "two" in Gen. 2: 24. However, Matthew's version of Jesus' teaching in 19: 5 uses "two". Thus, we are left with Jesus' indirect, implicit support of monogamy as the appropriate new covenant expression of marriage.

Moise did take the ten-year-old Jacques into his home and let him go to school. That was all that he could do.

So Martha was pushed on to Tonye [Francois' oldest, polygamous uncle]. She became his third wife. He hated her from the beginning, and with her he hated Christianity. He neglected her, mistreated her and tormented her. She received neither clothes nor shoes; no hut in which to cook, not even a piece of soap. Nevertheless he had one child by her.

I was that child.

Tonye already had a son by his second wife, who was his favorite wife. He never recognized me as his son.

Only my mother cared for me. I was a dirty, neglected child. I had a skin disease because she had no soap to keep me clean. She could barely clothe me, and I was ashamed to go to school. I ran away and wandered round until I came to the mission station. From there on you know my story.

...As far as my father goes, I do not exist, especially now that I have become a Christian.³²⁷

Francois' letter to Trobisch reveals not only the heartbreak of unloved wives and children of polygamous marriages but also the sinful complications resulting in cultures in which wives are considered property and in which widowed women have few options for survival. Furthermore, while we could not agree with Francois that Moise, his monogamous uncle, should have become "merciful" by becoming polygamous, we can at least sympathize with an abused child who saw Christianity as a hindrance to becoming the son of a Christian uncle, Moise, rather than an abusive, non-Christian polygamist.

C. Does the Bible Condemn Polygamy as Sin?

The conclusions presented above run counter to the understanding of many African church leaders who are trying desperately to rid their churches of polygamist practices. Their zeal is commendable, as well as their realization that monogamy is God's ideal for the marriage relationship and His original intention in Genesis. However, religious zeal may often go beyond the limits of God's revealed will, and it will produce more problems than it solves. We can only condemn polygamy as sin if God condemns it; and if He does, He will give us sufficient evidence in the Bible to prove this. So we must ask the question: Where is polygamy explicitly condemned in the Bible as sin? Since polygamy is practiced among some believers of the OT, where do we find even one of these believers being admonished for having more than one wife? As we pursue the solution to this problem, it should be kept in mind that it is one thing to say that polygamy is the result of sin entering the world and that it presents many problems, but another thing to say that it is explicitly condemned as sin in the Bible. The same can be said of divorce which so many church leaders are ready to condemn as sin. Divorce is certainly caused by sin, but every divorce is not sinful; otherwise, God would not have regulated it by His law. God never regulates sin; He condemns it. However, He regulates polygamy and divorce so that they do not become the occasion for more sin—like adultery or wife abuse.

1. Historical evidence from OT narratives

We could easily enter into a long argument about the sin of Abraham in taking Hagar as his wife. To be sure, many complications arose from this union which plagued his family throughout Biblical history and even to this very day. Yet, the emphasis of the Biblical writer in this incident was not polygamy. Polygamy had no recorded restriction during that time. Besides, at this point in the narrative

³²⁷ Walter Trobisch, *I Loved a Girl*, p. 58 (The book was first published in French in 1962 while Trobisch was a missionary in Cameroun, West Africa).

God had only told Abraham that an heir would come from his own body (Gen. 15: 4). Before Abraham fathered a child by Hagar, God had not revealed that the son would also come from Sarah (cf. Gen. 16: 1-3; 17: 16), and it was common practice for a wife to supply a maid to her husband in the event of infertility.

Possibly the best historical example for us to consider is the life of King David and his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11—12).³²⁸ By the time David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he already had at least nine wives plus an unknown number of concubines. His first was Michal (1Samuel 18); his second, Ahinoam (1Sam. 25:42); Abigail, third (1Sam. 25:42); Macaah, fourth (2 Sam.3:3); Haggith, fifth (2 Sam.3:4); Abital, sixth (2 Sam.3:4); Eglah, seventh (2 Sam.3:5). Michal is not mentioned in 2 Samuel 3 because she bore him no children. The wives mentioned here bore sons to David in Hebron. In 2 Samuel 5:13 we find that David “took more concubines and wives [plural] from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron....” Again, this was before he took Bathsheba as his wife. Besides Solomon, who was born by Bathsheba, David fathered ten sons in Jerusalem (2 Sam.5:14-16). Even assuming that all of them were born to David by only two of the wives from Jerusalem (highly unlikely) then David had a minimum of nine wives (not counting concubines) before he took Bathsheba as his tenth wife.

However, what happens when Nathan the prophet confronts David in 2 Samuel 12? Does Nathan condemn David for all of his wives—for polygamy? No. Instead, he condemns David for the sin of adultery, for taking the wife of Uriah the Hittite and for having Uriah (as well as 100 men with him) struck down by the sons of Ammon (v.9). It is true that the Lord’s directives for the kings of Israel prohibited the multiplication of wives (Dt.17:17), but this restriction does not come up in the narrative with Nathan, nor had it been addressed previously. The king must also not multiply horses or gold and silver for himself. All of these excesses were the habit of oriental kings whose sins should not be imitated by the kings of Israel. The multiplication of wives, particularly, was generally for the purpose of making foreign alliances with many nations, something which Solomon did to his own ruin (1Kings 11:1-13). But for the most part, David’s wives were not foreign (only Maacah is mentioned who was the daughter of the king of Geshur, a people who formed an alliance with the Israelites as far back as the conquest of Canaan; Josh. 13:13). Nor can we say that David was an obstinate, hard-hearted sinner—at least before he took Bathsheba—who degenerated into polygamy through the hardness of

³²⁸ David got himself in trouble for taking the wife of another man, not for having a sexual relationship with a woman other than his wives. In cultures where polygamy was accepted, adultery would occur only if a *married* woman was involved, not an *unmarried* woman. It is worthy of note that in the Mosaic legislation of Deut. 22: 22-25, the woman must be either married or engaged for the death penalty to be enforced. Nothing is said about the man’s marital status in this legislation, implying that his marital status was irrelevant to the legislation. Likewise, in Deut. 22: 28-29, nothing is said about the man’s marital status; but the girl is explicitly identified as a virgin. Although the rape of a virgin has occurred, the death penalty is not given to the man. This seems quite strange, but the case law is merciful to the virgin. In ancient culture, and in some modern cultures, a raped girl would either remain unmarried or, at best, her bride price would be seriously reduced. Executing the man would not be to her advantage. The rapist (or the seducer, Ex. 22: 16-17, whichever the case may be) cannot divorce this woman, thus giving her financial security. If her father refuses to give her to this seducer/rapist, he must still supply the dowry price, a hefty sum of 50 shekels. This will insure that her future dowry will not be insufficient because of she was violated. (For further reading, see Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible—The Social and Literary Context*, pp. 27, 59, including footnotes; also R.J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 177, 396-397. Both authors agree that the raped or seduced virgin had more to gain from the dowry than from the man’s execution. However, this would not be true in modern cultures where women had more options. The case laws of the OT, though given by God for Israel’s social well-being, must be contextualized and modified for application in modern cultures.)

his heart.³²⁹ While he was taking all these wives, he was also writing many of the Psalms, and more Psalms would follow after his repentance. By contrast, his predecessor, Saul, was a hard-hearted sinner and would-be assassin who only had one wife and one concubine (1Sam.14:50; 2 Sam.3:7). None of this is meant to condone David's polygamy, particularly its excessive limits. The multiplication of wives in imitation of typical eastern monarchs was clearly forbidden in Deuteronomy 17.

Yet, we must wonder why David was never reprimanded for his polygamy or why no polygamist in the entire OT is reprimanded for a "sin" which some scholars claim to be a clear violation of the seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery." In consideration of the seventh commandment, if polygamy is not a violation of this commandment, then which commandment does it violate? And if it violates this commandment, then why is it not punished—even to the extent of death?

Another historical example is that of King Joash for whom Jehoiada, the priest, acquired two wives.

Joash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest. ³ Jehoiada took two wives for him, and he became the father of sons and daughters. (2 Chronicles 24:2-3 NASB)

Jehoash [*another name for Joash*] did right in the sight of the LORD all his days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him. (2 Kings 12:2 NASB; explanation in brackets mine)

Now when Jehoiada reached a ripe old age he died; he was one hundred and thirty years old at his death.¹⁶ They buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done well in Israel and to God and His house. (2 Chronicles 24:15-16 NASB)

This is an interesting case for two reasons. First, Jehoiada's good influence upon King Joash is given credit for Joash' positive reign (2 Chron. 24: 1-14; 2 Kings 12: 1-16). After Jehoiada died, Joash succumbed to the influence of Judah's officials and began worshipping idols (2 Chron. 24: 17-27). Secondly, the text in 2 Chronicles 24: 2-3 juxtaposes³³⁰ a positive statement about Joash under Jehoiada's influence along with another positive statement concerning the sons and daughters born to Joash by his two wives. The chronicler often mentions progeny as the blessing of God.³³¹

However, it has been argued that no amount of historical evidence can be adequate to prove the legitimacy of polygamy in the OT.

Just because covenant people developed sinful habits does not mean they are normative and need to be imitated.

The Old Testament practice of polygamy is not normative. The fact that some of the Old Testament heroes of faith were polygamous does not justify the practice....

Christian ethics are not based on Old Testament practices but the teachings from God's Law and Prophets, as fulfilled in Jesus Christ and interpreted by the apostles.³³²

³²⁹ This is a short response to John Murray, who argues that the Mosaic legislation permitted polygamy—as it permitted divorce—because of the hardness of men's hearts (*Principles of Conduct*, pp. 17-19). However, callous treatment of wives lies in a different category from polygamy which does not necessarily have to be abusive.

³³⁰ To place side by side

³³¹ Richard L. Pratt, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, p. 518.

³³² Neal Hegeman, "Multiplying the Human Race", *Christ Sanctifies Culture*, pp. 3,7

Agreed, yet polygamy is regulated by “normative” OT case laws. God does not regulate what He absolutely forbids. By the same token, slavery was not the ideal economic status in Israel, but it was regulated by many OT case laws. Divorce is regulated, proving that divorce is not necessarily a sinful act by itself, although it follows sinful activity.

John Murray has also argues the position that OT narratives do not establish biblical ethics.

The study of biblical ethics, therefore, is not that of surveying empirically the sum-total of the behavior of those who are portrayed for us in the Bible as believers. What such a study would furnish is simply a description of the behavior of believers. And since there is so much sin and inconsistency in the behavior of believers at their best, whether they are viewed individually or in their corporate relations, we could not by any such empirical method delineate the biblical ethic. The biblical ethic is that manner of life which is consonant with, and demanded by, the biblical revelation. Our attention must be focused upon divine demand, not upon human achievement, upon the revelation of God’s will for man, not upon human behavior.³³³

I would generally agree with Murray and Hegeman on this point. We must be careful about drawing ethical principles from stories which do not expressly mention God’s approval or disapproval of the actions. However, we must also not forget that the OT narrators were not emotionally detached historians, but prophets with an ethical agenda. They always wrote with the moral and covenantal restoration of Israel in mind. In the narrative of David and Nathan, the prophet, there is express disapproval of adultery without any mention of polygamy. Nor do we find any express disapproval of David’s polygamy elsewhere. Murray faces honestly the question of ethical diversity in the Old and New Testaments honestly and forthrightly.

Are we not compelled to recognize that the New Testament not only marks a distinct development in the progress of revelation, but also, in some of the basic particulars of human behavior, institutes a change from one set of canons to another, and that therefore there is not only development and addition, but reversal and abrogation? Is the case such that it was perfectly consonant with the law established and revealed by God in the Old Testament for a man to have more than one wife at the same time, and for a man to put away his wife for relatively light cause, whereas in the New Testament it is unequivocally wrong and severely censurable for a man to have more than one wife and to put away one’s wife except for the cause of adultery?...We are required to face squarely the question of the relation of the Old Testament to the New in respect of the criteria of upright and holy living.³³⁴

For Murray, progressive revelation informing man of the nature of God and salvation cannot apply to the revealed canons (standards) for moral behavior in the Old and New Testaments. In other words, although there is progressive **revelation**, there is no progressive **ethic** which takes into consideration the relative immaturity of God’s people during the administration of the Old Covenant as compared to the mature sonship of the New Covenant (cf. Gal. 4). What is sinful in the NT is also sinful in the OT. Yet, Murray acknowledges the different historical circumstances of God’s people in the Old Covenant which affect the realization of the biblical ethic and the consequences of its violation.

The progressiveness of divine revelation bears closely upon God’s judgment upon sin because it bears upon the gravity of an offence.’ To whomsoever much is given, of the same shall much be required’ (Luke 12: 48). **The greater the degree of revelation, the greater the responsibility and the more severe the judgment of God upon the transgression.** In the earlier periods of revelation transgression of law would

³³³ Murray, *Principles of Conduct*, pp. 13-14

³³⁴ Murray, p. 15

not be as aggravated as that same transgression becomes in the fuller and brighter light of the revelation of its wrong and of the sanction with which it is attended. Hence polygamy, though it was a violation of the original institution and therefore inherently wrong under the Old Testament, would not have involved **the same degree of guilt or of punitive sanction** which it undoubtedly entails in the **clear light** of the New Testament....Progressive revelation, progressive realization of redemption, and progressive disclosure of the grace of the Spirit have been the method by which God's redemptive purpose in the world has been fulfilled. It has pleased God to work through process because he works in history. History has significance in the unfolding of his saving designs. The tutelary nonage [period of immaturity] of the Old Testament period is a fact in this historical process. In its historical context Israel's **hardness of heart** was also a fact which God himself took into account in the exercise of his disciplinary judgment. Sufferance was accorded in these cases of polygamy and divorce. But it was the sufferance of forbearance, not the sufferance of approval or sanction.

If this thesis is correct, then the underlying premiss [alternate spelling] is that there is basic agreement between the Old Testament and the New on the norms or standards of behavior in question in connection with these two practices. That is to say, the basic institutions related to matrimony in both Testaments are monogamy and the permanence of the marital bond.³³⁵

Murray's comments evoke several questions. First, where in the OT is there any less severe judgment upon the "transgression" of polygamy? Historical evidence is mixed since there is not only the curse of jealousy among wives but the blessing of progeny from polygamous relationships. Second, where is there any "degree of guilt or punitive sanction" upon polygamy? Third, where do we see a noticeable manifestation of "hardness of heart" demarcating³³⁶ the moral differences between polygamists and monogamists? Lamech was godless, but Abraham was godly. David's hard-heartedness was manifested through his adultery and murder, not his polygamy. While practicing polygamy, he was writing psalms. Fourth, where is the "guilt" and "punitive sanction" which polygamy "undoubtedly entails in the clear light of the New Testament"? In Paul's catalog of sins in 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10 and Galatians 5: 19-21, polygamy is never mentioned. The only thing we really have is the inference from Jesus' quotation of Genesis 2: 24 in Matthew 19:5 and the more explicit omission of polygamists from church office—an omission which infers, but does not explicitly state, the goal of monogamy for all believers, not simply officers.

2. Evidence from the Mosaic Law

As we saw earlier, a man who took a second wife must continue giving his first wife food, clothing, and sexual rights, even though, in this particular incident, the first wife was initially sold to him as a slave (Ex.21:7-11).³³⁷ In other words, the law commanded that he have sex with **both** his wives. Sexual intercourse with both wives—or, with **every** wife—was not optional; it was commanded. The

³³⁵ Murray, pp. 18-19, emphasis and words in brackets mine. This is not a textbook on biblical ethics, but one can see that the relationship between OT and NT ethics is a complicated issue. Murray's *Principles of Conduct* was first published in 1957, more than fifty years ago; but the continuity and discontinuity issues raised by Murray are more alive today than they were then. Old Testament scholars and systematic theologians with different views are honestly attempting to determine the appropriate applicability of OT law for Christians and societies in light of the fulfillment of the Law and the prophets (the entire OT) through the atoning work of Christ. See Rousas J. Rushdoony (*The Institutes of Biblical Law*), Greg Bahnsen (*Theonomy in Christian Ethics*), Vern Poythress (*The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*), and more recently Christopher Wright (*Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*). For a concise introduction to this subject, see McNeill, *Continuity and Discontinuity in the Divine Covenants*, incomplete.

³³⁶ Marking in distinction from something else

³³⁷ In Appendix D, it is argued by the anonymous author that Ex. 21 does not merely require *conjugal rights*, but *conjugal love*. This position is not merely speculative since a physically or emotionally abused woman would hardly care about her conjugal rights if her husband continually mistreated her—except, of course, to bear children. The purpose of the legislation was to protect women from abusive, negligent husbands.

polygamous man was obligated to love his first wife. This biblical mandate is contrary to the advice of some well-meaning western missionaries who propose the “solution” that the Christian polygamist retain all of his wives—giving them financial security and social stability—but cohabiting with only one of them.

Situations that I have seen handled in a Biblical way have to take several issues into consideration. First of all if a man leaves his wife for another that woman becomes a prostitute or could be seen as one. She loses her identity. So what we encourage the man to do when he comes to Christ, and especially if he wants to become a pastor or leader, is that he should chose to keep his wives but not have relationships with them, only his first wife. That gives stability to the women with children and identity without causing a second sin....This has worked well in all the tribes where this has been applied.

When the polygamous wife is saved she has two choices. But if she leaves, she can be considered a prostitute. However, in certain tribes where the gospel has had inroads she simply leaves the husband and raises her children on her own. I haven't seen an ex-polygamous wife, leave her husband and remarry. That doesn't mean it couldn't happen, but of the cases I know about, they don't return to marriage with another man. The tribal culture always wants to marry a younger woman not an ex-wife with children. That would mean he would have to take responsibility for her children. That's what every man is trying to avoid, being responsible. I found that with the Mesquito [sic] Indians in Honduras as well. Their churches are full of single mothers doing what they can to raise their children.³³⁸

This solution, while sensitive to the financial needs of women, makes virtual widows of all but one wife and virtual orphans of their children. For this reason, its value for social stability is questionable. While attempting to avoid “a second sin”, the solution deprives the wives of conjugal love—and who are we to assume that they do not love their polygamous husbands or that their husbands do not love them?

Moreover, even if the rejected wives are agreeable to this proposal, it is still unbiblical. We are not at liberty to alter the case laws of the OT but obligated to make every attempt to contextualize them for modern cultures. In this particular case, we have a situation essentially no different from ancient Jewish culture.

There is one other interesting consequence of letting the polygamist keep all his wives but cohabiting with only one. According to Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 7, these wives have been **deserted by their husband**.³³⁹ The slave wife of Exodus 21: 7-11 may demand food, clothing, and conjugal rights (which is conjugal love, not raw sex); and if these are not provided by her polygamous husband, she may divorce him without being obligated to refund the price of her purchase. Paul alludes to the material maintenance of Exodus 21: 7-11 in 1 Corinthians 7: 3-4. He does not mention divorce in the immediate context, but it is clear that these basic requirements are not optional for the husband or wife; they are covenant obligations. The polygamous husband who will not provide conjugal love for the rejected wives has violated the marriage covenant and is now subject to the discipline of the church. Lacking repentance, he could be declared an unbeliever, giving his wives grounds for divorce and remarriage.

There is other OT legislation relevant to the question at hand.

“If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and *both* the loved and the unloved have borne him sons, if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved,¹⁶ then it shall be in the day he wills what he has to his sons, he cannot make the son of the loved the firstborn before the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn.

³³⁸ Larry Buckman, email, wlbuckman@gmail.com, July 8, 2012, quoted by Hegeman in “Multiplying the Human Race”

³³⁹ See previous discussion and Appendix D.

¹⁷ "But he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; to him belongs the right of the firstborn." (Deuteronomy 21:15-17 NASB)

Similar to Exodus 21: 7-11, this legislation illustrates the regulation of a polygamous relationship for the protection of the unloved wife and her offspring—without doubt, a sinful, predictable consequence of polygamy. The firstborn son of the unloved wife must not be passed over in favor of the firstborn son of the loved wife. The law would be unnecessary if polygamy were not permitted under Mosaic Law, in which case the polygamist would be put to death for adultery or at the very least commanded to release his unloved wife. Polygamy is thus not considered a violation of the seventh commandment. Polygamy was not adultery in the OT, nor is it adultery in the NT era; otherwise, it would not have been necessary for Paul to disqualify men for elder who had more than one wife. They would have been disqualified for general membership.

