COURSE GUIDE

CRS231
CHRISTIAN ETHICS

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Introduction

CRS231-Christian Ethics is a one semester two-credit unit course. This course consists of 15 units which include the definition of Christian Ethics, the origin of Christian ethics and branches of Christian ethics, the relationship between Christian ethics and religion, Christian ethics and the law, ethics as a science of thought, the reason why it is needful for us to study ethics, descriptive ethics, meta ethics, the theory of value, ethics in the early church, the ethics of Christ, the Christian and his relationship to the state and the Christian and contemporary ethical issues like, abortion, genetic technology and the organ industry.

There are no compulsory prerequisites for this course. The course guide tells you briefly what the course is about, what you are expected to know in each unit, what course materials you will be using and how you can work your way through these materials. It also emphasizes the need for Tutor- Marked Assignments. (TMAs) Detailed information on TMAs is found in the separate file which will be sent to you later. There are periodic tutorial classes that are linked to the course.

What You Will Learn in this Course

The overall aim of CRS231: Christian Ethics is to introduce you to the basic issues in ethics, the function of Christian ethics and the different sources for the development of Christian sense of morality. Your understanding of this course will prepare you as a student to understand the fundamentals of ethics, the relationship between Christian ethics and morality, and the different ethical issues that the church is faced with today.

Course Aims

This course aims at helping the students of Christian Theology to understand the fundamentals of Christian ethics, the various types of ethical considerations and the contemporary ethical issues that the church is faced with.

Course Objectives

To achieve the aims set above there are set overall objectives. In addition each module and unit also has specific objectives. On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

Define Christian ethics
Understand the origins of Christian ethics.
Understand the ethics of the early church.
Understand the relation of Christian ethics to culture.
Assess the relationship between
Christian ethics and law.
Evaluate the place of Christian ethics in the economic life of the individual.
Assess the role of ethics in the family.
Examine the role of Christian ethics in modifying the conscience of the Christian.

Understand the role of Christian ethics in the ensuring world peace and international order.

Working through this Course

In order to pass this course with ease, it is important to study the units along with other related materials. You will also need to answer all the exercise questions. The exercise questions are to assist you in understanding the concepts and themes in the units better. This also prepares you for the final examination.

Course Materials

1) Course Guide
2) Study Units
3) Assignment file
4) Relevant textbooks including the ones listed in the references.

Study Units

Module 1 The Basics of Christian Ethics

Unit 1 Definition of Christian Ethics Unit 2 The Sources of Christian Ethics Unit 3 The Ethics of Jesus
Unit 4 Christian Characters
Unit 5 The Nature of Sin

Module 2 The Christian and the Family

Unit 1 The Ethics of Interpersonal Relations
Unit 2 The Christian Duties to Self
Unit 3 The Christian Duties to the Society
Unit 4 The Christian Family
Unit 5 The Christian and the Problem of Divorce

Module 3 The Christian and the World Community

Unit 1 The Culture and Ethics
Unit 2 The Christian and the State
Unit 3 Christians and the Race Problem
Unit 4 Christians and War Situations
Unit 5 World Peace and International Order

Textbooks and References

Ozumba G.O. (2001). *Ethics: A Philosophical Approach*. Lagos: O.O. Publishers.

Wallace, H. A. et al., (1943). *Christian Bases of World Order* (New York and Nashville :) Abingdon-Cokesbury Press.

Oshitelu G.A. (2003). *A Background to Christian Philosophy*, Oputoru Publishers, Lagos.

Knudson, A. C. (1943). *The Principles of Christian Ethics* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Walsh, Chad and Eric Montizambert (1954). *Faith and Behaviour* (New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co.

Assessment File

An assessment file and the marking scheme will be made available to you. In the assessment file, you will find details of the work. You must submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain from these assignments will count towards the final mark that you obtain for this course. Further information on assignments will be found in the Assignment File itself and later in this *Course Guide* in the section on assessment.

Presentation Schedule

The Presentation Schedule in your course material gives you the important dates for the completion of tutor-marked assignments and attending tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the date. You should guard against lagging behind in your work.