The same can be said of the legislation forbidding a man to marry his sister-in-law. The legislation assumes that he can legitimately marry a second wife within the limits of the Law; otherwise the restriction concerning the sister is unnecessary.

You shall not marry a woman in addition to her sister as a rival while she is alive, to uncover her nakedness. (Leviticus 18:18 NASB)

It is beyond question that God regulated polygamy in the OT with various laws, and whatever He is pleased to regulate is not condemned outright as sin—**even if not the ideal**. The same was true for divorce—also not the ideal, but nevertheless regulated. However, God did not regulate adultery which was punishable by death, as was homosexuality. In other words, God did not say, "Adultery is sin, but if you insist on committing adultery, this is how it must be done." He simply condemned it, and punished it. It can be said that "the hardness of men's hearts" which led to easy divorce in Deuteronomy 24: 1-4 was sin. However, the divorce which resulted from this hardness of heart was not sin because God legislated such divorce temporarily to lighten the suffering of unwanted wives. By receiving a certificate of divorce, such women would be allowed to marry someone who loved them. The very purpose of the certificate was the provision of liberty to the divorced woman to remarry as well as discouraging frivolous divorce. If the sinful husband wanted another wife, he needed to understand that he could not return to the former wife.³⁴⁰

For the reasons above, I do not believe that polygamy was a sin in the OT, nor is it a sin in the NT except under certain circumstances—very important circumstances. Single or monogamous **Christian** men should not contract polygamous marriages because the biblical standards of monogamy are more clearly implied in 1 Timothy 3: 2. Every unmarried man in the church should aspire to the marital ideal required of elders and deacons. Every other statement in the NT, even Jesus' quotation of Genesis 2: 24, is implicit by comparison. To whom much is given, much is expected (Lk. 12: 48). Christian men would be sinning against the progressive revelation of the NT. But for men who are converted to the Christian faith **after** becoming polygamists, I believe it is wrong to teach them that they are living in a **continual state of sin** unless they divorce all but one of these women or cohabit with only one. Paul never gives this impression. What will that kind of accusation do to their consciences and their

³⁴⁰ Instone-Brewer argues that the requirement of a certificate of divorce was unique in the life of Israel. Assyrian texts indicate that a husband could reclaim his divorced wife within five years, along with her children by another man (*Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible—The Social and Literary Context*, pp. 31-32).

marriages? Are polygamous husbands sinning every time they are making love to a different wife, even when OT law tells them that they **must** do so? I think John Frame is inconsistent in this regard.

So polygamy is a sin. It violates both the letter and the spirit of the seventh commandment, which is to protect the exclusive love of marriage....

But though Scripture upholds monogamy as God's pattern, it does not reject polygamists from the kingdom of grace. The reason is obvious. Polygamy is not like other sins. A thief can stop being a thief immediately upon his conversion, and if he does not stop after a reasonable period of pastoral attention, he can and should be removed from the church. **But a polygamist cannot simply stop being a polygamist.** He has incurred obligations to his wives, and he cannot simply cast them off. A sinful divorce does not remedy the sin of polygamy.

So I believe that churches **should admit to membership and to the sacraments people who, though polygamous, otherwise give a credible profession of faith in Christ.** But, following the New Testament example, they should not consider such people for church office.³⁴¹

So then, according to Frame, polygamy is a sin which “violates both the letter and the spirit of the seventh commandment”, but divorcing the additional wives would also be a sin because of covenant “obligations”. It appears then, that the Christian polygamist is caught in what Frame earlier calls a **“tragic moral choice”**—disobeying one command of God (monogamy) in order to obey another (keeping his moral obligations to both wives).³⁴² Frame disagrees with the theory of tragic moral choice, for he says,

In Scripture, we have a moral duty to do what is right, and never to do what is wrong....On this view, the law of God itself is contradictory, for it requires contradictory behavior.³⁴³

But to avoid the sin of unlawfully divorcing all but one wife, the polygamist must “sin” by remaining a polygamist—at least according to Frame's argument. Following this conclusion, Exodus 21 requires a polygamist to violate “both the letter and the spirit of the seventh commandment” by having sex with both wives. By logical deduction, such a polygamist will not inherit “the kingdom of grace” since Paul says,

Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, **nor adulterers**, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NASB)

(It is quite interesting that Paul does not mention polygamy in any of the three catalogs of sin found in 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10; Galatians 5: 19-21; or Ephesians 5: 3-6.)

In my estimation, John Frame is one of the most important and logically consistent theologians living today, and his writing has helped me more than any other single theologian I can think of—living or dead. Yet, I cannot follow his reasoning on this particular matter. I do heartily agree with his conclusion that unlawful divorce or dismissal of all wives but one is not the biblical solution. Polygamy is not remedied by an unbiblical divorce. One sin cannot remedy another sin, the very solution Hegeman proposes.

³⁴¹ Frame, *DCL*, p. 755, emphasis mine

³⁴² Frame, *DCL*, pp. 230-234

³⁴³ Frame, *DCL*, pp. 231-232

Reconciliation for polygamists. Reconciliation is not an easy matter and different churches have struggled with how to deal with the polygymist [sic] husband and wife, especially in situations where one or the other are not believers.

The converted polygamist husband is responsible to reconcile with the Christian concept of monogamy. When the extra wives are **let go** or arrangements are made for them, he is still responsible for their welfare, as much as the husband is responsible in times of divorce or for the children out of wedlock. Holding husbands responsible for their sexual exploits and its consequences is important.³⁴⁴

Hegeman's concern for the financial welfare of dismissed wives and their children is noted; but their emotional and social welfare as virtual widows and orphans is not addressed. Love includes more than financial maintenance, although financial maintenance is a very important manifestation of love.

While polygamy is not—and never was—the ideal, I believe that God can sanctify the polygamous marriage of a believer. The problems associated with this arrangement will not magically disappear, but grace can overcome them. The situation of the polygamist may be similar to that of a Christian couple who contracted marriage after unlawful divorces. In other words, they committed adultery by marrying each other because their obligations to their former spouses had not been biblically dissolved. They were having sex with one another when they should have been reconciling with their former spouses. But having entered the marriage, having recognized their mistake, and having repented, they are not still living in sin. Consider also the same scenario involving a couple who divorced their spouses ten or twenty years ago. They later realized that their divorce from their former spouses was unbiblical. But even this situation is somewhat different from polygamy which is never explicitly condemned as sin anywhere in the Bible.

I do not wish to imply that I condone the practice of polygamy—not in the least. I have already indicated that polygamy was never the ideal in the OT or the NT, and that leaders of the church are forbidden more than one wife. But further, if we traced the history of polygamous saints in the OT, we would find that multiple wives were the source of much strife and jealousy. Abraham's relationship with Sarah was jeopardized because of Hagar. Moreover, just look at the life of poor Jacob whose jealous wives, Rachel and Leah, were always competing for his attention.³⁴⁵ (In Jacob's defense, he never asked for Leah). As mentioned earlier, a man was forbidden from taking his sister-in-law as a wife as long as her sister (his first wife) was still alive. The reason is fairly obvious—to prevent their rivalry which would inevitably destroy their sisterly love for one another (Lev.18:18). Solomon's wives turned his heart away from God, and on and on the story goes. Monogamy was always the ideal arrangement, although God used polygamy providentially to populate the earth and establish the godly seed of the Jewish race through which the Messiah would come.³⁴⁶ Only monogamous marriages can ever hope to aspire to the companionship and exclusiveness which God designed for marriage. I would agree with Frame on this point and many others.

Lastly, one cannot overlook the well-known fact that polygamy is virtually non-existent and is commonly illegal in any society which has benefited from the Christian faith for hundreds of years—e.g. Europe, the United States, etc. It is decreasing considerably in Africa which has enjoyed the gospel only 130 years or so. At the same time, should we not bemoan the serial adultery (through serial divorce

³⁴⁴ Hegeman, "Multiplying the Human Race", emphasis mine

³⁴⁵ Gen.30. To his credit, he didn't initially bargain for more than one, yet he later accepted his wives' maids as concubines.

³⁴⁶ The procreation war between Leah and Rachael demonstrates that God was fulfilling the promise of a seed to Abraham even through the means of a dysfunctional family (see Dale Ralph Davis, *The Word Became Flesh*, p. 41).

and remarriage) taking place in western societies where divorce is obtained for reasons of convenience rather than breach of marital obligations?

D. Unlawful divorce and abandonment

Why, then, in light of the manifold disadvantages of polygamy, have I tried to prove that the practice is never condemned outright as sin either in the OT or the NT?³⁴⁷ Again, we must never go beyond what the Bible says, lest we open the door to worse errors and their consequences. As the statement goes, “He who forbids what God allows will soon allow what God forbids.”³⁴⁸ This statement applies to the problem of polygamy in which the solutions are often worse than the practice. Many questions need to be answered. If a man with two wives is converted to the Christian faith, and he wishes to become a communing member of the church, what do we do with him? 1 Timothy 3 implies that while he cannot be an elder or deacon, he can be accepted as a member (see Frame’s quote above). Consistency would imply that if his wives were converted, they, too, would be accepted as communing members. It would not be consistent to admit the husband but not his wives, or the wives but not the husband. Allowing practicing polygamists to be baptized and partake of communion in no sense condones polygamy as the Christian norm for marriage, especially if the congregation is educated about the difficulties of the situation. But neither is it a good example to make virtual widows and orphans of wives and children in the name of marital purity. Polygamy is a circumstantial difficulty which must be faced and dealt with according to the biblical case laws and NT scriptures provided. Slavery would be yet another circumstantial difficulty, but space will not allow for us to treat this subject.

It is the opinion of some church leaders that polygamous men should divorce all but one of their wives before being admitted as a communing member, but there are no grounds for divorce consistent with the texts of Matthew 19, Matthew 5, 1 Corinthians 7, etc. It has been suggested that such men are attempting to fulfill Jesus’ mandate for monogamy in the NT, but good intentions alone do not ensure proper behavior. I might ask where this explicit mandate can be found; and, if present, why Paul failed to republish this mandate. In his catalog of sins (1 Cor. 6: 9-10; Gal. 5: 19-21; Eph. 5: 3-6), Paul does not mention polygamy, but adultery; and we have already seen how God distinguished between adultery and polygamy with King David.³⁴⁹

Something as potentially dangerous to the church would surely have been explicitly condemned; and since polygamy was not explicitly condemned, it is not correct policy to violate known Biblical standards for divorce in order to comply with a standard for church membership which has no explicit Biblical foundation. Again we may ask, what will happen to the divorced wife (or wives)? Will she be able to support herself? What will happen to the dismissed wife’s children? Will she and her children be left to a life of poverty, and will the children grow up without the benefit of a father (or a mother if the husband keeps the children)? I have already covered one solution in which the husband cohabits with only one wife but maintains the others materially. Another alternative offered is that the polygamous husband could settle all his wives, except the first one, in independent households while seeking new husbands for each one.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ Paul had multiple opportunities to condemn the practice of polygamy, but didn’t do so. The same can be said for slavery. The two practices were tolerated until such a time that they could be gradually eliminated without social upheaval. For a discussion of slavery, see McNeill, *The Pastoral Epistles of Paul—1 Timothy*

³⁴⁸ I do not know where this statement originated.

³⁴⁹ See the discussion about David’s adultery.

³⁵⁰ Email correspondence with Julian Zugg concerning a Christian in Tanzania (July 7, 2014).

In the African context, this appears rather naïve. Men seeking first wives do not consider women of previous marriages, even if they are young and attractive. But what about divorced wives (for this is essentially what they are) who are older and unattractive. Can we reasonably expect fifty-year old women being remarried in developing-world cultures like Africa? But again, what are the grounds for divorce which releases these women to remarry?

Any real solution must take multiple scenarios into account. To be convinced of the resettlement solution, I would have to see documented cases of successful transitions; but even then, the solution still does not answer the question of unbiblical divorce. If polygamy was such a great sin in the OT, where are the cases in which men were required to dismiss any of their multiple wives? For that matter, where do we find this solution in the NT corpus?³⁵¹

It is not inconceivable that the husband genuinely loves all of his wives, and that they love him. Will one of them now be torn away from a man she genuinely loves, and he from her, because church leaders have not adequately researched the biblical guidelines? These are only a few of the difficult questions which must be considered, and they are far from theoretical for the African church. The number of Muslims is growing in Sub-Saharan Africa, and if many of these are later won to Christ—something we can hope for—the church will have many more polygamous marriages to deal with. Moreover, today in the US we are being faced with the legality of homosexual unions. Since we have denied the transcendental ethic of the Bible, on what moral grounds does our government deny the legality of polygamy? The western church might as well face the inevitable struggle against polygamy, but the prospects for winning this battle are not promising.

E. Rulings of the Anglican Church in Africa

The Anglican Church in Africa has wrestled with the problem of polygamy for over a hundred years. Yet, even today there is no continent-wide, Anglican consensus on what to do with polygamists. Lacking a consensus, specific Anglican communions have adopted their own statements. In Tanzania, the Provincial Standing Committee of the Anglican Church adopted the following ruling:

An unbeliever who has more than one wife, if converted to Christianity and requiring baptism, may be baptised with his believing wives and children with the permission of the Bishop. (He is not to take any more wives as long as any of his wives are still living). And they can be received for Communion.³⁵²

Regretfully, the Tanzanian resolution does not discuss the problem of members who contract polygamous marriages **after** becoming Christians.³⁵³ In November 1982, the Church of the Province of Kenya (Anglican) passed the following resolutions:³⁵⁴

3. Church and Polygamy

³⁵¹ If I ever write a future edition of Anthropology, and I probably won't, I will include a discussion of Ezra 9-10, which I believe is a situation unique to ethnic Israel. It is possible that Christians in Corinth who had married unbelievers may have taken the text in Ezra as a justification for divorcing their unbelieving spouses (1 Cor. 7). Paul forbids them to do so, saying that their unbelieving spouses are "sanctified" through the believing spouse—that is, set apart for the special privileges of being married to a Christian. Apparently, this progressive revelation did not apply in Ezra's day.

³⁵² David Gitari, *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies*, 1984, 1: 3. , p. 4; <http://trn.sagepub.com/>

³⁵³ Gitari, p. 4

³⁵⁴ Gitari, pp.8-9

‘The Church of the Province of Kenya is convinced that monogamy is God's plan for marriage and that is the ideal relationship for the expression of love between a husband and wife. Nevertheless, this teaching is not easily understood in many Kenyan cultures in which polygamy is widely practised and is socially acceptable. While it teaches monogamy, the Church must be sensitive pastorally to the widespread existence of polygamy.’

3.1. People who were Polygamists before becoming Christians

‘That a person who becomes a polygamist before becoming a Christian shall on accepting the Gospel be baptised with his believing wives and children on condition that he shall not take any other wives. The Bishop may confirm such a polygamist, his wives and children after further instructions in the Christian faith. That person who has contracted a polygamous marriage before or after baptism should not in any way be required or compelled to put away any of his wives as a condition of being admitted or re-admitted to the Holy Communion.’

3.2. People who become Polygamists while already Christians

‘A Christian who becomes a polygamist deprives himself of the privileges of participation in Holy Communion, standing as sponsor in baptism and in holding office as a member of a Church committee or parish council. Also that in keeping with the teaching of St. Paul, no polygamist should hold office as a Bishop, priest, or deacon or layreader.’

‘The Bishop shall have the discretion to re-admit a polygamist to the full privileges of lay Church membership after due consideration of the following circumstances with regard to each individual case.

- a. The lapse of a notable time.
- b. The polygamist's repentance for his faults in breaking the vows which he made at his marriage.
- c. The acceptability of such re-admission in the eyes of the local Church.
- d. Special factors operating in an individual case which made it hard for the polygamist to resist taking a second wife.’

I will not take time to comment on these resolutions, but at least they show that some effort has been made in dealing with the problem. However, there is still no continental consensus in Africa even in the Anglican Church, and western missionaries generally have to develop their own views. To my knowledge, there is no committee report from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (my denomination) concerning polygamy. This is understandable, considering that polygamy is a non-issue in the US. But this could change with the increasing pressure from social and political liberals calling for legal sanctions for same-sex marriages. If homosexuals are allowed to marry, then why not polygamists? I am not in favor of granting legal status to either one in the US, but it is illogical to forbid polygamy while allowing homosexuality.

F. The Social Context of Polygamy

The importance of protecting widows in a society where marriageable men might be in short supply due to war is crucial to understanding the permission for polygamy in ancient Israel and the continuing tolerance toward polygamy in Africa. Gitari, quoting Mbiti, argues that the drive to have children contributes to the social tolerance of polygamy.

“To lack someone close who keeps the departed in their personal immortality is the worst misfortune and punishment that any person could suffer. To die without getting married and without children is to be

completely cut off from the human society, to become disconnected, to become an outcast and to lose all links with mankind.”³⁵⁵

The assumption that polygamy always constitutes male licentiousness and self-gratification is questionable. Three letters from polygamous Christian men seeking help from David Gitari reveal otherwise.³⁵⁶

(1) “I was a polygamist before I became a Christian. I was baptized thirty years ago, but I am told I cannot be confirmed until I put away my second wife. I find it difficult to send her away as she has nowhere to go. She is the mother of my children. I hope the Church will accept me before I die.”

(2) “I became a Christian when I was young. I was married in Church forty years ago. After living with my wife for ten years, we did not have any children. We both agreed that I should take a second wife so that we could have children. I was then excommunicated. Ten years ago, I accepted the Lord as my Saviour together with my wives. They take Holy Communion but I was told to wait. I now feel physically weak as I am getting old and I might die any time. Please Bishop, I do not want to die outside the Church. Please have mercy on me.”

(3) “I was married in Church thirty years ago. My first wife and I had several children. Then she became sick and we could not cohabit. I did not want to divorce her as I love her very much. Neither did I want to become promiscuous or to go to prostitutes. She agreed that I could take a second wife which I did about fifteen years ago. I was excommunicated but I have never missed a Church service. The Church turns to me whenever they want a fundraising meeting (harambee) to be organized. Indeed I support the Church and the parish financially more than anybody else. When I go to Church I see some people whom I know are adulterous go to the communion table simply because they are monogamous and I find it difficult to understand. Is adultery a lesser evil than polygamy?”

Certainly we may challenge some of the false dilemmas presented in the second and third letters.³⁵⁷ Obviously, the husband in the second letter could have chosen to adopt children. Although legal adoption is not common for African men, it is a viable option, nevertheless.³⁵⁸ In the third letter, the husband with the sick wife should accept the fact that God has providentially hindered him from sexual pleasure and further offspring by allowing his wife’s sickness. It is a false dilemma for him to think that a man cannot live without sex and must either resort to prostitutes or marry a second wife. Matthew 19: 12 would apply in this case. The husband has been made a eunuch (metaphorically speaking) providentially by his wife’s sickness. Other African males in his situation choose to live a lie by practicing adultery rather than polygamy, but this is not an option for a Christian husband.

However, the letters demonstrate that licentiousness and selfishness are not necessarily the primary motives provoking their decisions. It is the last letter which begs the question: Why is polygamy singled out as the most egregious³⁵⁹ “sin” in the African church? While the church should certainly not allow adultery, many churches—African and western—choose to look the other way when adultery or serial monogamy is practiced. Serial monogamy is the succession of marriage, divorce, remarriage, and divorce, etc. by those seeking unbiblical divorce and equally unbiblical remarriage. The church never

³⁵⁵ Gitari, p. 8 (quoted from John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p. 134)

³⁵⁶ Gitari, p. 9. The Rt. Rev. Dr. David Gitari: Bishop of Mount Kenya East, Kenya, and Chairman of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship

³⁵⁷ A dilemma is a choice between equally disagreeable alternatives. A false dilemma is an argument maintaining that only these few alternatives are available. A false dilemma is akin to “tragic moral choice” which we discussed earlier.

³⁵⁸ Gitari, p. 8

³⁵⁹ outstanding for negative characteristics

gets around to determining whether their members have outstanding obligations to former spouses before allowing them to be remarried. Yet, where is the outcry against serial monogamy—or for that matter, adultery?

Summary and Conclusion

I have argued that polygamous husbands and their wives may become communing members of the church. Paul's explicit exclusion of polygamists from the offices of elder and deacon—determined from the language, historical context, and the corpus of Paul's other letters—assumes the presence of polygamous church members, otherwise the exclusion from office is unnecessary. In other words, everyone would know already that if a polygamist could not even be a member of the church, he certainly could not be an officer. Excluding polygamists from church membership once again places them in a special category of sinner, even when we have no explicit condemnation of polygamy either in the Old or New Testaments. The Pentateuch regulates polygamy, thus protecting wives from unloving polygamous husbands (Ex. 21: 10-11); but God never regulates what He condemns outright as sin. Murder and rape are not regulated in the OT; they are punished by death. Lying is not regulated by legislation, but simply condemned. Since church members should look to the monogamous marriages of their elders and deacons as the idea, they should not be allowed to enter into polygamous marriages. The real question is what to do with polygamists who are being saved, and if we are not careful, thousands of converted polygamists and their wives will be turned away from the church into the arms of Islam.

Lesson Eight Questions

1. Take a position on whether Paul is speaking of fidelity in marriage or monogamy in 1 Timothy 3: 2 and 12 and defend it biblically.
2. Explain my position on polygamy and church membership. If you disagree with my position, give me a biblical argument against it.
3. Is polygamy a sin? Argue my position first, and if you disagree with me, argue against my position. You will not be graded off if you disagree with me.
4. If we refuse polygamists from being communing church members, what problems do we produce?
5. Discuss David's confrontation with Nathan and its implications for the subject of polygamy.
6. Summarize John Murray's position concerning the use of OT narratives to determine the rule of conduct.
7. Some missionaries suggest that polygamists should continue to support all their wives with food and shelter while cohabiting with only one. What do you think about this solution? Support your view from Scripture.
8. What is John Frame's position on polygamy? Do you think it is consistent or inconsistent? Explain.
9. Interact with some of the rulings of the Anglican Church in Kenya.
10. Explain how the church in Africa has shown a certain degree of hypocrisy concerning the issue of polygamy.

Appendices

Appendix A—The Importance of Mothers in the Dominion Mandate

From 1 Timothy 2: 15, we learn that God will preserve and protect women in their God-given role if they willingly submit to male authority in the home and the church (v. 15). Specifically, they “will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.” The NKJ renders the verse, “Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.” The word “saved” is *sōzō*, the same word used in Romans 10: 13, “for ‘whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” This is admittedly a difficult statement. What could Paul mean that women are “saved” through the bearing of children? First, he does not mean that bearing children is a meritorious act by which women save themselves eternally. The preposition used in the verse is *dia* (“through”) not *en* (“by means of”). Some commentators believe that this is a reference to the birth of Christ. That is, in the same way mankind has been saved through *the* childbirth of Jesus, women will continue to be saved by this same birth. Although the definite article, “the”, is present in the Greek text, there is little to commend this interpretation as it stands, but a modified view of it may have merit (see below).

Another interpretation is that women will be preserved through the life-threatening experience of child-labor. This interpretation is likewise unsatisfactory. Hurley’s interpretation may be the most sensible.

...Paul is saying that women in general (and most women in this day) will be kept safe [“saved”] from seizing men’s roles by participating in marital life (symbolized by childbirth), which should be accompanied by other hall-marks of Christian character (faith, love and holiness with propriety) which will produce the adornment of good deeds for which he is called in 2: 10.³⁶⁰

Thus, in Hurley’s view the word “saved” is not used in the soteriological sense found in Romans 10: 13 and other places in scripture, but in a more general way.

³⁶⁰ James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, p. 223, words in brackets mine

Another possibility (a modified form of Hendriksen's view³⁶¹) is that women who embrace their God-given roles in the church and home will participate in the glorious covenant promise to Adam and Eve, namely, that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. When man fell into sin, the curse upon the woman was that there would be pain in childbirth. Nevertheless, this curse was a mitigated curse since the woman would still be able to have children—a blessing. One of those children descended from her would be the Christ who would crush Satan's head. Adam, hearing God's curse upon Eve—but understanding the promise that his seed would not be extinguished—calls her Eve, the mother of all the living (Gen. 3: 20). Thus, God would save mankind ultimately through the childbirth of Jesus. Paul picks up on this theme from Genesis and extends the application. Women still have a very important, irreplaceable function to perform in the covenant community—one that men cannot perform. As it turns out, that function is not that of leading men. Instead, women will influence and bless the Christian church through their God-given role of bearing and rearing covenant children in a godly manner so that they will one day submit to the Christian faith and the lordship of Christ. In so doing, the covenant community will grow both numerically and qualitatively not merely through the bearing of children but the nurturing of children in the Christian faith.

Both bearing children and nurturing them are implied in Paul's statement. As these children grow into Christian adults who are equipped to do battle against Satan, the serpent, he will continue to be crushed beneath the feet of Christ's church—His body—against which the gates of hell cannot prevail (cf. Matt. 16: 18 with Rom. 16: 20, in which the warfare against Satan is described as an ongoing, unfinished task for the church made certain by the once-for-all, definitive victory of Christ). Women will, therefore, be “saved” through the bearing of children who will in turn strengthen the future church to remain steadfast against the attacks of the evil one. Of course the only way they can serve in this function is to “continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint” (v. 15b). Without faith and love, they will be incapable of passing on their faith to their children. The term, “saved” is therefore used in a somewhat broader eschatological sense to include the final, glorious destiny of the church delivered totally and completely from Satan's onslaughts—the eschatological salvation. Since taking this position, I have found some support for it from Waltke.

After the Fall, God elevates godly mothers to a high status. In sovereign grace he changes the fallen woman's affection to enmity against Satan....By his promise to give this new woman a triumphant, though suffering, offspring, he implicitly assigns her the role of bearing the seed that would destroy the serpent, the adversary of God and humanity. The quintessential expression of that seed is Christ, who defeated Satan on the cross, but the mandate finds its fulfillment in every covenant child (Rom. 16: 20). In response to the promise to give the woman seed to defeat Satan, believing Adam names his wife Eve, “because she would become the mother of all the living” (Gen. 3: 20). Thus, every Christian mother, by being in Christ, bears his holy children (1 Cor. 7: 14; cf. Isa. 53: 10). If a woman has suffered any loss of leadership through her creation...(1 Tim. 2: 12-13; cf. Gen. 2: 18-25), and...through her historical guilt by Satan's deception, in contrast to Adam, in connection with the Fall...Paul says she...will be saved from that loss through bearing children in Christ if they ...continue in the faith, love, and holiness with propriety....In short, the apostle is saying, “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”³⁶²

Thus, the spiritual influence of women in Christ's church is not by leading men, but to a large extent (though not by any means exclusively) through the spiritual influence upon their children—the traditional role which Paul is advocating (cf. Tit. 2: 5). These children become godly men and women partly through a nurturing mother. This by no means excludes the nurture of fathers (Eph. 6: 4), but it

³⁶¹ William Hendriksen, *1 Timothy*, pp.111-112

³⁶² Waltke, p. 238

emphasizes the crucial influence mothers have on children especially in those early formative years at home in which their faith and values are being developed at home. It is also no secret that mothers will have more time with their small children while the fathers are in the market place working to support them.

Countless examples could be given, including Timothy's own mother and grandmother who nurtured him in the Jewish faith long before his conversion to Christianity under Paul's preaching (2 Tim. 1: 5; 3: 14-15). Yet, this influence goes beyond early childhood into adulthood since it is often the mother whose continued love, care, and prayer (attended by the Spirit's power) moves her children's hearts more than the father. One need only think of women like Augustine's mother who prayed on her knees night and day for her son to abandon a promiscuous sexual life and embrace the Christian faith. Her prayers were answered, and Augustine of Hippo became the greatest Christian theologian of the early church whose influence spread widely and deeply into the Protestant Reformation. Suzanna Wesley was another godly woman who gave birth to 19 children, including John and Charles Wesley who were instrumental in the first Great Awakening which brought revival to the church. The famous saying, "She who rocks the cradle rocks the whole world" is true because great men are influenced by great women, including mothers. Women diminish their importance when they downplay the traditional role of being mothers. They may participate in the kingdom in many other ways (as chapter 1 Timothy 5 indicates), but being a godly mother is by no means the least important function and appears to be the most important for younger women.

The interpretation above will stick in the throat of many evangelical Christians who have restricted Paul's words to the cultural situation of the 1st century. Yet, since Paul's reasoning has nothing at all to do with that culture, but creation and the fall, the burden of proof lies upon those who wish to dismiss these instructions as irrelevant for the modern church. The question is not, and never has been, the relative intellectual and spiritual equality of men and women. In terms of spiritual gifts and conduct, many women are wiser and more spiritually mature than their male counterparts. Many are also more intelligent—something to which I can personally testify, having a wife whose mind is sharper and quicker than mine. The issue is: What has God said? In His infinite wisdom, He decided to create man first and gave him, not the woman, functional authority in the church and the home.

Regretfully, African women are buying the bill of goods now sold to them by western feminism. To be truly useful and productive, we are told, a woman should put her children in nurseries and boarding schools for others to care for and train while she fulfills her ambitions in a "meaningful" job or career. Such thinking denies the obvious—that God gives children to mothers and fathers for nurturing, not to day-care centers, kindergartens, or elementary and secondary schools. Motherhood, like fatherhood, is a high calling which women should count as a great privilege, not as a burden to bear until she can do something "really" significant with her life. Although it is a good thing that women are availing themselves of many educational opportunities and other privileges, they have also become convinced that a woman must enter the market place to accomplish something "important". Professional men and women in Africa often live apart in different cities pursuing separate careers—and, consequently, separate lives—in order to become proficient consumers of more and more available goods and services to the middle class. Meanwhile, their children are sent off to boarding schools without the daily influence of mother and father. Even if children live at home, they live with one parent or the other, not both, thus being robbed of the "normal" family life God intended. Moreover, the consequences for life in the church are dismal. If the pattern of family life is flawed, so will the pattern of life in the church.

Only as we appreciate the importance of procreation and childrearing can we understand the meaning of Paul's words for women in Titus 2:4-5 to "love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home...." While this should not be interpreted as an absolute prohibition of women working outside the home (cf. Prov. 31), Paul's words highlight the dignity of "woman's work"—a term often used derogatively (in a negative way)—in caring for children who will one day grow up and take their places in God's world.

Again, qualification is necessary. Men also play a crucial role in the rearing of children, and the neglect of fatherly duties has had enormous consequences upon young people throughout the world. Just as woman's role is not exclusively child-birth and nurturing but also includes other dominion responsibilities outside the home, so man's role in dominion is not exclusively outside the home but includes the duties of fatherhood and training his children. Deuteronomy 6: 1-9 is addressed generally to fathers and mothers ("O Israel"), but Ephesians 6: 4 is addressed specifically to fathers, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"—and this primarily through godly example. Women cannot multiply without men, nor have they been very successful in rearing godly children without men. Although many good children have been reared in one-parent homes, the negative statistics of single-parent homes (or homes with negligent fathers) are evident for all to see. Crime, domestic violence, drug abuse, teen-age pregnancy outside of marriage, joblessness, etc. are all more likely to occur in single-parent homes.

Appendix B—The Legitimacy of Singleness

The disciples were shocked at the restrictions Jesus placed upon divorce in Matthew 19: 3-9. Jesus' new regulations were radical to the Jewish mind, even going beyond the strict interpretations of the Shammai school.³⁶³ If marriage was this permanent, the disciples thought, then it would be better never to marry (Matt. 19: 10). Jesus' response in vv. 11-12 has received various interpretations. One interpretation has Jesus immediately moving to the discussion of celibacy, a subject which His disciples had just introduced in v. 10.³⁶⁴ Not all men can accept "this statement", namely, the statement of the disciples, "...it is better not to marry." But God has granted the gift of celibacy ("to whom it has been given") to some men who make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. (The other eunuchs mentioned were those born impotent or those castrated by men to care for a king's harem—Esther 2: 3; Acts 8: 27.) Jesus made Himself a eunuch in the figurative sense for the kingdom of God, never marrying but devoting Himself exclusively to His ministry. There would be other such "eunuchs" to follow, like the Apostle Paul, who would forego marriage to devote himself unreservedly to the gospel ministry (1 Cor. 7: 32-35). How could the Apostle Paul have devoted sufficient time to the responsibilities of marriage in light of his rigorous life and suffering as an apostle and a traveling missionary? His wife would have led a very lonely life—a virtual widow.

Another interpretation takes Jesus' response in v. 11 to apply to His teaching about divorce in the previous passage. Not all men would be able to accept His new, more restricted teaching about divorce. Certainly the hard-hearted men who were looking for any reason to dismiss their wives would not "accept" His new teaching, but only those whose hearts are changed and made willing to hear the truth.³⁶⁵

³⁶³ See McNeill, "Synoptic Gospels"

³⁶⁴ D.A. Carson, *Matthew*, p. 419

³⁶⁵ James B. Hurley, p. 105; cf. Matt. 13: 9, 11, 43; cited by Hurley

There is an element of truth in both interpretations.³⁶⁶ God's grace is required to accept Jesus' teaching about marriage as a creational ordinance and to fulfill the obligations of marriage, namely, to love another person as he loves himself (Eph. 5: 28). Otherwise, he will always be preoccupied with what he can get out of the marriage relationship and not what he can give to it. In the latter case, marriage is too threatening for this self-centered person who may not be able to lawfully escape the marriage.³⁶⁷ But it is also the gift of God for a person to voluntarily deny himself the joys of marriage in order to devote himself more unreservedly to the Lord's work. Not many people—men or women—have this gift of self-denial; but it is a valid decision in light of the overwhelming claims of the kingdom of God. The real question is: How can my life most effectively be used for God? Some people—most people—cannot function well without the companionship of marriage, a reality based on God's general design for the human race (Gen. 2: 18). Others to whom the gift of singleness has been given find that they are not burdened with the distractions of marriage and can devote far more of their time to the Lord's work (1 Cor. 7: 32-34), even if their occupation is not the ministry of the word or evangelism. A person can give himself wholeheartedly to the work of the kingdom of God by being a politician or businessman, to use only two examples. Both singleness and married life are acceptable options if the motivation for either is proper—service rather than selfishness.

Appendix C—Growing up in rural Mississippi

In my life-time of 62 years, the standard of living for most Americans has risen considerably from the economic level my parents enjoyed during their working career. My father worked for Southern Natural Gas Company, a distributor of natural gas for heating and cooking. My mother worked as a librarian. Neither my father nor mother earned a university degree, and I am the only one of three children who did. Most high school graduates at that time (1950-1970) went immediately into the work force rather than going to the university. A very large percentage of females in my generation, and earlier, got married and had children rather than attending college. We lived in Mississippi which can be miserably hot in the summertime—much hotter and more humid than Uganda—and I remember the elation I felt when my family bought a whole-house attic fan which pulled in air from the outside. Now we could stay cool, at least at night, even while breathing the dust from the air drawn from the outside! When I was 12, we bought a window air-conditioner, and then I really thought we had arrived at a life of luxury! Several years later we bought a color TV, which proved to be a big event in the McNeill household, but by that time my two older sisters had already married, and I was the only child left at home to enjoy it. We always had an automobile, but I was in my late teens before we bought one with an air-conditioner. Nowadays in the US, automobiles don't even come without air-conditioners, at least I haven't seen one in many years. We couldn't afford vacations (besides, my father preferred hunting and fishing when he was off work), and rarely did we go anywhere more than 100 miles from home.

The life described above would be considered by many in America today as the life of a family living in the lower economic class. Yet, at the time, it was a typical (normal) middle class life-style. I think my father never made more than about \$15,000 US per year which today would barely be over the poverty line for a single individual. Yet, our family of five had plenty to eat, lived in a well-built house, and bought a new car every few years. (New cars averaged about \$6000 back in the 60's.) To be sure, many other American families had much more, but they were considered "well-to-do" or even wealthy.

³⁶⁶ Hendriksen, pp. 717-718

³⁶⁷ This would also apply to the self-centered wife, especially in the modern context, but divorce in the ancient world was primarily a male prerogative (privilege).

This was the way I lived. My grandparents had a much harder life on a rural farm—where most of America lived at the time. My grandfather on my mother's side was a carpenter living in the Great Depression of the late 1920's and 30's. One day when he was out in the fields gathering crops, a builder came by and offered him a job at top carpenters' wages, \$5 US per day, which he quickly accepted. He and my grandmother did not have an automobile, which at that time was a luxury reserved only for the wealthy, and they were content to ride a mule-pulled wagon until later on in life. My grandmother never learned to drive a car. Most of the furniture in their house was hand-made by my grandfather; and for that matter, most of the furniture my father and mother owned when I was growing up was also made by my grandfather. Come to think of it, some of the furniture Fran and I owned was handed down from my mother—also made by my grandfather.

Many of my grandparents' early married years were spent without indoor running water, indoor plumbing, or electricity. I still remember regular visits to my other grandfather on my father's side. It was fun drinking out of a container of cool, freshly drawn well-water and sitting in front of the huge open fireplace which was the only source of heat in the house. It never crossed my mind that he was poor, because he wasn't. In fact, he was considered by many as fairly well off; and he often helped his neighbors financially, including African-American neighbors. (The history of black-white relationships in the southern US is not all negative. There are many stories of warm relationships between blacks and whites which the liberal historical revisionists, those who like to rewrite history to fit their liberal agenda, would not wish for people to ever know about.) This was the typical life of a middle-class grandfather who had always lived in rural America and grown crops for a living. I never got to meet my father's mother since she died in 1930 when he was 11 years old from pneumonia, a disease she could have easily survived with a simple dose of penicillin. But, the drug was not available at that time.

Appendix D—Verbal and Emotional Abuse as Biblical Grounds for Divorce

The following paper was written in response to the ruling of the session of a Presbyterian church. The writer challenges the decision of the session to refuse Sally Moore (the name has been changed to protect privacy) the right to biblical divorce and remarriage and argues that persistent verbal and emotional abuse (for four years of marriage in this case) is grounds for biblical divorce, and therefore, biblical remarriage. No physical abuse was involved in the case other than one or two instances of marital rape. While arguing first for physical abuse as grounds for biblical divorce, the writer later argues that persistent verbal and emotional abuse is also grounds for divorce. Further, he challenges some of the reasoning of the committee on divorce commissioned by the 20th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America, 1992 ("Position Papers on Divorce").

The names of the husband, wife, author, church, and counselor have been changed to protect their privacy.

To the Elders of Fifth Street Presbyterian Church: (the name of the church has been changed)

Verbal and Emotional Abuse as Biblical Grounds for Divorce

Don McNeill

Introductory Remarks

I am writing this paper for the Session of Fifth Street Presbyterian Church (the name of the church has been changed) in response to your decision to refuse Sally Moore (her name has been changed) the right to remarry according to 1 Corinthians 7: 11. In summary, I would maintain that 1 Corinthians 7: 11 refers to the groundless divorces common in Greco-Roman culture which were mirror-images of the “any cause” divorces condemned by Christ in Matthew 19. Yet, Sally Moore’s divorce does not fit the category of a groundless divorce. The cause of her divorce is John Moore’s (his name has been changed) desertion demonstrated in four years of verbal and emotional abuse and occasional marital rape. Although claiming to be a believer, he has not shown sufficient evidence of belief by tangible repentance of specific abusive behaviors or by admitting the problem or by cooperating with counseling in the first four years of marriage. I believe that John should have been declared an unbeliever and excommunicated early in the marriage conflict, and the session’s failure to do so will delay genuine repentance and may ultimately preclude it.

My following response is not given in anger or with disrespect for the session. I believe the session consists—without exception—of sincere, genuine believers and godly men who have made this ruling with the best of intentions, with pure motives, and with the conviction that they have considered all the relevant biblical data. I know this to be true of some of you from personal experience and friendship. I also believe that you sincerely love both John and Sally and have their best interests at heart, and I appreciate the professional counseling you as a session have provided for them. Yet, I humbly disagree with your ruling and some of your methods in dealing with this difficult marriage, and I present my reasons for doing so below. I cherish no unrealistic or arrogant hopes of changing your minds—even though I desire to do so—but as a believer and member of this congregation I felt it was my duty to explain my opposition to a ruling which will have grave consequences for Sally and other abused women who are now under your care or shall be in the future. I would appreciate a careful and prayerful reading of this paper.