Assessment

There are two aspects of the assessment of this course, the tutor-marked assignments and the written examination. The marks you obtain in these two areas will make up your total marks. The assignment must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadline stated in the presentation schedule and the assignment file. The work you submit to your tutor will count for 30% of your total score.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

There are fifteen tutor marked assignments in this course. You need to submit all the assignments. The best five (i.e. the highest five of the fifteen marks) will be counted. The total marks for the best four (4) assignments will be 30% of your total course mark.

Assignment questions for the unit in this course are contained in the Assignment File. You should be able to complete your assignments from the information and materials contained in your textbooks, reading and study units. However, you are advised to use other references to broaden your viewpoint and provide a deeper understanding of the subject.

When you have completed each assignment, send it together with your assignment file to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline given. If, however, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is done to discuss the possibility of an extension.

Final Examination and Grading

The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self- testing, practice exercises and tutor-marked problems you have come across. All areas of the course will be assessed. You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

Course Marking Scheme

The following table lays out how the actual course mark allocation is broken down:

Assessment	**Marks**
Assignment (Best Three Assignment out of Four marked)	30%
Final Examination	70%
Total	100%

Course Overview

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them and assignments that follow them.

Unit	**Title of Work**	**Weeks Activity**	
Course Guide			
Module 1: The Basics of Christian Ethics			
1	Definition of Christian Ethics	Week 1	Assignment 1
2	Sources of Christian Ethics	Week 2	Assignment 2
3	The Ethics of Jesus	Week 3	Assignment 3
4	Christian Character and Ethics	Week 4	Assignment 4
5	The Nature of Sin	Week 5	Assignment 5
Module 2: The Christian Family			
1	The Ethics of Interpersonal Relations	Week 6	Assignment 1
2	The Christian Duties to Self	Week 7	Assignment 2
3	The Christian Duties to Society	Week 8	Assignment 3
4	The Christian Family	Week 9	Assignment 4
5	The Christian and Divorce	Week 10	Assignment 5
Module 3: The Christian and the World Community			

1	Culture and Ethics	Week 11	Assignment 1
2	The Christian and the State	Week 12	Assignment 2
3	Christians and the Race Problem		Assignment 3
4	Christianity and War Situations	Week 14	Assignment 4
5	World Peace and International Order	Week 15	Assignment 5

How to Get the Most from this Course

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning, you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might assign you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other material. Just as a lecturer might give you an in- class exercise, your units provide exercises for you to do, so do them at appropriate points.

Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives enable you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the units,you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this, you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from a reading section.

Remember that your tutor's job is to assist you. When you need help, don't hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

Read this Course Guide thoroughly.

Organize a study schedule; refer to the 'course overview' for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you chose to use, you should decide on it and write in you own dates for working on each unit.

Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they lag behind in their course work.

Turn to Unit1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit. Assemble the

study materials. Information about what you need for a
unit is given in the 'overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will
almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.

Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.

Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.

When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can the start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.

8. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting the next unit. Keep to your schedule when the assignment is returned pay serious attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor- marked assignment form and also the written comments on the ordinary assignments.

9. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in the course guide).

Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

Information relating to tutorials will be provided at the appropriate time. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must take your tutor- marked assignment to your study centres well before the due dates (at least two working days are required). They will be mark by your tutor and return to you as soon as possible.
Do not hesitate to contact your tutor if you need help. Contact your tutor if:

1.0. You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings.
2.0. You have difficulty with the exercises.
3.0. You have a question or problem with an assignment or with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before

attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussion actively.

Summary

CRS231 intends to introduce you to the basic issues of Christian Ethics.

Upon completing this course, you will be able to answer questions such as:

6.0 What is the meaning of Christian Ethics?
7.0 What are the sources of Christian Ethics?
8.0 Identify the basics elements of Christian Ethics?
9.0 Compare Christian ethics to ethics in philosophy?
10.0 Define Christian ethics?
11.0 What do you understand as the ethics of the early church?
12.0 What is the relation of Christian ethics to culture?
13.0 Assess the relationship between Christian ethics and law?
14.0 Evaluate the place of Christian ethics in the economic life of the individual?
15.0 Assess the role of ethics in the family?
16.0 Examine the role of Christian ethics in modifying the conscience of the Christian?
17.0 Examine the role of Christian ethics in ensuring world peace and international order?

MAIN COURSE

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MODULE 1 THE BASICS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

UNIT 1 DEFINITION OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with what is morally good and bad or right and wrong. When we begin to use such terms as right, wrong, good, bad, virtuous, sinful, ought, duty and obligation among others, we are directly within the confines of ethics. All these form the moral sense and the sentences in which they are made used to express moral or ethical judgments.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the meaning of ethics
- examine the need of the ‘Christian’ attached to our title of study understand some concepts related to ethics.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What is Ethics?

The term 'ethics' comes from the Greek word '*ethos'* meaning norm or customary. This is equivalent to moral (Ozumba, 2001). It means a customary way of acting, contrasted with historical or anthropological way of acting. Ethics is the branch of philosophy known as moral philosophy or philosophical thinking about morality. It includes moral problems and moral judgments. Ethics therefore deals with judgment as to the rightness or wrongness, virtuous or vicious, desirability or undesirability, approval or disapproval of our actions. The subject matter of ethics is nothing but human absolute end.

Ethics or moral is contrasted with non-moral rather than amoral or immoral. It has meanings which do not have such direct link as to give acceptable content to represent the direct contrasted of the word ethics or moral. The word ethics has to do with value systems arising from the reasoned or acceptable as against mere habitual or customary way of life. Immoral stands for the obscene behaviour like sexual immorality or that which offends acceptable standards of morality. This is the same as amoral which stands for anything that is contrary to acceptable behavioral (moral) conducts. Ethics therefore embrace, but surpass, discussions that centre on immorality or amorality.

The ethics or morality of person or groups, however, consists not merely in what they habitually or customarily do, but always a sign of what they believe. It may be asked whether ethics is concerned with life beyond this earth. As a branch of philosophy, ethics is tasked to look at moral issues from the platform of their reasonableness and in view of how they contribute to good earthly existence.

3.2 The Meaning of Christian Ethics

This is a course on Christian ethics. Its main focus will be on Christian action and on the principles, derived from the Christian faith, by which to act. It is at the point of a multitude of decisions about what to do or what not to do - how to do right and how to avoid doing what a Christian ought not to do - that the daily strains of living are most acute. Though there can be no exact blueprint by which to settle all these dilemmas, there is light to be seen from the Bible.

It was said of old of an evil man, "*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he*" (K.J.V.), and this may be said of the good man as well. The indispensable connection between Christian character and conduct is such that cannot be hidden for long.

Yet, on the other hand, some things can be said with a fair degree of certainty and assurance. Is adultery right or wrong? Are double-dealing and dishonesty to be condoned in business and politics? Ought children to be starved in body, mind, or soul? Christians have no doubt as to the answer, though how to carry out the implications of the answer may not be simple. Even on such matters as race relations and war, the Christian conscience has spoken in our time with an amazing degree of unanimity as to principle. And if principles can be agreed upon, the groundwork is laid for action.

There are at least six frames of reference within which the term has been used. These overlap and meet at the edges, but much confusion has come about from failure to see clearly that there are different frames of reference. Christian ethics may mean:

1) The best in the moral philosophy of all ages and places,
2) The moral standards of Christendom,
3) The ethics of the Christian Church and its many churches,
4) The ethics of the Bible,
5) The ethics of the New Testament, and
6) The ethical insights of Jesus.

The term "Christian ethics," means a systematic study of the way of life exemplified and taught by Jesus, applied to the manifold problems and decisions of human existence. (Georgia Harkness 1967).

3.3 Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy

3.3.1 Plato's Moral Philosophy

How does this differ from the focus of reference in the various systems of classical moral philosophy? Though this is not the place for an extended exposition of them, even a casual glance may suggest that there are both affinities and differences. Platonic thought makes much of *eros*, and *eros* means love. Yet *agape* though it also means love, is not the same thing as *eros*. *Eros* (which must not be confused with its modern derivative, "the erotic') means a quest for the highest values, the harmonious adjustment of personality in a well-rounded life, self-fulfillment through seeking the good. This is achieved in the individual only through promoting the well-being of others. It therefore involves mutuality in love. Its modern correlate is the quest for "the good life" through self-realization.