I. The Protection against Abuse Provided by OT Case Law

The “Recommendations to the 20th General Assembly of the PCA” state “That under extreme circumstances, a Session following the BCO (Book of Church Order) may properly judge...that such desertion (separation) has occurred, even though the deserting spouse is still physically present in the home (‘desertion’ being viewed in the sense understood in the Committee report)”³⁶⁸ which states the following position:

Several considerations incline us to agree with those of our authorities who have maintained that desertion can occur as well by the imposition of intolerable conditions as by departure itself. We are struck by the fact that, taking Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7 together, it appears that the Lord concedes the necessity of the abolition of marriage in certain cases precisely so as to protect a blameless spouse from intolerable conditions. Further, taking into account both the general principles of Biblical ethics and the Scripture’s characteristic manner of ethical instruction, viz. the statement of commandments in general form to which is added case law sufficient to indicate the manner of application, it seems to us that those Reformed authorities are correct who have argued that sins which are tantamount in extremity and consequence to actual desertion should be understood to produce similar eventualities (cf. Larger Catechism, Q. 99, A. 6).

What is more, a husband’s violence, particularly to the degree that it endangers a wife’s safety, if unremedied, seems to us, by any application of Biblical norms, to be as much a ruination of the marriage in fact as adultery or actual departure. This is so precisely because his violence separates them, either by her forced withdrawal from the home or by the profound cleavage between them which the violence produces,

³⁶⁸ Committee Report, PCA Papers on Divorce, Chapter 2, Section II.E.4

as surely as would his own departure, and is thus an expression of his unwillingness to “consent” to live with her in marriage (1 Cor. 7: 12-13; Eph. 5: 28-29).

The reference to case law is especially interesting in light of the protection these laws afforded the more helpless members of OT Jewish society—namely, slaves and women. If a slave owner destroyed the eye of a slave, or even knocked out his tooth, he had to let the slave go free (Ex. 21: 26-27; it is not specified in the text whether the slave is a Hebrew or a foreigner). In other words, the slave owner stood to lose a lot of money for his uncontrolled anger. Thus, Biblical law afforded a large measure of protection from abusive slave owners. It was in their best interests to curb their anger and keep their slaves rather than lose them over fits of uncontrollable anger. Arguing from the lesser to the greater, if Biblical law provided protection for slaves, it surely provided protection for free Israelites. This is precisely what we find in Exodus 21: 18-19 in the case of two men who are fighting. If the injured man did not die, the one who injured him was forced to pay for his loss of time from work and his medical expenses. This law would surely have the effect of cooling people off before they got carried away in a brawl. The bottom line: Abuse is expensive to the abuser.

Abuse was also expensive to a husband. In Exodus 21: 10-11, if an Israelite male took another wife, he was not allowed to reduce the material provisions of food and clothing and the emotional provisions of conjugal rights given to his slave wife. By good and necessary inference, “conjugal rights” included much more than sexual relations but also credible love and affection. God knows how He made women and needed no one to explain to Him that women are often more receptive to warm conversation and an affectionate hug than they are to sexual intercourse. It would be ludicrous to assume that a man was fulfilling the emotional needs of his wife merely by having intercourse, especially if he was otherwise physically and emotionally abusive in which case the abused wife would hardly desire his sexual advances. Further, the requirement of sexual intercourse per se would be impractical in cases of illness or physical frailty.³⁶⁹ If these physical and emotional provisions were not met, the slave-wife could leave the marriage relationship—as well as the master-slave relationship—without repaying the cost of her purchase price which could have been a considerable sum of money.

For those of us living in 21st century America, this law appears to have little relevance. However, the underlying principle of the law (what the Westminster Confession would call the “general equity”³⁷⁰) was the protection of women, even female slaves. If the law provided a large measure of protection from negligent husbands for female slaves, then arguing from the lesser to the greater, the law also provided protection for free wives.³⁷¹ To appreciate how radical this was, one would have to consider the terrible conditions of most slaves in the ancient East who had no rights at all. God’s people, who were once slaves themselves, had to be fundamentally different by offering protection for slaves—protection unknown in the rest of the ancient world.

II. The Relationship of OT Case Law to 1 Corinthians 7

Extending the argument from the lesser to the greater, if the Old Covenant provided protection for slave wives, should not the church living under the New Covenant provide at least an equal measure of protection for Christian women suffering at the hands of negligent and abusive husbands? Stuart has

³⁶⁹ David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church—Biblical Solutions for Pastoral Realities*, p. 102; otherwise cited as *DRC*.

³⁷⁰ Chapter IX, Section 4

³⁷¹ (David Instone-Brewer, *DRC*, p. 36. See also *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible—The Social and Literary Context* by the same author. Otherwise cited as *DRB*, pp. 100-101)

argued that the case law of Exodus 21: 10-11 is implicit in Paul's command to married couples in 1 Corinthians 7.

Failure to provide equal treatment in *every way* for a second wife was sufficient grounds for the wife to be freed from both her marriage...and her service [as a slave]....The apostle Paul reiterated the principle behind the emphasis on marital rights (v. 10) in 1 Cor. 7: 3-5 in his reminder to married couples of the need for regular sexual activity in marriage.³⁷²

Modern scholarship has also made note of the stated obligations of the Exodus 21 case law insinuated in 1 Corinthians 7. While Paul deals with the emotional obligations first in vv. 1-4, he deals with the material obligations in vv. 32-35 in the same chapter.³⁷³ Paul would have been well aware of the rabbinical discussions in his time concerning the material and emotional obligations of marriage,³⁷⁴ and while omitting the legalistic stipulations of rabbinical law requiring certain amounts of food and clothing and a stated number of times for sex, he nevertheless acknowledges the necessity of all obligations being met. It is inconceivable that Christian wives or husbands could refuse these obligations without any consequences. A wife or husband could not refuse sexual intimacy with the other spouse indefinitely without the offended party having recourse to divorce, and a husband could not neglect the material needs of his wife.³⁷⁵ That Paul does not specifically authorize divorce in such situations is not proof that this neglect was not grounds for divorce. Rather, he wanted to encourage the fulfillment of obligations which would limit divorce among believers.³⁷⁶

According to rabbinical teaching, the material and emotional obligations of marriage were required, and if the wife or husband refused to fulfill such obligations, either one could divorce on the basis of Exodus 21. By way of contrast, only Jewish men could divorce under the provisions of Deuteronomy 24, but the Jewish judges could put pressure on the man to initiate divorce by increasing the bride price (the *ketubah* or marriage inheritance) weekly until his money became the sole possession of the offended wife.³⁷⁷

Paul's command to believing wives (and by extension, husbands) in 1 Corinthians 7: 10-11 is a reference to the groundless divorces typical in Greco-Roman culture. All that was necessary for divorce in Greco-Roman culture was for the man or woman to leave or to send the other away depending on who owned the house.³⁷⁸ Paul forbade this kind of groundless divorce among Christians, telling wives not to leave their husbands. It is possible that Paul is addressing a particular wife on this occasion which may account for the fact that he does not mention husbands. In any case, Roman-style divorce by separation was off-limits for all Christians, men or women. However, knowing that many would divorce by this Roman method anyway, Paul instructs the Corinthian husbands and wives who sinfully divorce to remain unmarried or be reconciled to their former spouses. According to Jesus' own teaching anyone divorcing his or her spouse for insufficient reason and marrying another has committed adultery.³⁷⁹ Again, Paul's aim in the passage was not to present the terms of divorce, but the obligations of marriage which, if kept, would hopefully minimize divorce within the Christian

³⁷² Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, pp. 482-483; emphasis his, words in brackets mine

³⁷³ Instone-Brewer, *DRB*, pp. 193-194; including footnote which cites several sources in which 1 Cor. 7 is connected with Ex. 21.).

³⁷⁴ Instone-Brewer, *DRB*, chapter 5 for a full discussion)

³⁷⁵ Marital rape, however, was forbidden—Instone-Brewer, *DRB*, p. 107

³⁷⁶ Instone-Brewer, *DRC*, pp. 99-100

³⁷⁷ Instone-Brewer, *DRB*, p. 196

³⁷⁸ *DRB*, p. 195

³⁷⁹ "not I, but the Lord", 1Cor. 7: 10; cf. Matt. 19: 3-12; 5: 31-32

church. Thus, his emphasis is on a healthy marriage, not the terms of divorce. But it does not follow that he did not recognize material and emotional neglect as grounds for divorce.³⁸⁰ Paul did not explicitly list adultery as grounds for divorce, either, but he would have recognized it as grounds from Jesus' teaching.³⁸¹

There were also members in the church who were persuaded that sexual relations were unspiritual, and that it would be “good for a man not to touch a woman.”³⁸² This ascetic form of Gnosticism could have been the driving force leading some Christians to walk away from their spouses, assuming they could lead a better Christian life without a sexual relationship.³⁸³ In any case, Paul condemned groundless divorce out of hand as unbiblical, instructing Christians who had divorced in this manner to remain unmarried in hopes that they would return to their former Christian spouse.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul outlines the requirement for conjugal love (not merely sex) for two believers. They are required to count their own bodies as under the authority of the other (v. 4; emotional provisions) and how they may please one another in this life (vv. 32-35; material provisions). The reference to “pleasing” the other must also include the material provisions of marriage, for whoever does not provide for his own house is worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim. 5: 8). If such material and emotional requirements are not provided, the offended partner of a Christian marriage has grounds for divorce which are implied but not specifically spelled out in the 1 Corinthians 7 passage.

As applied to Sally and John, 1 Corinthians 7: 10-11 is not applicable since Sally is not seeking a groundless divorce, but one which is based on verbal and emotional abuse. The relevant text is not 1 Corinthians 7: 10, but 1 Corinthians 7: 15—desertion as grounds for divorce. It may be argued that abuse is equivalent to desertion for a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, but not between two believers. I would counter-argue that the Scriptures offer at least as much protection for a spouse married to a professing believer as a spouse married to an unbeliever. A person's profession of faith cannot shield him or her from the provisions of 1 Corinthians 7: 15 since faith must not merely be professed but also demonstrated—the underlying premise of church discipline. This is also the position of the PCA committee toward a professing believer who gives evidence of marital abuse.

When the abuser does not cease these words and actions, the Session should investigate whether these words and actions are in effect breaking the one-flesh relationship by “hating” the abused spouse and not “nourishing and cherishing” this one (Eph. 5: 28-29). In counseling the abuser, the reality of his Christian faith should be ascertained. When it is determined by the Session that the abuser does not appear to them to be Christian and the abuse continues, the Pauline teaching about an unbeliever leaving a believer should be applied.³⁸⁴

John Frame concurs by saying,

Now it might appear as though verse 15 [1 Cor. 7: 15] is irrelevant to marriages between believers. Certainly the verse doesn't mention such marriages. Paul has dealt with them in verses 10-11. But situations are often fluid. Through the discipline of the church, a person recognized as a believer at one time can, through

³⁸⁰ *DRB*, p. 196

³⁸¹ *DRC*, pp. 100-101

³⁸² 1 Cor. 7: 1b. This statement is not Paul's but his quotation of the mistaken opinion of many in the Corinthian church. Paul refutes this opinion in vv. 1-4; cf. *DRB*, pp. 192-193, and Gordon Fee, *1 Corinthians*).

³⁸³ One form of early Gnosticism was the belief that one could live a better spiritual life by abstaining from sex, even sex with one's spouse. Paul condemns this notion (cf. 1 Tim. 4: 1-3).

³⁸⁴ PCA Papers on Divorce, p. 291, emphasis mine

excommunication, be later regarded as an unbeliever. So a marriage between two believers can, by the action of the church, become a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever. Then verse 15 can enter the picture.³⁸⁵

As a matter of historical fact, John's (the name has been changed) verbal and emotional abuse did, indeed, continue throughout the first two years of their marriage while under the supervision of this session but without any formal censure or discipline from the session.

III. Jesus' Implicit Approval of Abuse as Grounds for Divorce

The whole debate about the biblical grounds for divorce has been clouded by the baseless assumption that Jesus allowed only adultery as grounds for divorce. It would appear that this unproven assumption would be discounted when the Holy Spirit would later inspire the Apostle Paul to formulate another ground for divorce, the desertion of the marriage on the part of an unbeliever. Obviously, Paul is not imposing another ground for divorce that Christ would not have foreseen or approved, and it follows that if Christ would approve desertion as a ground of divorce—by means of Paul's teaching—He would also approve the OT case law definition of desertion in Exodus 21 and expounded in 1 Corinthians 7.³⁸⁶ That the PCA committee acknowledges desertion only as an "accomplished fact" and not as another ground for divorce is beside the point. The point is: Paul allowed such separation to take place and gave the deserted partner the right to remarry. ("Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.") "Under bondage" refers to the obligations of the marriage covenant, and the right to remarry implies the legitimacy of the divorce.

If desertion is on the part of a believer, the deserted partner has recourse to the church to discipline the deserting believer who should be excommunicated from the church for refusal to rectify the abuses defining his or her desertion. The Bible never leaves believers in "limbo" with no solutions and never holds them hostage to offending partners, be they professing unbelievers or professing believers. If the deserting spouse (a professing believer) refuses to return to the marriage or refuses to correct abuses which constitute desertion, the deserted spouse would surely never be expected to continue in the married state to someone who demonstrates no intentions of fulfilling their marriage obligations. (Imagine a session allowing a wife to refuse her husband all sexual intercourse or a husband refusing his wife food and clothing indefinitely.) To allow the deserting partner to hold his or her spouse hostage to neglect without formal discipline would be irresponsible.

Getting back to the original question: Did Jesus allow only one ground of divorce among believers? Stated another way, did He *allow* only one ground, or did He only *mention* one reason while allowing others which He did not expressly state? Quite obviously, if we carry through to the logical conclusions of excommunication, there are at least two He would have recognized for believers—sexual immorality or desertion by an unrepentant believer who would be declared by the church a "Gentile and a tax collector" (Matt. 18: 17). Christ condemned other grounds for divorce allowed by some rabbinical interpretations of Deuteronomy 24; that is, He condemned the "any cause for divorce" legislation of the Hillel school (Matt. 19), a lax standard accepted by most of the Jews of His day.

³⁸⁵ John Frame, *DCL*, p. 780, words in brackets mine

³⁸⁶ See "Paul's Use of Case Law" below

The legislation of Exodus 21 was widely accepted as grounds for divorce in 1st century Palestine, and if Jesus had not accepted it, He probably would have said so. This assumption may be based on the fact that He does, indeed, correct other misconceptions or misapplications of Mosaic Law. For example, polygamy was also widely accepted in Jewish culture, but His quotation of Genesis 2: 24 from the Septuagint clearly indicated the ideal of monogamy (“the two” which is more specific than “they” which occurs in the Hebrew). Further, although most Jews believed that marriage and childbearing were obligatory, Jesus implicitly taught that the unmarried state was an acceptable option for those who had a special calling (Matt. 19: 10-12). Some rabbis taught that infertility was grounds for divorce; thus, by accepting singleness and celibacy, Jesus effectively removed infertility as grounds for divorce. Jesus was never directly questioned about celibacy or polygamy, yet He was willing to speak out about such issues. Thus, had He disagreed with the Exodus 21 legislation which was used extensively in Jewish culture as regulatory for divorce, it is likely He would have refuted it directly.³⁸⁷ The fact that He did not explicitly mention Exodus 21—the material and emotional grounds for divorce—implies that He did not need to mention them: (1) because they were universally held, and (2) because He agreed with them and saw no need to correct them.

There were no debates about the validity of neglect and abuse as grounds for divorce in any ancient Jewish literature, for the same reason that there are none about the oneness of God: these principles were unanimously agreed on. Rather than indicating that Jesus did not accept the validity of divorce for neglect and abuse, his silence about it highlights the fact that he did accept it, like all other Jews at that time.³⁸⁸

Of course, this is an argument from silence which should be viewed with caution, but Reformed scholars have never discounted all arguments from silence. The major argument for infant baptism is based on OT circumcision and the argument from silence which presumes the continuation of applying the covenant sign to believers’ children. Jesus also did not say anything about the Mosaic legislation of Exodus 21: 22-23 in which the rights of unborn children are upheld to the extent of the death penalty, but His silence on this passage certainly does not imply approval of abortion. We would have very little explicit Biblical teaching on abortion were it not for this passage.³⁸⁹ Jesus also said nothing about fornication between two unmarried people, but we would never assume His approval of such behavior or His disapproval of the Mosaic legislation (Ex. 22: 16-17). He never mentioned the right of widowed spouses to remarry (as Paul did in 1 Cor. 7: 39), but no one would question His approval of the practice.

In all these matters it is easy for us to assume that he agreed with the universally held position because we too agree with it. However, in the matter of divorce on the grounds of Ex. 21: 10-11, we find it harder to assume that Jesus accepted the universal position [in 1st century Palestine] merely because we do not hold to it.³⁹⁰

In Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees in Matthew 19, it is warranted to assume that He was addressing exclusively the liberal interpretation of the Hillelites in His answer. In other words, He was only refuting the “any cause” interpretation of Deuteronomy 24 without implicitly or explicitly renouncing other scriptural grounds for divorce found in other parts of the Mosaic legislation, specifically Exodus 21.³⁹¹ Since material and emotional neglect was universally recognized in Jewish culture as grounds for divorce, He would have had to explicitly *deny* such grounds.³⁹²

³⁸⁷ Instone-Brewer, *DRB*, pp. 184-185

³⁸⁸ Instone-Brewer, *DRC*, pp. 95-96, emphasis his

³⁸⁹ Ps. 139 provides other explicit Biblical perspective on the life of the unborn

³⁹⁰ *DRB*, p. 185, words in brackets mine

³⁹¹ This is clear from the context. The Pharisees explicitly mention Deut. 24: 1-4 and nothing else.

³⁹² *DRB*, p. 186

Many PCA sessions would grant the legitimacy of divorce on the ground of severe material neglect—for example, if the husband refused to work to provide the basic essentials of food, clothing, and shelter. Such failure would render him “worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5: 8) in the sight of the church and subject to church discipline (2 Thes. 3: 10-14). No obedient church would stand by and allow a man to systematically force his wife into destitution without stepping in to help her—particularly if she had small children, was disabled, or had no present employment. What is lacking is a clear understanding of the devastating effect of verbal and emotional abuse.

IV. The PCA Committee’s Recognition of Physical Abuse as Desertion

Physical abuse has been considered more carefully as grounds for divorce in spite of the general neglect of this issue by such notable theologians as John Murray and Jay Adams. Over 400 years ago Perkins (1558-1602) considered “malicious dealing” as a sub-category of desertion. The spouse who drove the other away was “equipollent” (equivalent) to the deserting spouse. “Again, the desertion is not made by the person, which giveth place for the time, but by him in whom is the cause of the desertion.”³⁹³ J.I. Packer maintains that Perkins allowed divorce for “the imposition of intolerable conditions” which was equivalent to separation. Although Packer was challenged by Lachman in this interpretation of Perkins, the PCA committee was not convinced that Lachman’s conclusion was the correct one.³⁹⁴ It would appear from the quotations of William Ames and Beza that other Puritans and continental reformers were in agreement with this principle.³⁹⁵ Thus, it appears that even though there are no explicit statements about spousal abuse in the Scriptures, the Puritans and continental reformers were convinced that Scripture was not, in principle, silent about such matters. Indeed, could Scripture be altogether silent about such matters?

The PCA committee also acknowledges the equivalence of desertion and physical abuse.

We are struck by the fact that, taking Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7 together, it appears that the Lord concedes the necessity of the abolition of marriage in certain cases precisely so as to protect the blameless spouse from intolerable conditions. Further, taking into account both the general principles of Biblical ethics and the Scripture’s characteristic manner of ethical instruction, viz. the statement of commandments in general form to which is added case law sufficient to indicate the manner of application, it seems to us that those Reformed authorities are correct to have argued that sins which are tantamount in extremity and consequence to actual desertion should be understood to produce similar eventualities (cf. Larger Catechism, Q. 99, A. 6).

What is more, a husband’s violence, particularly to the degree that it endangers his wife’s safety, if unremedied, seems to us, by any application of Biblical norms, to be as much a ruination of the marriage in fact as adultery or actual departure. This is so precisely because his violence separates them, either by her forced withdrawal from the home or by the profound cleavage between them which the violence produces, as surely as would his own departure, and is thus an expression of his unwillingness “to consent” to live with her in marriage (1 Cor. 7: 12-13; Eph. 5: 28-29).³⁹⁶

The committee wisely acknowledged that such an assertion should be fenced with certain boundaries lest the reasons for divorce become inflated beyond the principle teachings of Scripture.

³⁹³ PCA Papers on Divorce, p. 194

³⁹⁴ PCA Papers on Divorce, pp. 195, footnote 24; citing J.I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*, page unknown

³⁹⁵ PCA Papers on Divorce, pp. 197, 199-200

³⁹⁶ PCA Papers on Divorce, p. 229, emphasis mine

We are quick to add, however, that the list of sins tantamount to desertion cannot be very long. To qualify, a sin must have the same extreme effect as someone's physical abandonment of his spouse.³⁹⁷

V. Subjectivity in the Committee's Position

Yet, at this juncture the committee lapses into the same subjectivism they intended to avoid.

Both porneia and desertion are objective acts by which a marital covenant might be broken. The Bible gives no justification for divorce based on merely inward, emotional, and subjective reasons. Even if we find justification for interpreting porneia and desertion in a broader sense than some have, they must be broadened only within the boundaries of serious objective acts of sexual immorality or desertion.³⁹⁸

But what constitutes a "serious objective act" of desertion? Does a wife have grounds for divorce for one serious violent act which puts her in the hospital? Would the session require her to return to her husband if by one act of violence he had put her life in jeopardy? The venerable Calvin, according to the committee's interpretation, allowed "a Protestant wife to flee for safety only if in actual danger of her life and not simply for cruel beatings."³⁹⁹ It is amazing, indeed, that the committee would quote Calvin and the sparse writings of the Westminster divines, as well as their predecessors, without even honorable mention of an OT text—Exodus 21. Calvin aside, OT law allowed a slave to go free if his master knocked his tooth out or if a husband failed to provide material and emotional benefits for his slave-wife, including conjugal love. Hitting someone so brutally that his tooth is knocked out is a "serious objective act" according to the Scriptures, but Calvin would have a poor woman (who is emotionally traumatized) to accurately assess whether her life is *really* in danger even after successive cruel beatings?!

This is continuing proof that the church should always be reforming, as well as thinking, and never resting on the past scholarship or reasoning of theological giants like Calvin or the Westminster divines who were quite capable of serious errors. Perhaps a church session would be willing to risk an abused woman's life to one more isolated act of violence just to make sure she is not acting too hastily, but she may not be willing to risk her own life to one more act or entrust her children to a widower who can't control his temper. Reasoning from the OT case law, I seriously doubt that Christ would refuse her the liberty of leaving. Just as a wronged husband or wife would have to make his or her own decision about whether to continue the marriage with an adulterous spouse, the abused partner would also have to make his or her own decision about leaving an abusive spouse.

It is interesting to me that the Continental reformers were willing to allow divorce to someone whose spouse refused to allow the public worship of God, believing

that the worship of God took priority over marriage vows and, when there was obstinate continued refusal by the marriage partner to continue the marital union in circumstances which allowed the other the exercise of the true religion, they believed divorce justified, though only after a considerable period of time as a last resort. They did not, however, consider simple physical cruelty cause of any more than temporary separation.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ PCA Papers p. 229

³⁹⁸ PCA Papers, p. 229, underlined emphasis theirs

³⁹⁹ PCA Papers, p. 288

⁴⁰⁰ PCA Papers, p. 288

Is physical cruelty ever “simple”? I will argue below that emotional cruelty is also never “simple”. Apparently many reformers, not all, did not believe that protecting one’s own life “took priority over marriage vows”—better to let the spouse kill you than divorce him. But the same God who said, “Keep the Sabbath holy” and “I hate divorce” also said, “You shall not kill.” Once again, God does not put us in impossible situations in which one commandment has to be violated in order to keep another commandment, what Frame calls “tragic moral choice.”⁴⁰¹

In “A Summary of the Findings of the Committee”, it is implied (if not explicitly stated) that a Christian does not have legitimate grounds for divorce for one act of “attempted murder.” However, the spouse may remove herself or himself from the threatening situation.

When the abuser does not cease these words and actions, the Session should investigate whether these words and actions are in effect breaking the one-flesh relationship by “hating” the abused spouse and not “nourishing and cherishing” this one (Eph. 5: 28-29). In counseling the abuser, the reality of his Christian faith should be ascertained. When it is determined by the Session that the abuser does not appear to them to be Christian and the abuse continues, the Pauline teaching about an unbeliever leaving a believer should be applied.⁴⁰²

This is an interesting admission for a number of reasons. First, because it quotes Paul’s command to love the marriage partner—not simply good advice but the same kind of command we find in Exodus 21: 10-11, contextualized for the new covenantal community of the Christian church.⁴⁰³ “Conjugal rights” does not simply mean “sex”. Second, it would seem to me that even one act of attempted murder would essentially break the one-flesh relationship. At the very least, the guilty party would be subject to arrest. Attempted murder is a criminal offense outside the authority structure of the church. The committee suggested that a session must “investigate” whether this act of attempted murder has broken the relationship, but I would argue that the decision to return to the marriage would be solely the decision of the offended partner, as also in the case of adultery. No “investigation” would be necessary in this case.

If it is argued that someone could attempt to murder his spouse only in an irrational burst of anger which must be forgiven, the same argument can be made for one irrational act of adultery. If we are willing to require reconciliation for one irrational act, why not for another? The only reason is the explicit statement of Matthew 19, but I believe that this is simplistic reasoning. Third, the committee’s statement mentions another pertinent text (Eph. 5) which is consistent with the conclusion that marriage has obligations which are not optional, but essential to the one-flesh relationship. Loving one’s wife in tangible, credible ways is not a good idea; it is a command. Thus, in Ephesians 5 Paul is being consistent with his teaching in 1 Cor. 7 that there are emotional obligations which cannot be ignored as incidental to the marriage covenant. The committee acknowledges that consistent failure to fulfill these obligations is grounds for divorce. The question remains how to interpret these obligations and what constitutes a serious breach of the one-flesh relationship.

In no sense am I saying this is a simple task; it requires complex thinking about acceptable extrapolations from Scripture. If it is argued that we are “opening the door” to all kinds of justifications for divorce, I would counter that we have already opened the door to all kinds of “intolerable

⁴⁰¹ John M. Frame, *DCL*, p. 230

⁴⁰² PCA Papers, pp. 290-291

⁴⁰³ As I mentioned earlier, I don’t think Ex. 21: 10 is simply a command to have sex, but a command to show love and affection. Raw sex without affection makes a woman feel like a whore within her own home.

conditions” which wives and husbands (especially wives) must endure to continue in good standing with their churches. Origen struggled with the question of whether a husband was obligated to stay with a wife who had attempted to poison him or had killed one of his children.⁴⁰⁴ Recently, a Christian wife was told by a pastor to reconcile with a husband who had chased her into a field, put a shotgun to her head and pulled the trigger. The gun jammed, leaving her alive to consider whether her pastor was giving her good biblical advice.⁴⁰⁵

Exactly what constitutes an “intolerable condition” anyway? Frame notes the inescapable subjectivity involved in this assessment.

The PCA Report says that divorce may be necessary “to protect a blameless spouse from intolerable conditions.” But, realizing that this principle could open the floodgates to all sorts of grounds for divorce, the Report then insists that “the list of sins tantamount to desertion cannot be very long.” Obviously, what is tolerable to one person may be intolerable to another. So the Report tries to distinguish between objective and subjective sources of intolerability, a very difficult distinction to make with any cogency. I am not satisfied with the Report’s reasoning at this point. What is needed is a focus on the question of whether the unbeliever makes a credible claim to be upholding his marital vows. When that claim is no longer credible, because of physical or verbal abuse, emotional entanglements with people other than the spouse, failure to provide, literal desertion, and so on, the church may declare the original marriage null and void and the partners free to remarry.⁴⁰⁶

The committee’s admission of other reasons for divorce would appear to be a self-contradiction of their findings if it were not for the words, “We find that Scripture teaches....” In other words, the committee admits that they are extrapolating from Scripture to “find” that such persistent “words and actions” are tantamount to desertion. Scripture, while expressly allowing divorce for adultery, does not expressly state these other grounds. Further, if they are committed by a professing believer who refuses to repent, they are grounds for excommunication, in which case the conditions of 1 Corinthians 7: 15 apply. Thus, the whole argument is not about what the Scriptures expressly teach, but about what they imply by “good and necessary inference.” Once again we are full circle back to the classic reformed position concerning infant baptism which is not expressly taught in Scripture but is practiced in reformed churches by extrapolation from Scripture—and good extrapolation at that.

Yet, once again we drift into subjectivity when we attempt to determine whether the offending partner is *really* a believer. Since neither the session nor the abused spouse can determine genuine faith, the session has to make a *functional* (not final) judgment on the basis of objective actions (Matt. 18: 17). Is he or she continuing to abuse the other spouse, or not? If so, he or she at least *acts* like an unbeliever and must be *treated* accordingly regardless of being able to articulate the Christian faith. John’s verbal and emotional abuse has not been occasional, but consistent; and this is precisely why Sally was advised by her counselors to leave Michigan (the name of the state has also been changed) for a period of time to remove herself from potential danger and let John remain for intensive counseling. Based on the counselors’ experience, physical abuse will almost always follow verbal abuse, and in John’s case, some of his actions were showing signs of impending physical abuse. This measure was interrupted by contrary advice from the session although with the good intentions of saving the marriage—something Sally has desperately tried to do. For four years, Sally has endured the verbal and emotional abuse of her husband, who although he says he loves her and wants to continue the marriage, has in very real

⁴⁰⁴ Instone-Brewer, *DRC*, p. 94

⁴⁰⁵ Instone-Brewer, *DRC*, p. 93

⁴⁰⁶ Frame, *DCL*, p. 781, emphasis mine

and tangible ways proved his hatred of her, thus abandoning her and breaking the one-flesh relationship.

When separation has already occurred, how must we determine whether the offender has ceased such abusive activity or whether the peace is simply an artificial lull in the storm? Research will bear witness that almost all abusive husbands plead for forgiveness and say they are sorry, only to repeat the same behavior—repeated cycles of remorse and abuse. John has already demonstrated physically threatening activity before (marital rape, forcing his way through doors, pinning Sally down, charging at her with clenched fists claiming that he wanted to beat her, etc.); and George Smith, the marriage counselor assigned to John and Sally, (again, the name has been changed) testified that he had concerns about Sally’s safety, stating bluntly, “If I were Sally, I would—I would have been afraid.”⁴⁰⁷ Physical threatening aside, John’s verbal abuse, on a scale of one to ten (ten being the worst) was judged a nine by George Smith, giving him reason to believe that John could be dangerous.⁴⁰⁸ This concern was mirrored by the two counselors in Michigan, as well as someone who worked with abused women. Research will show that it is a rare marriage in which physical abuse does not follow severe verbal and emotional abuse. As Dr. Smith said, “They’re almost inseparable. It would be like two sides of the same coin. I mean, I don’t know if I said that right, but—yeah. They usually go hand in hand.”⁴⁰⁹

I am convinced that the destructive powers of the tongue are far more damaging than physical abuse both to Sally and to James (Sally’s and John’s son; the name has been changed), who would possibly follow in his father’s destructive footsteps.⁴¹⁰ The problem in judging such cases is that physical abuse is far more tangible and quantifiable than emotional abuse. How can anyone know but Sally and John—who is in a state of denial—how much verbal and emotional abuse occurred in their home for four years? At this point in time, I believe there is little need to delay the inevitable, especially when John has not demonstrated any of the classic signs of change in formerly abusive husbands.⁴¹¹

- Willingness to wait for her trust to be rebuilt without pressuring her to forgive and reconcile until she is ready
- Willingness to continue counseling as long as necessary
- Admission of abusive behavior without efforts to cover it up or blame others
- Admission that his abusive behavior was a choice and not something out of his control [e.g. the result of his diabetes]
- Desire to make amends for his behavior

It is true that God hates divorce, but it is equally true that God hates murder and abusive speech. In the OT legislation of Exodus 21, God did not wait until the husband destroyed his slave-wife with destitution and hatred before giving the civil magistrate legal permission to help her. Thus, in essence, this case law was a law against a form of murder.⁴¹² If he pushed her away with hunger or physical want, or with lack of love, she could walk away from her marriage and her service contract. Noting the inescapable subjectivity in applying this law, first-century rabbis debated among themselves how

⁴⁰⁷ Recorded testimony of church court case, pp. 43-44, 52

⁴⁰⁸ Recorded testimony, p. 45

⁴⁰⁹ Recorded Testimony, exact quotation, p. 47

⁴¹⁰ See Paul Hegstrom, *Angry Men and the Women Who Love Them*, pp. 21, 54

⁴¹¹ See Brenda Branson, “Changed or Not Changed”, BrokenPeople.org.; found in troubledwith.com., a Focus on the Family website, not exact quotes, words in brackets mine

⁴¹² Cf. James 2: 1-13 where the apostle likens mistreatment of the poor to a form of murder

much food, clothing, and sexual relations were necessary to avoid divorce. But even this is less subjective than the position of the PCA committee which speaks only of “serious objective acts.”

Exactly what constitutes a serious objective act? What if a husband roughed up his wife with only a few bruises once a week, or only once a month, but never put her in a life-threatening condition? Would a non-life-threatening roughing-up once a month constitute a “serious objective act of desertion”? And given this regular roughing-up once a month, do we suppose the abused woman would earnestly desire her “conjugal rights” on a regular basis; or would she rather be repulsed by his sexual advances? Some deranged women—many who were abused as children—are so emotionally and financially dependent upon their husbands that any act of affection is readily and naively interpreted as love, but any thinking woman would consider an alternative interpretation—being used by her husband as a whore. This is further evidence, to me at least, that “conjugal love”—with an emphasis on love, not sex—is the real intention of the phrase in Exodus 21 confirmed by Paul’s command, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.”

The truth is: There would be broad differences of opinion among reformed scholars and elders as to what constitutes a serious objective act of desertion. How many times a week or month must a husband and wife have sex before the negligent partner is accused of desertion? It is doubtful that any PCA session would allow *serious* (an inescapably subjective term) sexual neglect to go undisciplined, yet the PCA committee has said that *porneia* and desertion “must not be interpreted in any way that opens the floodgates to divorces based on subjective reasons, such as “irreconcilable differences,” “emotional separation,” “loss of affection,” or the like. The committee is correct in limiting the offenses, but a certain degree of subjectivity is inevitable. For that matter, there would also be some differences of opinion about what constitutes a serious act of sexual immorality. How much pornography—how often and to what degree—must the husband view before it is considered a “serious act of sexual immorality”?

The committee acknowledges the difficulty when it states,

As is the case in any other area of Biblical ethics, one cannot extract from Scripture a comprehensive statement of all possible applications of a divine law. Rather, it is left to the church to apply Biblical norms, with the direction provided by the casuistry Scripture does supply, to the untold number of situations which must be faced. It is important to acknowledge that the view that “desertion” in 1 Corinthians 7 cannot be made to refer to anything but actual departure from house and home and the view we have stated above are both extrapolations from the Scriptural statements. No one can appeal to a Biblical statement concerning the duty or the liberty of a battered spouse.⁴¹³

VI. The Apostle Paul’s Use of OT Case Law

Another issue which has clouded the discussion on divorce and remarriage is the squeamishness with which the PCA, and this session, resists appeal to OT case law. Part of this is no doubt a knee-jerk reaction to “Theonomy” which spread through the PCA with the publication of *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* by Greg Bahnsen. To set the record straight, I am not a “theonomist”—whatever this term means anymore considering the many differences within the theonomic camp. Nor do I believe in eradicating false religious beliefs by constitutional law and civil penalties, unless the exercise of

⁴¹³ PCA Papers, p. 230

such religions violates the rights of others, as in the case of radical Islam.⁴¹⁴ However, with so much appeal to the Puritan divines and their views on divorce, it seems strange that the PCA committee would completely ignore the same biblical case law to which the Puritans so commonly appealed for Biblical substantiation of ethical principals—even civil law. Presbyterians enjoy appealing to the personal piety of Puritans without appealing to their use of the law which informed that piety.

In 1 Corinthians 9: 9 the Apostle Paul unapologetically cites the case law of Deuteronomy 25: 4 to prove that God requires believers to materially support their pastors, even saying, “I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things?” And there was no one in Corinth who objected, “Wait a minute, Paul, that’s not the Ten Commandments, but OT case law, and we aren’t going there.” In v. 13 of the same chapter, Paul even appeals to Levitical law to prove the same point, that those who preach the gospel are eligible to receive their living from the gospel (cf. Lev. 6: 16, 26; 7: 6). He uses the same OT text (Deut. 25: 4) for the same purpose in 1 Timothy 5: 18 and places its authority side by side with the Lord’s instructions in Matt. 10: 10, “the worker is worthy of his support.”

Other citations of OT case law include Acts 23: 1-5 in which Paul rebukes the high priest for violating Deuteronomy 25: 2 by having someone punished who has not been proven guilty while later revoking his statement in obedience to the case law of Exodus 22: 28 which forbade speaking evil of a ruler. In Acts 25: 11, he upholds the legitimacy of the death penalty for certain crimes (cf. Deut. 21: 22), yet there is nothing in the NT which explicitly enumerates which crimes are worthy of civil execution. Other examples include 2 Corinthians 6: 14 in which the yoking together of a believer and an unbeliever is likened to the yoking of two different animals for plowing (“unequally yoked”; cf. Deut. 22: 10). Paul makes such appeals to OT case law with the same ease with which he appeals to the Ten Commandments (Eph. 6: 1-2). His ethics were always informed by the same Law which Jesus explicates throughout the entire Sermon on the Mount saying, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill” (Matt. 5: 17).

It is also inconceivable that Paul would have limited his ethical instructions to first century believers to a few isolated OT case laws, especially since the OT scriptures were the only scriptures available besides his own personal instruction and epistles. If Paul cited a few case laws, he probably cited dozens. However, if we wish to prove that the two from 1 Corinthians 9 and 2 Corinthians 6: 14 are two case laws among the very few he actually cited, it is odd that he should choose the two pertaining to oxen rather than people. This would imply that if case laws pertaining to oxen are still applicable in the New Covenant, surely any case law pertaining to people, even slaves (Ex. 21), is also applicable in some way. The point is, we must determine the relevant application of any case law to current situations contextualized for our particular culture, precisely what Paul does in 1 Corinthians 9. Arguing from the lesser to the greater, if God is concerned about oxen, He is most assuredly concerned about people.

The current application of any particular case law may be nothing more than looking to Christ for salvation, to which all the Mosaic ceremonial and sacrificial laws point. But when it comes to issues like sexual immorality, divorce, or the general treatment of people, there is nothing in our current cultural context which would rule out a proper application—even the civil punishments which are now contextualized in the church age through church censure and excommunication. I for one am not

⁴¹⁴ See Leonard Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid—A Study in Church-State Relationships*, a story of religious persecution in New England

willing to throw out the baby with the bath-water, but with the Westminster “divines” wish to be informed by the “general equity” which applies to all times and all cultures. They are not to be relegated to mere historical curiosities (“My, aren’t these laws weird?”). When it comes to a situation as serious as marital abuse, should we not at least explore the possibility that the OT law has something pertinent and relevant to say to us?

Does one really have to be a “theonomist” to take the position I have taken above, or were these things readily admitted until the dispute over “theonomy” made them unpopular? Whatever the case, it is undeniable that Paul appealed to the authority of the case law and made the appropriate applications for his time and culture.⁴¹⁵ Frame himself appeals to the case laws of Exodus 21: 16 and Deuteronomy 24: 7 to condemn the southern slavery of the 19th century which was based on kidnapping. As such, southern slavery existed in stark contradiction to the institution of slavery established in the OT for Hebrew slaves.⁴¹⁶ While differing with R.J. Rushdoony on many points, Frame, nevertheless, has a much greater respect for his work on social ethics (*Institutes of Biblical Law*) than the average PCA pastor, remarking over thirty years ago, “...I would reiterate that Rushdoony is a most important thinker, possibly the most important contemporary Reformed social critic.”⁴¹⁷

VII. Verbal and Emotional Abuse More Harmful than Physical Abuse

In conclusion, I must return to a point only alluded to earlier. Modern research has indicated that verbal and emotional abuse can be just as damaging—or more damaging—than physical abuse. I have discussed the committee’s conclusions on physical abuse only to follow through to this conclusion. If persistent physical abuse can be regarded as a form of desertion and grounds for divorce, then I believe that persistent verbal and emotional abuse can also be regarded as desertion and justifiable grounds for divorce. I realize I may be going beyond the conclusions of the PCA committee, but I am not alone. You may recall when Dr. George Smith (name changed) was asked, “Are you familiar with any research on verbal abuse? In brief, if you are, how does that compare in relation to its impact in a marriage in relative relation to physical abuse?” His answer was, “It is a close second. Physical abuse would be a close second to the verbal.”⁴¹⁸ Although he admitted that his opinion might be “speculation”, I feel confident that modern research will bear witness that emotional abuse is equally damaging to a person’s well-being and probably more damaging.