3.3.2 The Moral Philosophy of Aristotle

Aristotle's *eudaemonism,* with its emphasis on a life of moderation with every man fulfilling the function for which he is fitted by nature, and thereby ensuring happiness, is a practical and down-to-earth system which still has much modern relevance. The hedonistic, or pleasure- seeking, ethics of Epicurus was by no means the crass sensualism suggested by the oft-quoted 'Eat, drink, and be merry; for tomorrow we die"; it centered in a refined enjoyment of congenial friends, simplicity of living, and freedom from tension in a cultured and unstrenuous life. Stoicism, on the other hand, with its appeal to courage in the face of life's vicissitudes and the pursuit of virtue solely for virtue's sake, was both a more serious and a more religiously grounded ethic. Its doctrine of an all-pervasive World-Reason, or Logos, and of a natural law of morality fundamental to all existence and embracing in its scope all men, had a note of universalism which made Stoicism particularly open to amalgamation with Christian thought.

3.3.3 Other Moral Philosophies

These, of course, are not the only classical systems of moral philosophy. There is the formal, duty ethics of Kant with its categorical imperative, or unconditional demand, to treat all persons as ends, never as means, and to act only in such a way that one's conduct could be universalized. There is also the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, centered in the "greatest happiness of the greatest number" and the measurement of all courses of action by their usefulness toward this end. There is also the more recent, but in its elements very old, "social adjustment" philosophy of John Dewey which measures right conduct by the ability to take one's place as a good citizen in an ordered, democratic society.

It is apparent that there are good elements in all of these systems. But are they Christian?

3.4 The Role of the Bible in Christian Ethics

The Bible is certainly indispensable to our knowledge of Christian truth and moral obligation. Without it, it is very possible that there would be no churches today, no Christendom, no knowledge of Christ. It is, of course, conceivable that God would have found a way to propagate the faith by word of mouth without a Book through all the centuries, and the fact that Roman Catholicism could exist so long without access to the Bible by the laity makes it impossible to say categorically that the Bible is the *sine qua non* of Christianity. Yet few would dispute the fact that without the Bible we should be infinitely poorer in our Christian experience and moral insight.

The Bible as we hold it today is the common possession of all Christians and it is through it that we are able to forge a common front and deduce a common ground on issues of doctrine and direction. It therefore plays a major role in the determination of the direction of the Christian world at a given time. Through the ages, the spiritual progress or otherwise achieved by the church has been directly tied to the level of insights garnered from the Bible.

3.5 Christian Ethics and Jesus Christ

The keynote in the life and teaching of Jesus with regard to man's moral duty is found in "obedient love." This means that with faith in God as the energizing center of one's being, one is required to seek to do the will of God by loving God supremely and one's neighbor as one's self.

What then is Christian ethics? It is the systematic study of the way of life set forth by Jesus Christ, applied to the daily demands and decisions of our personal and social existence.
Christian ethics centers in the ethical insights of Jesus. Jesus had a past, and from his life and influence came the Church of which the
beginnings are recorded for us in the New Testament.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit as the opening unit of this course is dedicated to the careful examination of the basic terms of reference in this course- Christian ethics. It is an undeniable fact that moral philosophies are common to all cultures of mankind. They all contain certain forms of directives for daily living and recommendations for the achievement of a peaceful social existence and wholesome living.
But as laudable as these moral philosophies may be they cannot adequately satisfy the yearning of the Christian mind that is entirely hinged on apprehending divine truth.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have been able to examine the meaning of ethics, the place of ethics in moral philosophy and its meaning in the Christian sense. Also the relation of Christian ethics to Jesus, the Bible and other moral philosophies were examined.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is the meaning of Christian ethics?
2. Explain what is meant by moral philosophy?
3. Explain the role of Jesus Christ in the formulation of Christian doctrine?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

G. A. Oshitelu (2003). *A Background to Christian Philosophy*. Oputoru Publishers, Lagos.

G. O. Ozumba (2001). *Ethics: A Philosophical Approach*. Lagos: O.O. Publishers.

H. A. Wallace, *et al*. (1943). *Christian Bases of World Order*. (New York and Nashville) Abingdon-Cokes Bury Press.

A. C. Knudson, (1943). *The Principles of Christian Ethics.* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Chad Walsh and Eric Montizambert (1954). *Faith and Behavior* (New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co.