The Journal of Family Violence reported in 1990 that 72 percent of abuse victims felt that emotional abuse was harder to endure than physical abuse. What makes verbal abuse particularly threatening is the fact that verbal abuse always precedes physical abuse. The progression to this level of attack may take years—or months.⁴¹⁹

A person cannot be subjected to a consistent pattern of verbal abuse without being seriously affected. One’s sense of worth is steadily eroded when the person he married consistently tells him by word or action that he is despicable and worthless. Women and children are especially susceptible to an erosion of self-worth by persistent emotional abuse. (And since this session is making decisions about such cases, have you checked the research, yourselves?) The reaction to such abuse may vary.

⁴¹⁵ See Vern Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* and John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, Chapter 13, “Applying the Law”

⁴¹⁶ Frame, *DCL*, pp. 656-662

⁴¹⁷ *DCL*, p. 976, originally published in the Westminster Theological Journal 38, 1976

⁴¹⁸ I will refer you to pp. 46-47 of the Recorded Testimony to fill out this testimony.

⁴¹⁹ Holly Hudson, “Recognizing Abuse; Both Seen and Unseen”, Focus on the Family; found in troubledwith.com

Certain types of men when cornered by other men with “in-your-face” encounters will come out swinging. Others will yield, but may stick the knife in the back later. Women react differently too, some curling up in a little ball to protect themselves while others will extend the cat claws. Few of us know just how much we can take and how we would react to even a few “in-your-face” encounters if we have not had them. (I know what I would like to do). But how would we react to four years of cumulative abuse?

It is ironic that Sally—by her own testimony to me—could have forgiven John one or even two incidences of adultery far more easily than four years of verbal and emotional abuse. I suspect that this is true of many emotionally abused women, some of whom may be members of this church. Any one of us men could fall to impulsive sexual immorality under certain circumstances (unless of course we are more spiritual than King David). If we fell, I should hope we would excuse ourselves, at least for a reasonable time, from public ministry. If not, I’m sure the presbytery would make this decision for us. But four years of verbal abuse, occasional marital rape, threatened kidnapping, threatening to leave, telling Sally that she should leave, is a more deliberate disregard of marital vows than a one-night stand. Such behavior has killed this marriage far more effectively.

Most physically abused women will tell you that the verbal and emotional abuse is worse, and understandably so. It is not the fist that hurts the most but the hatred.⁴²⁰ If I accidentally poke my wife in the eye with my elbow, she may get a black eye from which she will soon recover. In the future she would probably make jokes about the incident. But if I purposely hit her, she may never fully recover from the hatred expressed in one act of physical abuse; her sense of trust and security will be seriously eroded even by one deliberate act. Persistent verbal and emotional abuse has a cumulative effect, and I seriously doubt if any of the session or their wives could endure it—or would endure it as long as Sally has. I’m not sure if I could, and it would be hypocritical of me to say that Sally should just take it on the chin emotionally while her son learns throughout life that women are convenient sexual objects, emotional punching bags worthy of mistreatment. Sally’s decision to leave is grounded to a large degree in her desire to save her son from the same destructive behavior.

Estimates suggest that between 50 and 75 percent of the men who batter their wives experienced or witnessed abuse in their own childhood home. One family research laboratory has argued that young boys who have watched their father beat their mother have a 1000 per cent greater likelihood of violence in adulthood than boys who never undergo this painful childhood experience....

Children who watch the victimization of their mothers are five times more likely to exhibit serious behavioral problems than other children.⁴²¹

I don’t have the time or ability to research the relative difference between physical abuse and emotional abuse upon one’s general well-being. I will leave that to counselors who see thousands of such cases every year. Some of the above references were obtained in about an hour on the internet and reading one book among dozens on this subject. I would also suggest the session consult the findings of Focus on the Family. I find it very strange, however, that the PCA committee would ignore such relevant data in favor of searching the archives of the Westminster “divines” and earlier scholars—men like us who were inescapably affected by their own times and culture and many of whom were willing to hold women hostage even to severe physical abuse. Is the PCA so fixated upon past scholarship that it

⁴²⁰ In April, 2012, while teaching in Kenya, I was informed by one of my students, Christopher Busienei, that African wives will commonly say to verbally abusive husbands, “Just beat me and get it over with, but don’t keep berating me.”

⁴²¹ Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark, *No Place for Abuse*, p. 33, 37

cannot acknowledge modern psychological research or dozens of works on divorce even since Murray and Adams, works which may not be inside the reformed “camp”? Even the committee’s report is seriously out of date (1992, sixteen years ago) and out of touch. This denomination is blessed with many brilliant and godly men and women (theologians and psychologists) who could be pooling their efforts to come up with a current document which is up to date with modern psychological research and which reflects exhaustive consideration of all the biblical texts, not just the NT. We have such scholars even within the membership of this church (and, assuredly, I make no pretense of being one of them).

VIII. Personal Reflections

I have some questions of my own concerning the way the session has conducted its oversight. John’s abuse of four years was recently disciplined by his removal from the Lord’s Supper, and this after five years (four years plus one year of separation). I respectfully reply that after five years this is nothing more than a slap on the hand and an insult to the doctrine of church discipline. This much should have been done at the beginning of their marriage, not after it had fallen apart. Thus, I would argue that barring John from the Lord’s Table is, at this point, too little and much too late. Since they have been separated for over a year, there is now less opportunity for John to tangibly demonstrate genuine repentance. Throughout the initial months of counseling, John demonstrated an unwillingness to follow through with assignments given him by counselors and elders, and I have little reason to believe that the session adequately challenged him or held him accountable during this crucial period of time, thus emboldening him to further his abuse.

There were many times when Sally called members of the session to come over to the house while John was on one of his tirades. The elders came several times, but became weary of Sally’s repeated pleas for help. Some samples of their subsequent refusals to come were, “Can’t you just go to your room?” and “Stop provoking him.” Well, she did go to her room and locked it, only for John to push the door open and continue his attacks. The possibility of mutual provocation was often assumed, but abusive husbands don’t need this excuse, and the least bit of provocation is often enough to set them off—like awakening him from a nap when she was explicitly requested to do so. She was also asked by elders if she was in physical danger, and she would answer in the negative; but historically, verbal abuse has almost always led to physical abuse after an indefinite period of time—even after years of verbal abuse—and an abused wife doesn’t absolutely know at any given time whether she is in danger of physical abuse or not. It is pure speculation. Sally still fears that John may harm her physically even after the divorce goes through. It is likely that your coming on any given occasion would have yielded little evidence anyway since John would have quickly and convincingly altered his behavior and accused her of making a mountain out of a mole hill—something he did for four years, a common tactic among abusive husbands and especially among those who attend church regularly. The ease with which the session is now dealing with him confirms my suspicion that not enough was ever done to discipline his destructive behavior, and I firmly believe that this marriage would have had far greater probability of being saved—though not certainty—had the session dealt more sternly with his actions.

So often, the church is not a safe place for abused women. Speaking as a woman counselor, Catherine Kroeger says,

First and foremost, churches need to be safe places to disclose abuse. Are they? While some women see their local congregation as a “safe haven,” others report that “it’s not a safe place to come...because nobody knows what to do with you.”

Most clergy are reluctant to name the behavior of a violent man toward his wife for what it is; they would rather interpret the conflict as relational and the partners as equally responsible to seek help and resolution. Pastors prefer to see persistent verbal abuse as a couple's problem with communication and to downplay the economic and social dependency that a married woman often experiences. Ministers are slow to recognize unrestrained male power in a relationship, though they are usually decisive in their condemnation of violent physical outbursts.⁴²²

But what is done is done. I've made more than my share of mistakes in the ministry, and as long as I'm breathing I will continue to make more mistakes. The central issue is whether persistent verbal and emotional abuse is biblical grounds for divorce, and therefore, remarriage. You have ruled that Sally has evidence of this abuse throughout their marriage, and that she has proven two out of three charges against John, but that she is not free to marry anyone else. I am appealing to you to reexamine whether his behavior is equivalent to desertion, and this from a professing believer who has ostensibly demonstrated his unbelief by such behavior.

I would like once again to say that I am not angry with the session and that I believe the session has acted according to their best understanding of the issues and with the best motives. However, I am disappointed with how you have handled the situation, and I would be less than honest if I didn't say so. But it is better to tell you directly than to harbor grudges or spread strife among other members of the congregation, which I will not do. I have little doubt that this letter will be quite offensive, but there is more at stake here than Sally's right to remarry. What is also at stake is how this session, and other sessions, will deal with future issues of marital abuse and whether abused women (or men) will be held hostage to abusive spouses.

Your brother in Christ,
David Johnson (fictitious name)

End of paper.

Appendix E—The Levirate Law and the Law of the Kinsman-Redeemer

The levirate marriage law of Deuteronomy 25: 5-10 ensured the continuance of the family name of a husband who dies without a son.

"When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be *married* outside *the family* to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.⁶ "It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.⁷ "But if the man does not desire to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.'⁸ "Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And *if* he persists and says, 'I do not desire to take her,'⁹ then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, 'Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.'¹⁰ "In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose sandal is removed.' (Deuteronomy 25:5-10 NASB)

⁴²² Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark, pp. 68-69).

Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian, acknowledges the protection this law provided the family unit for the continuation of property rights and social stability to the deceased husband's widow.

...for this procedure will be for the benefit of the public, because thereby families will not fail, and the estate will continue among the kindred; and this will be for the solace of wives under their affliction, that they are to be married to the next relation of their former husbands.⁴²³

Both Luther and Calvin regarded the levirate law as applicable in their day. Luther remarks,

First, as the text sets forth, households should not die out but should be multiplied; this concerns the fostering and enlarging of the commonwealth. Secondly, in this way God provides for widows and the pitiable sex, to sustain and support them; for the woman, by herself a weak and pitiable vessel, is even more so when she is a widow, since she is at the same time forsaken and despised.⁴²⁴

We must not read Luther's comments from the perspective of modern western culture—and in some modern African cultural contexts—in which many unmarried women are quite capable of self-support, even more so than many men. This simply was not the case in ancient eastern culture, and apparently not the case in 16th century Europe. Widowed women are also very vulnerable in traditional African rural settings.

There were other considerations besides the inheritance of the land which prompted the continuation of the levirate principle in the legal traditions of Israel. The land belonged to God, and God gave it to the tribes of Israel for their use, but not for ultimate ownership. Consequently, the land could not be sold permanently but had to be returned to the original family in case it was sold for the temporary relief of poverty. In the Jubilee year, the land must be returned, meaning that only the harvest of the land was actually sold for consumption by others outside the family (Lev. 25). The land was closely tied to the covenant promise given to Abraham. It had a sacred significance which every Israelite understood—the very reason Naboth would not sell his vineyard at any price, even a handsome price offered by a king (1 Kings 21: 3). When a brother married his brother's widow, he not only preserved the name of his deceased brother through the firstborn son of his widow, but he also symbolically or vicariously preserved his brother's continued participation in the covenant promise, the land.⁴²⁵ The first-born son of the widow would inherit the land owned by the deceased brother.⁴²⁶

The levirate law predated the Mosaic Law and was practiced among the tribes of Israel and other cultures for the reasons stated above, the continuation of a family line and the protection of widows. Significantly, when Judah's son, Onan, "wasted his seed [*sperm*] on the ground" during sexual intercourse with his deceased brother's wife, Tamar, his actions displeased the Lord; and the Lord took his life. Therefore, Yahweh, the source of all good laws in every culture, carried out the sentence of death for violation of the levirate law. The Mosaic Law, however, did not command execution of the brother who refused to do his duty to his deceased brother. Nevertheless, failure of compliance resulted in public humiliation at the city gate among the elders. The rejected widow would personally remove the sandal from the brother's foot and spit in his face. Moreover, his name would be disgraced in the

⁴²³ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book IV, Chapter VIII, 23 (quoted from Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 377).

⁴²⁴ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Deuteronomy*, p. 248f. (quoted from Rushdoony, p. 377).

⁴²⁵ Peter C. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, pp. 314

⁴²⁶ If there was no surviving son, the landed inheritance would be passed on to a surviving daughter (Num. 27: 8); and even if this daughter was later married, her children would preserve the name of her father through the land (Keil, C. F. and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes, The Fourth Book of Moses*, p. 213).

whole community as “the house of him whose sandal is removed” (Deut. 25: 5-10). The reason for disgrace was that the surviving brother selfishly coveted his brother’s land at the cost of his brother’s name. He also despised his deceased brother’s vicarious (substitutionary) participation in the covenant promise through his offspring living on the land (see above). If he married the widow and had a son, this son would inherit the deceased brother’s name and his land, but if there were no son, the surviving brother might inherit the land for himself in the future.⁴²⁷ It should be noted here that not just *any* brother was obligated to perform the levirate requirements. Only a brother who was currently living in the same location—not necessarily in the same house—with the brother who dies was required to do so (Deut. 25: 5). Moreover the law does not contradict Leviticus 18: 16 which forbade sexual intercourse with one’s sister-in-law while his brother is still alive. This would be incest. Moreover, the prohibition is further explained in Leviticus 18: 18.

‘You shall not marry a woman in addition to her sister as a rival while she is alive, to uncover her nakedness. (Leviticus 18:18 NASB)

The implication of this verse is that one is permitted to marry his wife’s sister once his wife dies. The law prevents unnecessary competition between sisters for their husband’s love. The law also implicitly permits polygamy since it does not prohibit marrying two women as long as they are not sisters.

Gitari says that the levirate law is consistent with traditional African culture.

The Levirate Law is in keeping with African tradition in a number of cultures. If a husband dies, and his wife has not passed the age of child bearing, or when the deceased has not left a surviving male heir, then his brother is obliged to marry his brother's widow even if he himself has another wife. This helps to maintain the family name and continuity and also solves the problems of inheritance and gives security to the widow.⁴²⁸

Another ancient tradition, the kinsman-redeemer, is illustrated in the book of Ruth. Boaz demonstrates that he is a righteous man by being willing to sacrifice a portion of his property-inheritance to purchase Naomi’s property and take Ruth as his wife. The nearest of kin who stood closest to Ruth relinquished his opportunity to redeem both the land and Ruth because his “purchase” of Ruth (v. 10, KJV; “bought”, ESV) would have jeopardized (“ruined”) his own inheritance (Ruth 4: 6). For the purpose of our inquiry, it should be assumed that this man was already married—as most likely was Boaz—and the acquisition of Ruth, upon bearing children, would prevent the man from passing along to his existing children whatever he might have gained from the acquisition of Naomi’s land. Moreover, he would have been required to capitalize the new purchase from his existing net worth, thus diminishing the estate left to his children by another wife.⁴²⁹

Before hearing about the obligation to take Ruth, the man was agreeable to purchase the property. We may ask, what about Naomi? Technically, it was Naomi who must also come with the property, for it was her property. However, given her age, she would either not require sexual relations or, if required, the kinsman knew that no children would be conceived. By mentioning Ruth as the “widow of the deceased” (v. 5), Boaz makes a substitution of Ruth for Naomi, a substitution which by all appearances was legally recognized by both the nearest of kin and the elders who appear in the story.⁴³⁰ The reason the substitution is acceptable is that the kinsman-redeemer and levirate laws were designed to protect

⁴²⁷ Craigie, p. 315

⁴²⁸ Gitari, p. 8

⁴²⁹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Ruth*, p. 490

⁴³⁰ Ronald L. Hubbard, *Ruth*, pp. 242-243

the continuity of a man's name and property rights. However, if the widow being married was too old to bear children (like Naomi), the law would not function as intended. Someone like Naomi, and her deceased husband Elimelech, would receive no benefit from the law. Recognizing the intent of the law, the nearest of kin and the elders were not inclined to challenge Boaz' requirement that the kinsman-redeemer also marry Ruth.⁴³¹

In the story of Ruth, the social stigma (shame, embarrassment) associated with the levirate law (Deut. 25: 9) is absent. The nearest kinsman, not Ruth, removes his own sandal; and there is no spitting in the face to indicate social shame and community disapproval of his actions. The man was allowed to preserve his existing inheritance. Nevertheless, Boaz' willingness to sacrifice his own inheritance by marrying Ruth demonstrates his unselfishness and willingness to preserve the name of Elimelech and Mahlon, Ruth's former husband. However, as it turns out, by sacrificing his own interests to redeem this poor woman and her mother-in-law, Boaz enriches himself by winning a godly woman and becoming the ancestor of Christ from the line of Judah (Ruth 4: 17). Likewise, Christ sacrifices his own interests for the salvation of others (Phil. 2: 3-11), and by doing so wins for Himself a bride, the church, who will one day be spotless and blameless (Eph. 5: 25-27).

⁴³¹ For further enlightenment on the complexity of this story, see Keil and Delitzsch, *Ruth*, pp. 489-490

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Author's Biography

Born in 1952, I grew up in a rural town in Mississippi not much bigger than some of the larger villages in Africa. I received the Bachelor of Science degree (BS) from Mississippi State University which included courses in biology, biochemistry, and animal physiology in pursuit of a career in medicine. However, the Lord redirected my steps to theology (Prov. 16: 9).

Shortly after graduating from MSU, I married Fran Wiggins, a girl I met in German class in my first year of college. We were married in May, 1976, and two weeks later I entered Greek class at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, MS—a reformed and evangelical seminary in the US. I have two master's degrees from RTS—the MDiv. and the MCE (or MA in Christian education). I am presently pursuing the DMin. with Miami International Seminary. Fran and I have been married almost 37 years; we have four grown children and seven grand children, two of whom were adopted from orphanages in Ukraine. Second only to my relationship with Jesus Christ, Fran is the best part of my biography and a very important part of my ministry in Africa.

Before coming to Uganda as a teacher in 2003, I had been a headmaster in a Christian school and a pastor of two small churches. However, twenty-five years or so of my work experience has been in manual labor—renovating old homes for resale, cabinet-making, and house painting.

Instructor's Manual—Questions and Answers from Lessons 1-8

Lesson One Questions and Answers

1. How is the image of God a “common ground” for any discussion with the unbeliever about the existence of God? How does Paul use this “common ground” approach in his address to the Athenians? Interact with the Scriptural text.

The argument in Acts 17 is basically the same as the argument of Romans 1:18-23. God's wrath against mankind is justified because the evidence of God's existence and His nature is written in creation and in the human heart. The fact of God is inescapable, rendering man inexcusable for his unbelief. Being the image of God, men have the innate (inborn) knowledge of God, but he attempts to suppress this truth in unrighteousness. In like manner Paul tells the Athenians that God will no longer overlook their ignorance since there is no excuse for it. Not only do they have the witness of creation, but they now have ample reason to believe that God has raised Christ from the dead (Acts 17:30-31). Just as the fact of creation (general revelation) produces accountability, the resurrection of Christ from the dead produces even greater accountability for unbelief. The inescapable facts of the creation and the resurrection of Christ provide adequate grounds for God's demand for repentance. However, these facts would mean little to man if he did not experience within himself the inescapable image of His Creator.

2. Name the various elements of the image of God in man and give a one or two sentence summary of each one.

(1) Conscience, morality—the innate sense of right and wrong

Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 teach us that Christians are being renewed to the new man who is created in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Since Christians are renewed to such a state, it can be safely assumed that knowledge, righteousness, and holiness were elements of man's original condition before the fall.

(2) Will (self-determination or free agency)

Though man is affected by outside circumstances and internal abilities and limitations, how he responds to his circumstances is largely determined by his free choice. People with very similar circumstances may react in totally different ways.

(3) Rationality

Man is a reasoning creature. He is continually improving his methods of farming, construction, etc, and developing new technologies. Since God reasons, man is capable of reason.

(4) Emotion

Man is an emotional being capable of sadness, joy, anger, and humor. We are commanded to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Dt. 6:5; Mark 12:30). We should understand from this statement that our faith and worship is not just intellectual activity, but involves the whole person, including the emotions.