UNIT 2 THE SOURCES OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The origin of morality may be difficult to trace. Right from creation, according to Biblical accounts, man was given a code of conduct comprised of dos and don'ts which were believed would guide him to attain peace and eternal bliss. However, with the fall of man from grace, he also lost his grip on peace. Hence one can conclude that morality is as old as creation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

identify the source of philosophical ethics
evaluate the role of certain philosophers in shaping the ethics of their various societies and times
assess the role of divine covenant in shaping Christian ethics
discuss the role of the law in Christian ethics
evaluate the role played by the prophets in shaping Biblical Christian ethics.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Origin of Philosophical Ethics

Ethics is used in three different but related sense, the first sense of ethics signifies a general pattern or way of life. This can be likened to the Christian conduct or moral code. In another sense, ethics is used to signify

a set of rules of conduct or moral code. Here, ethics is relevant to other fields in professional and applied ethics. The third sense of ethics is seen as an inquiry into the measuring of ethical terms and its relation to ways of life and rules of conduct. This sense relates to meta-ethics which is a branch of moral philosophy.

Philosophy in its written and systematic form is attributed to the Greeks and hence ethical philosophy traces its origin to the Greeks too. Ethics is said to have started in the fifth century B.C and it was given its philosophical texture by Socrates who jostled men of his time into a living consciousness of their duty to live a life guided by rational criticism of their beliefs and practices. In his life and teachings, Socrates showed exemplary character. He displayed an uncompromising stand for what is upright and moral. It was for the cause of making good men out of ordinary men that he incurred the envy of people who subsequently plotted his death. He lived a strictly moral life. The same can be said of men in every culture who became great examples and inspirations for a viable moral life in the midst of a corrupt and misguided society. The teachings of Buddha Confucius and other great moral teachers readily come to mind.

Socrates believed that a sound body should house a sound mind; he saw the soul as the proper entity that rises above the pettiness of the body. The soul must transcend custom and tradition. The soul should accept only those rules of conduct that are in

accord with objective moral principles. To him, an unexamined life is not worth living. Ethics however acquired its meaning as a universal science of good conduct from Aristotle.

3.2 The Origin of Christian Ethics

It is important that we examine certain important facts in our study of the sources of Christian ethics. The first is the light that the Old Testament can throw upon Jesus as we note what he retained, consciously or unconsciously from his heritage and what he set aside in response to higher insights. The second is the need to understand the Old Testament as a whole and to see it in perspective, since it also form a part of the Christian's Bible. The third arises from the fact that the social teachings of the prophets supply a degree of concreteness and of social application to specific circumstances which appears only marginally in the teachings of Jesus

3.2.1 The Covenant

The concept of covenant occupies an important place throughout the Old Testament. From the creation story to the closing pages of the Old Testament, it permeates the very essence of the relationship between Israel and her God. It is the most basic and distinctive idea in the Old Testament, affecting as it does, the total religious and moral outlook of Israel. In it, are the nature of their God, his relationship with them and to the stream of history, the framework within which

they conceived their moral obligation, the grounds of divine judgment, and the hope of salvation which was to grow into the expectancy of the promised Messiah and the kingdom of God. This is not to say that in the initial establishment or acceptance of the covenant the people foresaw all this, but it laid the groundwork on which all the rest could be erected. This relationship centers in a covenant voluntarily initiated by God, offering Yahweh's protection and support in return for obedience to his will and law.