(5) Spirituality and immortality

Man is made both body and soul (or spirit). When his body dies, his spirit departs to everlasting life or everlasting death (Lk. 23: 43; Acts 7: 59). Death is not the natural consequence of being a creature. God did not create man for death, but for life in fellowship with Himself. Had he not sinned, man would have been confirmed forever in eternal life on earth without ever having to experience death (Gen. 2: 17; Rom. 6: 23). Man's spirit is indestructible in the sense that it cannot be annihilated (completely extinguished).

(6) Body

The physical parts of man reflect the character and abilities of God in many ways. Although God does not have a body like man, God still sees, hears, speaks, smells, etc. Man's ability to procreate is, furthermore, a reflection of God's ability to create man and woman in His own image. It is also a reflection of the new creation in Christ which comes about only through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

(7) Dominion—the cultural mandate and the Great Commission

Bearing children, cultivating and keeping the garden, along with ruling the animal world, defines what God means by ruling and having dominion. God does what man cannot do. He creates the world and all the natural forces which govern the world out of nothing, but He refrains from doing what man can do—completing creation and populating the whole earth. The Great Commission is the NT extension of the creation mandate by which the church makes disciples of all nations, thereby populating the earth with believers who work for the glory of God.

3. Is the special revelation of God's law in the Bible necessary or unnecessary to guide us morally, both individually and corporately? Explain your answer.

Natural revelation in creation cannot be properly understood by unbelievers because they look at nature with sinful bias. Since they cannot properly "read" creation, they also cannot formulate good social and moral laws based upon their flawed understanding of creation.

4. What are the limitations of will or self-determination?

All of us are born with certain natural limitations which prevent us from doing some things we may desire to do. A crippled man cannot become a professional football player, not matter how determined he is to do so. Analogically, in the case of fallen man, his whole being (mind, heart, will, and body) is affected by sin so that he does not have the spiritual freedom to do what he ought to do. In fact, man's fallen condition is so complete that he cannot do anything which fundamentally pleases God.

5. What do I mean by "pleasing" God in the highest sense of the word or by "pleasing" Him in the lower sense of the word? Use a relevant text of scripture to support your answer.

Man pleases God in the highest sense by obeying Him with the right motive (love), goal (the glory of God), and action (standard, the Word of God). Therefore, unbelievers are not free *not* to sin because their motives and goals for a specific action can never be the love of God and the glory of God.

Man's "free" will, therefore, is not absolutely free. He is free to make choices between some lesser evil or another, but he is not free to "please" God in the highest sense of this word (Romans 8:6-8; 14:23).

6. Discuss briefly John Frame's and Wayne Grudem's arguments against the traditional formulations of the impassibility of God.

Grudem argues that God created our emotions and is the origin of our emotions. Therefore, God must Himself feel these same emotions. He grieves, gets angry, pities, and loves; and all these feelings of God are supported in the Scriptures.

Frame takes the same approach by saying that Scripture often refers to God's emotions. He also makes the additional comment that the Bible does not radically separate the emotions from the intellect and the will. God's thoughts, decisions, and emotions are not separated into distinct categories separate from one another in tight compartments. Frame, therefore, disagrees with the traditional concept of anthropomorphism which challenges the real-ness of God's emotions (e.g. anger) by saying that the mention of God's anger in Scripture is only a human means of describing God. He is not "really" angry. But if God is not *really* angry, does He *really* know and love His people? Does He *really* hate sin? Is He *really* jealous when we serve other gods? And why, Frame asks, are such emotions unworthy of God? Since every action and God's responses to these actions—pleasure, displeasure, love, hatred—are ordained or predetermined, we cannot say that God is "passive" to the activity of man or that He can be ontologically (essentially) changed by man's actions.

7. Why is the body also one element of the image of God? Explain your answer with respect to man's destiny of dominion.

Just as the body is the instrument with which we express the righteousness of God by doing good deeds to others. It is also the instrument with which we exercise dominion over the earth both now and in the new heavens and new earth. As God created the earth, so the image-bearers of God will require physical bodies to accomplish their dominion tasks in the new heavens and earth.

8. Demonstrate exegetically from Scripture why man's dominion is a prominent element of the image of God.

The cultural mandate is emphasized in the Genesis account. When we look at Genesis 1:26 immediately after the reference to man being made in the image of God, God says, "...and let them rule over the fish of the sea...and over all the earth...." Grammatically, the cultural mandate is connected to the image of God in the closest possible way. We find the same emphasis in Gen. 1: 27-28.

9. Discuss the relationship between the cultural (dominion) mandate and the great commission. Include some of Frame's treatment of the land and the seed.

Christ's disciples are now commanded to disciple the nations, teaching them to obey His word. Thus, the church through evangelization and discipleship is re-populating the world with image-bearers who are no longer in rebellion against God. In this way, God moves forward with His original plan of having man exercise dominion over the earth for His glory. As Adam is given the garden (the land) to cultivate, so also the people of God (the born-again seed) are given the new heavens and earth to cultivate for His glory. Between the Garden of Eden and the new heavens and earth, the Bible presents us with a temporal foreshadowing of God's original plan by giving Israel the land of promise and eventually a righteous (but not perfect) king, David, as a picture of the Messianic reign of Christ in the restored earth. This theme of land and seed can be traced through the whole Bible.

10. Briefly discuss the relationship between the temple and the new heavens and earth.

The restored heavens and earth will be the fulfillment of God's intention to dwell with His people in intimate communion who serve Him day and night in His cosmic temple. As Adam was expelled from the original garden-temple because of disobedience, the new covenant people will be allowed entrance because of Christ's obedience. In the Mosaic economy this communion was typified by the entrance of the high priest once a year into the holy of holies, and in the New Covenant by the entrance of the greater High Priest, Jesus Christ, into the heavenly tabernacle with His sacrificial blood. When Christ entered the heavenly holy of holies, the veil separating God from His people was torn, thus allowing all those who believe in Christ into eternal intimate communion with God. The whole earth will serve as the eschatological temple of God with God's people serving him and keeping His commandments. The garden-temple is the archetype of harmonious existence enjoyed between God, man, and creation unmarred by human sin.

Lesson Two Questions and Answers

1. Cite biblical texts proving that man is still the image of God after the fall. Elaborate on these texts.

Gen. 9: 6—Murder brings the capital punishment of death because man is still the image-bearer of God. Unlawful violence upon another man is an attack upon God. What's more, another human being in the image of God must be the executioner.

James 3: 9—We may not curse another man because he is the image-bearer of God. Verbal abuse is an attack upon God.

1 Cor. 11: 7—Man remains the image and glory of God after the fall.

2. Should there be the death penalty for murder? Explain your answer biblically. (Note: You may disagree with me on this or any other question if you wish, but use biblical reasoning.)

God still demands the death of a premeditated murderer. Accidental homicide is not murder, and may be punished as the situation demands. Arguments condemning capital punishment on the basis that it takes away life fail to address the unlawful killing of innocent victims.

3. What is your honest opinion of mob justice? Is it justifiable?

[many answers possible]

4. Some people have argued that capital punishment does not deter crime. Why are these arguments futile?

Because most capital crime is punished with long prison terms. If only a small percent of murderers are executed, then the percentages are in favor of most murderers that they will never be put to death for murder. Thus, it is irrelevant to argue against the effectiveness of capital punishment if it is rarely carried out.

5. What is your honest opinion of the village court system following the Rwanda genocide as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa. Give a biblical justification of your answer.

[several answers possible]

6. Explain the African custom of calling down curses upon one's enemy through the medium of witch doctors. Respond to this custom from a biblical perspective.

[several answers possible]

7. How are imprecatory prayers (like those in the Psalms) consistent with loving one's enemies?

Prayers of imprecation are not contradictory to the command to love one's enemies. It is clear that the command to love one's enemies is based upon God's example of loving those who do not love Him (Matt. 5: 44-45). Likewise, Jesus felt compassion for the multitudes, many of whom He will condemn in the final judgment (Matt. 14: 14). If we drive a wedge between the command to love one's enemies and the imprecatory psalms, we have a conflicting example contradictory to the love of God—by none other than David, author of most of the psalms and a man after God's own heart (1 Ki. 14: 8). The Bible contains no such contradictions. The imprecations express hate for the enemies of God, but they do not imply personal hatred of the individual.

[Many answers possible.]

8. Is woman also the image of God? Interact with 1 Cor. 11: 7.

Paul is referring back to the Genesis account in Gen. 1: 27 which says explicitly, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them". The full complement of "man" is found in both male and female, both created in the image of God. Thus, the reference to Gen. 1: 26-27 proves that Paul cannot be promoting the image of God as the distinction between sexes or the reason for the woman's head coverings in worship contexts.

Second, the reader will notice that Paul does not say that woman is the image of man, but that she is the "glory" of man. Paul does not bring up the identity of the woman's image since this is too obvious to mention. By referencing the Genesis account, there is no admissible doubt about the image of the woman. She is also the image of God.

Woman is the glory of man because man did not come originally from woman but woman from man (v. 8). The woman had her original source in man (v. 12), and this will be used later to show that wives must honor their husbands because of this original source. Secondly, man was not created for the purpose of helping the woman, but woman was created for the purpose of helping the man—"for the man's sake." Both of these reasons refer back to creation and have nothing to do with the cultural distinctions of Paul's day—or our own. Thus, the reasons given for a woman's head covering relate to

the order of creation at which the woman was placed under the authority of her husband from the beginning, not merely after the fall. The head covering is a sign of her submission to her “head,” i.e. her husband (v. 3).

The man must not wear a head covering because he is directly in submission to God as his original source. By wearing a head covering in 1st century Corinth, the woman demonstrated her willingness to submit to the headship of her husband for the specific reason Paul has given—the order of creation.

9. How has man’s mind been affected by the fall?

Man’s reasoning is flawed by sin to the extent that he cannot look objectively at the evidence for divine creation or Christ’s resurrection from the dead in spite of their compelling evidence (Rom. 1: 21). Professing to be wise, he has become a fool. When we present the gospel to unbelievers, we may acknowledge openly that our evidence may not be **convincing** to them, but not because it is not **compelling**. It is not convincing because of their commitment to personal autonomy.

Apart from the divine assistance of the Holy Spirit, unbelievers will not be able to look at the evidence objectively. They will persistently suppress the truth in unrighteousness to defend their own personal autonomy (independence). When they do this, their autonomous reason leads inevitably to moral unrighteousness and degeneration.

10. Discuss image-making by ancient kings. Moses (the author of Genesis) demonstrated a different point of view from ancient kings in the way he presented the creation of man, the image of God. What was Moses trying to tell the Israelites? What are the implications of this difference for how we view modern heads of state? (see my summary of Pratt’s treatment of this subject)

Ancient kings built images of themselves and ordered them to be placed in strategic locations throughout their conquered kingdoms. This reminded the people who was in control. Moses was familiar with this custom and used it to illustrate the fact that God was in control of the entire universe. Every time someone saw another human being, he was beholding the image of God who ruled over the world. But while rulers made images of themselves from permanent material like stone or costly material like gold, God made man from the dust of the earth, a common material that is insignificant. Every man on earth is made this way, even kings and heads of state. They have no greater inherent worth than the common man.

Lesson Three Questions and Answers

1. Summarize (one or two sentences each) the six features of dominion presented in Gen. 1-2.

- (1) God gave man an uncultivated earth—Man was given the privilege of improving or completing the creation. Everything God made was “good” but it was not intended to be complete.
- (2) Dominion over the earth is given to man before the fall (Gen. 2:15)—Work is not a curse; the ground is cursed, making it difficult for man to go about his labors with enjoyment and meaning.
- (3) Dominion is given first to the man and later to the woman—Woman is required to be man’s helper in both multiplication and dominion. The order of creation requires that man is the leader in dominion and the woman is subordinate to his authority in the home and the church.
- (4) Dominion is given to corporate humanity, thus, the continuing importance of reproduction and the nurture of children—God has not rescinded his original purpose for man to cultivate the earth. This

requires continuing multiplication of his image bearers and the nurturing of children so that they will grow up to work for the glory of God.

(5) The first dominion task given to man was cultivating the garden, manual labor.—Manual labor is not demeaning work from God's viewpoint. It is just as honorable as labor which focuses upon intellectual activity. Manual labor will continue in the new heavens and earth, and people involved in it will be satisfied and fulfilled in their labor.

(6) The animal world is subjugated to mankind and submitted to his use—Man has biological similarities with the animal world, but he is unique in being made in the image of God. He is given permission to use animals in his dominion task for the progress of the human race.

2. What is the significance of the fact that Paul's admonition concerning work is addressed to slaves rather than free men? (Col. 3 and Eph. 6)

If even slaves were supposed to work for the glory of God, even when they didn't have a choice in their labor, surely everyone else should pursue his work to the glory of God.

3. What are the implications of the priority of the male in the order of creation and the dominion mandate?

The wife is subordinate to her husband in dominion. She was created to help him rather than him created to help her. Moreover, the priority of dominion implies the priority of responsibility in providing for his family. His wife should help him feed his family, but the primary obligation is the man's because of the order of creation and dominion.

4. Is the world overpopulated? Defend your answer.

The world is not overpopulated. There are vast reaches of the earth's planet that are barely populated, just waiting for man to exercise his dominion over them. Overpopulation is an urban problem, with millions of people flocking to the cities for jobs which do not exist.

5. Exegetically, how would you argue the continuing importance of reproduction in the plan of God? What would be the limitations to having as many children as a couple could possibly produce?

God has not set aside the command to multiply and fill the earth. Nothing in the OT or the NT implies that God no longer is concerned about populating the earth with image-bearers capable of exercising dominion. By having children and teaching them the Christian faith, the Christian husband and wife multiplies Christian disciples. Thus, the limitation upon the number of children is implied by the Great Commission to make disciples. If husbands and wives are not teaching their children the Christian faith, they may grow up to be a negative drain on society, even criminals. Thus, they may wish to limit the number of their children to those they can provide sufficient material and spiritual needs. Yet, no magic number of children is suggested by the Scriptures. The Bible gives us liberty in this matter.

6. How would you argue for the dignity of all labor?

Manual labor is not the only dominion task, but it was the first. Our Lord Jesus was a carpenter who took up his father's trade; and we see that in His first 30 years of obscurity Jesus accomplished something that He did not accomplish in His last three years of public ministry: He gave dignity to all

kinds of common labor. There is no distinction in God's mind between the dignity of one kind of labor as opposed to another.

7. What is implied in Adam's naming of the animals? What practical importance does this have in environmental legislation?

In the ancient world, naming something, or someone, implied your authority over the thing or person named. Although man should manage the earth as a steward, not an owner, he is allowed to use the earth within reasonable limits to promote man's life on earth to the glory of God. Without the Scriptural teaching on the distinction between man and animal, we can't make intelligent decisions about the use of the earth's resources.

8. Why is the Christian world-view important for the maximum use of the world's resources?

Science and technology made their greatest gains in cultures distinguishing between the value of man and beast. Quite obviously India, with its belief in reincarnation (becoming "re-infleshed" in a different life form after death), did not allow experimentations with animals which could be reincarnated relatives.⁴³² Forty percent of Indian children are malnourished despite India being one of the world's fastest growing economies, particularly in the area of pharmaceuticals. But its progress is based primarily upon copying the technology of western nations, not original innovation. Medical science is the product of the Christian world-view which allows man to subjugate the animal world for the greater good of man whose life is inherently more valuable by virtue of his image.⁴³³

9. What is the implicit teaching of Gen. 3: 16b, "Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you." (Genesis 3:16 NASB)? Use another text to support your answer.

Eve's "desire" will be to exercise authority over Adam rather than submitting to his authority. She has already done this when she decided to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now her desire to rule her husband will become all the more acute (strong). This interpretation is supported by Gen. 4: 7 in which the same Hebrew word is used for "desire". Sin's desire (Satan's desire) was to dominate Cain, and he succeeded in this. Woman, on the other hand, will not succeed in dominating the male.

10. How does the curse upon the man imply his responsibility as the bread-winner of the home?

The curse specifically targets the earth from which Adam derived his living. While Eve will have pain in bearing children, Adam will experience pain in his attempt to grow food on ground resistant to his efforts. His punishment, therefore, highlights his primary responsibility.

Lesson Four Questions and Answers

1. What perspective do the "better-than" proverbs give us on wealth and poverty?

⁴³² Whatever gains India now has in medical technology is not the result of independent research, but dependence upon western research.

⁴³³ See Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, and D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?*

God doesn't wish for us to measure true wealth in monetary or material terms. True wealth consists of many non-material things like the love of others, peace with God, and peace with one's wife or husband—i.e. a good family life.

2. Explain this statement: Wealth or poverty follows predictable economic patterns according to an individual's or nation's obedience or disobedience to the laws of God governing economic life.

Water does not run uphill. Moreover, we cannot expect prosperity to flow into the hands of individuals or governments with failed economic policies and behavior. Prosperity generally follows obedience to economic principles which are evident in the Bible, and failure to follow these principles leads to poverty individually and nationally.

3. In two or three sentences, summarize the teaching of the Proverbs on hard work.

Hard, consistent work will generally preserve a man from poverty. God rewards the person who is industrious. The lazy man, on the other hand, comes to ruin.

4. Should a nation or individual expect instant prosperity? Explain.

Prosperity for the individual or nation is a gradual climb. The working man, given enough freedom, can work hard, save as much as he can, send his children to school. The education they receive—assuming other factors—will make them more marketable and prosperous. This is what has happened in western countries with an expanding middle class which grows more prosperous with time.

5. Does the NT record agree with Proverbs on the importance of work? Explain.

Paul taught that member of the church of Thessalonica should not be allowed to eat from the tables of fellow members if they refused to work (2 Thes. 3: 10). This meant not only were the lazy members not allowed to eat, but that other members were not allowed to feed them. To support a lazy person is the same thing as subsidizing his sinful behavior. This is not love.

6. What is the most valuable asset or resource of any country? Cite historical proof of this fact.

Its people. Japan has few natural resources; everything must be imported. Yet, its people are hardworking and have built one of the most prosperous economies in the world. Other examples include Singapore, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, none of which have many natural resources.

7. Explain the relationship between population growth and prosperity.

The real problem is not population growth by itself, but inadequate production *per person*. As a nation's population increases, so should its production by reason of the larger labor force. Increased population density does not necessarily diminish the per capita income of a nation as long as there is increased production per person. But when there is considerable unemployment or underemployment an increase in population usually reduces the per capita income and the economic prosperity of the nation.

8. How much foreign aid would be necessary per year to increase the per capita (per person) income of 1.4 billion people to \$1000 per year? How does this figure compare with the total current foreign

aid budget per year? Based on these calculations, would it make a significant difference to double, triple, or increase foreign aid to ten times the current level?

It would take \$700 billion US per year to raise the income of 1.4 billion people to \$1000 US per year. The total current spending on foreign aid is \$100 billion US; therefore, even ten times the current foreign aid budget (\$1 trillion US) would not succeed in raising the income of 1.4 billion of the poorest people to \$2000 per year. That would take \$1.4 trillion US or 14 times the current annual aid budget.

9. Explain how foreign aid promotes despotism on the African continent.

Foreign aid from governments of other countries is donated to the governments of developing nations. Much of the money never reaches those it was designed to help. Instead, it is easily stolen by government bureaucrats who spend it on houses, cars, and stash it away in foreign bank accounts—bank accounts in some of the same countries which donated the money. If a failing government is supported by foreign aid, it is no longer accountable to the people that put it in power. The taxes levied upon the common citizens are not sufficient to run the government in the first place, so they are not needed by the failing governments to stay in power.

10. Name and explain four reasons NGO's continue despite their many failures.

- (1) The charitable motive to give poor people what they need.
- (2) Self-propagation. Many people will work very hard to preserve their jobs even if they know that little long-term benefit is being accomplished.
- (3) Lack of support in western nations for a strong business sector in developing countries. This is due to the socialist dream of western universities.
- (4) Lack of business alternatives for using billions of dollars in aid. Stated another way, "We've got all this money, but where do we spend it?!"

Lesson Five Questions and Answers

1. Why is working harder not sufficient to bring long-term prosperity?

We must not only work hard, but smart, in order to make our work more efficient, thus producing the same amount of goods and services in less time. Time itself is a valuable commodity, and there are only 24 hours of it in any given day, never more. We must use it wisely by appropriating time-saving tools.

2. What does the Bible imply about skilled labor?

A man skilled in his labor will stand before kings, i.e. before people of sufficient means to employ his labor at a high price. He will not be limited to working for people who either will not pay him or will pay him minimally.

3. How does a person capitalize any business endeavor?

Saving for the future.

4. Why is diversification necessary for individual and national prosperity?

Diversity helps the individual find a product or service in which he has an absolute or comparative advantage rather than selling or producing something which everyone produces or sells. The same principle applies to a country that finds its comparative or absolute advantage through diversity. Like an individual, the country can choose between alternatives which it did not realize existed.

5. Are the economic concepts of comparative and absolute advantage biblical? Explain. Incorporate the cultural mandate of Genesis and other supporting texts into your answer.

God gave a diversity of gifts to His church. Not everyone can or should do the same things. The church is the paradigm for the perfect society; thus, if there is diversity in the church, we should expect it in society along with its benefits. Moreover, competition can help everyone discover his absolute and comparative advantage. When God closes one door, he always opens another. We just need to knock on a lot of doors.

6. What are the factors which affect foreign direct investment in a particular country?

(1) How much will the host government tax the earnings of one's business? Will the tax rules be changed after the business is capitalized and operating? If there is no predictability about the legal rules of operating a business, the risks of doing business go up which, in turn, discourages direct investment.

(2) What is the availability of a trained workforce or a trainable workforce? Is the workforce reliable; that is, are workers in the habit of coming to work regularly and on time and working regular working hours?

(3) Is the country politically stable, and what are the odds of it staying that way?

(4) Is the legal system dependable enough to protect the business against fraud, common theft, and violations of contract? Can a large percentage of the judges be bribed.

(5) Does the nation have a history of securing property rights for expatriates (foreigners) who purchase property within the country; or does it, instead, have a history of nationalizing the assets of private companies and individuals?

(6) Another problem with doing business is the government bureaucracy which hinders the start-up and operation of businesses. The World Bank says that of all the countries in the world whose governments create unnecessary hindrances to operating businesses, 80% are in Africa.

(7) Is there trust in the market place allowing investors the freedom of mind to risk hard-earned cash? Rapid economic growth is characteristic of nations in which there is a high level of trust for *strangers*, not just for family members and close friends. Personal and societal values play a crucial role in determining a nation's wealth. Some workers do not show up for work on time, and they steal from the owners.

(8) A reliable, non-bribeable police force in protecting the basic human rights of life and property.

7. What biblical principle is implied in the law of the tithe?

God owns everything we have, not simply one-tenth of it.

8. Is tithing (the tenth) still the biblical standard of giving, or has this standard been elevated to a new standard? Give exegetical support. If you have a different view from my own, please state your position, also with exegetical support.

When urging the Christians in Corinth to give, Paul does not invoke the principle of the OT tithe. Rather, he appeals to the example of Christ who, although rich, became poor for our sakes (2 Cor. 8—

9). James and John also do not invoke the tithe to encourage wealthier Christians to help their brothers and sisters (James 2: 14-17; 1 Jn. 3: 17-18)

9. According to Gilder, what is the relationship between marriage and poverty?

“The short-sighted outlook of poverty stems largely from the breakdown of family responsibilities among fathers.” Marriage provides the incentive for men to harness their energies for future generations—their children—rather than squandering them for short-term gratification. Consequently, married men generally make more income than single men, and those who lose their marriage through divorce generally drop in income.

10. What has been the consequence of welfare solutions granting income to unmarried women?

In the welfare culture money becomes not something earned by men through hard work, but a right conferred on women by the state through policies that haven’t been thought through. In this culture, boys grow up seeking support from women, while they find manhood in the macho circles of the street and the bar or in the irresponsible fathering of random progeny.

Lesson Six Questions and Answers

1. If marriage were defined by the sexual act, what would be the consequences of this fact?

Marriage would be reduced to the biological function of mating. Animals mate, but humans are united together in a covenant of companionship.

2. What basic problem is marriage designed to solve? Prove this exegetically.

The problem of being lonely. In the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden, God Himself complained that it was “not good for man to be alone.” Prov. 2: 16-17 indicates that marriage is a covenant between a man and woman. Mal. 2: 13-16 brings out both the concept of marriage being a covenant and the marriage partner being a companion.

3. Discuss exegetically the practical implications of the covenant of companionship. In other words, if this is what marriage is, then how does this affect what kind of marriage it should be?

If marriage is a covenant of companionship, then vigorous effort should be made to realize the “one flesh” description of marriage in Gen. 2: 24. Husband and wife should attempt to move in the same direction as one person in their desire to please God in the work of dominion. By ordaining marriage, God’s plan is for most of the human race to unite in marriage to maximize their potential in exercising dominion. The woman was given to man to help him in this endeavor, to work together with him, not against him or separate from him. They share a common goal, and their intimacy in marriage enables them to achieve this goal, not as competitors, but as partners.

4. Explain the meaning of Gen. 2: 25. What are the implications for the marriage relationship?

They should be open to one another, vulnerable to one another, and honest with one another. Their physical openness (Gen. 2: 25) to one another without shame is metaphorical, representing their emotional, psychological, and spiritual transparency to one another.

5. Cite Scriptural mandate against mixed marriages between believers and unbelievers. What are the practical problems which come up in mixed marriages? Is there anything wrong with “missionary courting” which says, “I’ll be able to convert him (or her)”?

Marriage between believers and unbelievers is forbidden (1 Cor. 7: 39). There is no agreement between light and darkness (2 Cor. 6: 14). In this passage, Paul is talking about being intimately bound together with unbelievers. It will not work in a marriage because of differing goals and commitments. The single Christian should never get involved romantically with an unbeliever with the hope that he or she will be converted. There is no guarantee of this, and the relationship itself is a violation of the commandment against being unequally yoked.

6. Explain Gen. 2: 24 and its implications for marriage relationships and the relationship of the wife to the husband’s family. Does this text imply that the husband no longer has to honor his father and mother? Cite scriptural support for your answer.

The husband and wife’s primary loyalty, other than their supreme loyalty to Christ, is to each other. After marriage, the husband emotionally and physically leaves the authority structure of his father and mother to establish a new authority structure under a new roof. He is no longer subject to the authority of his father, although he must still honor his father and mother with assistance if needed and with love and respect (Mk. 7: 9-13). Husbands, therefore, must protect their wives from any abusive authority from others.

7. What are some of the dangers of husbands and wives living apart to pursue jobs in different cities?

Loss of companionship and loss of legitimate means of releasing sexual urges places both husband and wife into an unnecessarily tempting situation. Men in such situations often resort to prostitutes or other unlawful sexual relationships (1 Cor. 7: 5).

8. Explain 1 Pet. 3: 7 and its implications for the marriage relationship.

In the Greco-Roman social context it was an easy thing for husbands to exploit their wives emotionally and sexually. The husband could obtain an easy divorce, and since the wife would have a much more difficult time supporting herself financially, her husband wielded a substantial amount of emotional power over her. This weaker social position may be Peter’s meaning when he says that the woman was “weaker” (v. 7). Peter also may be referring to the woman’s subordinate position to her husband’s authority making her more vulnerable (exposed) to his mistreatment. Further, this admonition may also imply that a woman has greater emotional sensitivity to harsh and unfair treatment.

9. What is the main emphasis of Matthew’s account (chp. 19)?

Adultery by reason of remarriage if the divorce was not for immorality. Jesus was contradicting the Hillel school which taught easy divorce.

10. How must we apply the exceptional clause of Matt. 5 and 19—to the divorce or to remarriage, or to both? Explain.

The exceptional clause applies to both the divorce and the remarriage. If the divorce is for reasons other than sexual immorality, then both the divorce and the remarriage are unbiblical. But if for reason of immorality, both are illegitimate.

Lesson Seven Questions and Answers

1. Did Jesus give us every conceivable justification for divorce in His teaching? Explain.

The phrase “But to the rest I say, not the Lord” (1 Cor. 11) indicates that Paul is now going beyond the teaching of Christ on the subject of divorce. Jesus never intended to give us instructions on every issue pertaining to the Christian life but left many things to be taught by His apostles. This was one of them. The “rest” are those believers in the Corinthian church who were married to unbelievers (“if any brother [or sister] has a wife [husband] who is an unbeliever”). By making this statement, Paul qualifies the previous group in vv.10-11 as those marriages consisting only of believers, the ones Jesus was addressing in the Matthew, Mark, and Luke passages.

2. What other justification for divorce does Paul give in 1 Cor. 7 that is not found in Jesus’ teaching?

Abandonment by an unbelieving husband or wife who no longer wishes to remain with his or her believing spouse.

3. Why are the conditions for divorce different in mixed marriages between believers and unbelievers than in covenant marriages between two believers?

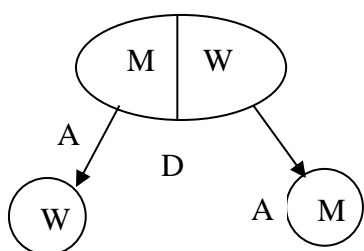
A Christian husband and wife will have the Bible, Christian friends, elders, prayer, and many other resources at their disposal to help them keep their marriage together. Hopefully, Christian couples will be willing to listen to their elders. Mixed marriages between a believer and an unbeliever have almost none of these advantages. In such cases, the unbeliever can appeal to the church to discipline the believing partner (if the believing partner is in the wrong), but the believing spouse doesn’t have this advantage since the unbeliever has no accountability to a church. Consequently, Paul does not require the same rigid standards for mixed marriages as he does for marriages between two believers.

4. Where do we find the “exceptional clause” for divorce and what is its significance?

We find it in Matt. 5: 32 and 19: 9. It establishes beyond reasonable doubt that Jesus allowed at least one cause for divorce, sexual immorality. The clause legitimates not only the divorce but also the remarriage subsequent to divorce. Apart from adultery, whoever divorces his wife or husband and marries another commits adultery through remarriage.

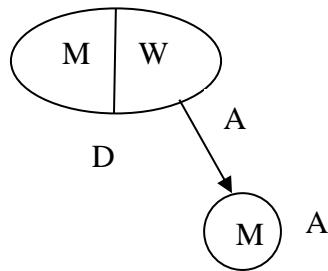
5. Explain the following charts in your own words.

Luke 16: 18



“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.” (Luke 16:18 NASB). The man who divorces his wife for unbiblical reasons commits adultery by marrying another woman. Furthermore the second man who marries this divorced wife also commits adultery.

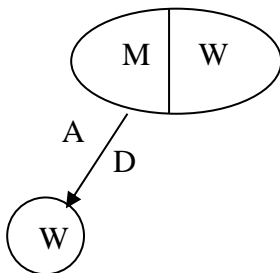
Matt. 5: 31-32



“but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” (Matthew 5:32 NASB)

The wife is divorced for unbiblical reasons. She commits adultery by marrying another man. The man who marries this woman also commits adultery by marrying an unlawfully divorced woman. Also, the former husband who divorces his wife for unbiblical reasons is guilty. He is implicated in his former wife’s adultery because he divorced her unlawfully, although not directly guilty of adultery.

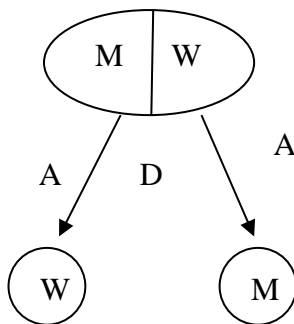
Matt. 19: 3-9



“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” (Matthew 19:9 NASB)

The man who divorces his wife for unbiblical reasons commits adultery by marrying another woman.

Mark 10: 2-12



“And He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her;¹² and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.” (Mark 10:11-12 NASB)

The man who divorces his wife for unbiblical reasons commits adultery by marrying another woman. The woman who divorces her husband for unbiblical reasons commits adultery by marrying another man.

6. How do marriages between believers become mixed marriages? What are the implications for divorce?

When professing believers do not fulfill the material and sexual obligations of the marriage (cf. 1 Cor. 7: 3-4; 33-34), the believing spouse has recourse to the disciplinary procedure of the church court which calls the offending party to repentance. If there is no repentance, the offending party is eventually excommunicated from the church and declared an unbeliever. He or she may now be divorced on the grounds of abandonment. Although he may say he wants to remain in the marriage, he has demonstrated by his behavior that he does not want to remain with marital obligations.

7. Discuss the material and sexual obligations of marriage found in 1 Cor. 7: 3-4 and 33-34. What OT passage is Paul referring to in these texts? From the OT text, what kind of argument can be made in favor of using this text as grounds for material maintenance of a wife?

The husband “must fulfill his duty to his wife” and vice versa (the other way around). These are not options; they are duties rooted in OT law and confirmed by the apostle Paul. “Pleasing” the wife would include conjugal love, affection, and providing for her and the children adequately. Pleasing the husband would include conjugal love and various domestic responsibilities, although women also worked outside the home.

A slave holder who took his female slave as his wife was obligated to provide her with food, clothing, and sexual relations (Ex. 21: 10). We may assume that shelter was also part of this package). If he took another wife, he could not reduce any of these provisions which would impoverish her in her own home. You will notice that sexual intercourse was not the husband’s only duty, but the duty to provide the basic necessities of life. If these basic necessities were withheld, the woman “shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.” What this meant was that the woman could leave the marriage if these things were not provided by the husband, and she would be not be required to repay the cost of her purchase price as a slave. It is not our purpose here to answer all the questions which arise from this passage, including the question of slavery. What is pertinent (applicable) to our discussion is the protection of the woman under biblical law. Even a wife originally bought as a slave had certain legal rights which could not be violated. If they were violated, she could divorce, and the divorce would be very expensive to the husband. He would lose both his slave and her purchase price. Arguing from the lesser to the greater, if such protection was afforded a former slave, then certainly the rights, privileges, and protection given a fully dowered wife were much greater, and this is the main point here.

The implication is that, if breach of contract to provide is applicable for bonded girls, it is applicable as grounds for divorce for endowered wives. St. Paul referred to this law in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, where the requirement of sexual relations and all “due benevolence” (or “obligations” BV) is specified. St. Paul spoke of the failure to meet the sexual responsibilities of marriages as defrauding the marital partner. (It can also be described, and has been, as a form of desertion.) The reference to Exodus 21:1-10 is clear; St. Paul spoke in the context of Biblical law.⁴³⁴

It is, therefore, arguable from Exodus 21: 10-11 that the failure of the husband to provide basic essentials to his wife is grounds for divorce.

8. What are the implications for remarriage found in 1 Cor. 7: 27-28?

In this passage Paul expressly states that the one who has been released (divorced) from a wife has not sinned by getting remarried even during a troubled time for all married people (v.26, “present distress”). Because of this “present distress” Paul cautions such people against marriage and remarriage, but assures them that marriage is a biblical option. Those released from marriage by biblical divorce have “not sinned” if they remarry.

9. What are the implications for remarriage found in Ezek. 44: 22?

Ezekiel 44:22 forbids a priest to marry a widow or a divorced woman, but only a virgin or the widow of another priest. By forbidding the **priest** from marrying a divorced woman, it clearly implies that marriage to a divorced woman by anyone other than a priest was permitted. If not permitted to anyone, the restriction would have been unnecessary.

10. How do we know that Paul did not forbid widowers from holding church office?

⁴³⁴ Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 403.

If Paul had wished to restrict the office of elder to someone who had been married only once, he could have said so plainly with the phrase “married (*gameo*) only once.” Instead, he wanted to restrict the office to those who had an exemplary monogamous marriage.

Lesson Eight Questions and Answers

1. Take a position on whether Paul is speaking of fidelity in marriage or monogamy in 1 Tim. 3: 2 and 12 and defend it biblically.

[No answer supplied. I have clearly laid out my position in the lesson.]

2. Explain my position on polygamy and church membership. If you disagree with my position, give me a biblical argument against it.

By restricting elders to monogamy, Paul implicitly allowed the existence of polygamous marriages in the church. Otherwise, it would not have been necessary for him to mention the necessity of monogamy among elders since every member would have been restricted to monogamy. If Paul is not speaking of monogamy in 1 Tim. 3: 2, we are left without any other NT instruction about what to do with polygamous relationships in the church.

3. Is polygamy a sin? Argue my position first, and if you disagree with me, argue against my position. You will not be graded off if you disagree with me.

Neither in the OT or the NT is polygamy condemned as a sin. Jesus’ use of “the two shall be one flesh” implicitly sets monogamy as the Biblical standard, but it does not establish polygamy as a sin punishable by church censure. King David had at least 10 wives before his adultery with Bathsheba but Nathan the prophet did not condemn him for polygamy, but for adultery. Moreover, Ex. 21: 7-11 commanded a polygamous husband to sexually love both of his wives.

4. If we refuse polygamists from being communing church members, what problems do we produce? We encourage husbands to unlawfully divorce the wives they don’t prefer. We also place these unwanted wives in situations of possible poverty or cause them to use desperate means of making a living.

5. Discuss David’s confrontation with Nathan and its implications for the subject of polygamy.

At the time David was confronted by Nathan, he had many wives; but Nathan confronted him for adultery, not polygamy. Had polygamy been considered sin by the Mosaic legislation, Nathan would have condemned David long before his adultery with Bathsheba. Nor can we say that David was a hard-hearted sinner. At the time he was married to many wives, he was writing psalms that are part of the canon of Scripture today.

6. Summarize John Murray’s position concerning the use of OT narratives to determine the rule of conduct.

According to Murray, examination of OT narratives only describes what the characters did without in any way suggesting whether God approved or disapproved of their behavior.

7. Some missionaries suggest that polygamists should continue to support all their wives with food and shelter while cohabiting with only one. What do you think about this solution? Support your view from Scripture.

My view: This “solution”, while sensitive to the financial needs of women, makes virtual widows of all but one wife. For this reason, its value for social stability is questionable. In the eyes of the African community, the other wives are rejected women, only slightly superior to divorced women. As we saw earlier, a man who took a second wife must continue giving his first wife food, clothing, and sexual rights, even though, in this particular incident, the first wife was initially sold to him as a slave (Ex.21:7-11). In other words, the law commanded that he have sex with both his wives. Sexual intercourse with both wives—or, with every wife—was not optional; it was commanded.

There is one other interesting consequence of letting the polygamist keep all his wives but cohabiting with only one. According to Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 7, these wives have been **deserted by their husband**. The slave wife of Exodus 21: 7-11 may demand food, clothing, and conjugal rights; and if these are not provided by her polygamous husband, she may divorce him without being obligated to refund the price of her purchase. Paul alludes to the material maintenance of Exodus 21: 7-11 in 1 Corinthians 7: 3-4. He does not mention divorce in the immediate context, but it is clear that these basic requirements are not optional for the husband or wife; they are covenant obligations. The polygamous husband who will not provide conjugal love for the rejected wives has violated the marriage covenant and is now subject to the discipline of the church. Lacking repentance, he could be declared an unbeliever, giving his wives grounds for divorce and remarriage.

8. What is John Frame’s position on polygamy? Do you think it is consistent or inconsistent? Explain.

Frame says polygamy is sin, but it is not like any other sin. One stop being a thief, but he cannot stop being a polygamist because he has marital obligations to all his wives. “Sinful divorce cannot remedy the sin of polygamy.”

My view: Frame is adopting a position which he refutes elsewhere, tragic moral choice, in which a person has no biblical option out of a sinful situation. But the Bible never puts us in a tragic moral choice in which we must choose between two sinful options.

In Scripture, we have a moral duty to do what is right, and never to do what is wrong....On this view [*tragic moral choice*], the law of God itself is contradictory, for it requires contradictory behavior.⁴³⁵

While polygamy is not—and never was—the ideal, I believe that God has sanctified the polygamous marriage of a believer. The problems associated with this arrangement will not magically disappear, but grace can overcome them. The situation of the polygamist may be similar to that of a Christian couple who contracted marriage after unlawful divorces. In other words, they committed adultery by marrying each other because their obligations to their former spouses had not been biblically dissolved.

But having entered the marriage, having recognized their mistake, and having repented, are they still living in the sin of adultery? I don’t think so. Consider also the same scenario involving a couple who

⁴³⁵ Frame, *DCL*, pp. 231-232

divorced their spouses ten or twenty years ago. They later realized that their divorce from their former spouses was unbiblical. Are they now living in sin? But even this situation is somewhat different from polygamy which is never explicitly condemned as sin anywhere in the Bible.

9. Interact with some of the rulings of the Anglican Church in Kenya.

[Various answers possible]

10. Explain how the church in Africa has shown a certain degree of hypocrisy concerning the issue of polygamy.

The church has made polygamy the unforgiveable sin while tolerating open adultery, unbiblical divorce, and serial monogamy.