Israel's covenant relation foreshadows in a number of ways what was to become more explicit in Christianity. The most obvious connection is, of course, the "new covenant" and the establishment of Church as the "new Israel" with Christ as its center and head. But this is not all. Both judgment and redemption on God's part rest the foundation of the covenant idea; likewise the demand for obedience and hence for unremitting moral responsibility on man's side. So does the hope of the coming of the Kingdom, not as something earned by man's good works nor yet as a state in which God can be indifferent to human effort, but rather as a consummation in which the condition of the covenant would be fully met. The apocalyptists of later Judaism distorted the covenant idea into an expectancy of the salvation God's elect solely by the direct intervention of God; those Jews who envisaged Israel as a holy commonwealth whose holiness was to be tested and proved by moral obedience came closer to its meaning.

3.2.2 The Law

The Law became Israel's understanding of what is expected of them in the bilateral relationship with their God. There were two basic tests of being a Jew. One was circumcision; the other was the more general requirement of the keeping of the law. The first was clearly repudiated by Christianity, as became evident in the very important decision recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. What Christianity did with the law is a much more complex question, and the answer depends on what aspect of the law is being considered and in what context it is understood.

The Covenant Code, which is affixed to the Exodus Decalogue, illustrates admirably the blending of moral with religious considerations, and within religion the mixture of adoration and gratitude with ceremonial observance, which characterizes Israel's faith as a whole. It begins with an injunction to imageless worship, provisions for altars and sacrifices, and assurance of the divine presence and blessing. Then follow nearly three chapters of very explicit provisions concerning slaves, punishment for deeds of violence and theft, restitution for injury to property, family relations, and helpfulness to the stranger and to the poor, observance of the Sabbath as a day of rest for servants and even for the animals. They are not provisions for our day, but in the setting of agrarian society in the tenth century B.C. they show an admirable sense of justice, moral responsibility, and humane concern for the underprivileged. In between are stern warnings against sacrifice to strange gods and firm injunctions as to the modes and times of sacrifice to Yahweh.

The law was by no means the barren and external thing that the legalists of Jesus' time or the literalists of ours have too often made. It was founded on bedrock - the righteous, sovereign rule of a protecting, gracious God who demanded its observance. It took on concreteness from the circumstances of the times - social, political, and economic - as ours inevitably must. Yet its basic frame of reference is timeless

3.2.3 The Prophets

It is the almost universal consensus of serious students of the Bible that in the message of the prophets is the high-water mark of the Old Testament.

The first observation to make is that the prophets, like the compilers of the law, proceeded from the assumptions of the covenant. This made their messages both religious and ethical, with an intertwining which makes it impossible to withdraw either element without losing the heart of their message. They never doubted that Israel was the chosen people of God and that a righteous, gracious, but exacting God demanded obedience of his people. What they objected to, as the burden of their message, were the misunderstandings of God's will which substituted ceremonialism for justice, mercy, and faith, and the apostasies whereby the people persistently violated their side of the covenant.

Did the prophets reject the cultic side of Israel's religion? Their invectives against the substitution of ritualistic correctness for righteousness leaves open this possibility, and of the greater prophets Ezekiel alone, standing on the threshold of the postexilic period, expressly calls for a purified ritual as an integral part of the worship of Yahweh. Opinions differ as to whether the others rejected outrightly the sacrificial cult. It seems more probable; however, that what they protested was not its existence, deeply embedded as it was in the covenant relation, but its perversion through exaltation to a place of primacy. Comparably, no Christian today needs object to the ritual and traditional observances of the Church when these contribute to the worship of God, but every Christian ought to protest when "doing things right" in the Church becomes a substitute for righteousness.

Second, the prophets must be understood in both an individual and a social context. This is true whether what is being considered is the source or the object of their message. They were for the most part lone figures assailing the popular mores, and hence misunderstood. But to assume that they were solely individual religious geniuses is to miss the fact that they emerged out of a religious community and spoke to a religious community. They were Hebrew prophets, not Greek philosophers or Buddhist Bodhisattvas, and they never dreamed of stepping outside of this framework. Furthermore, though we are accustomed to think of a progressive growth in a sense of individual responsibility from Amos to Ezekiel, the difference at this point is probably overstated. The message of every prophet, Moses, Samuel, Nathan, and Elijah as well as those who came later, was to every individual within the community of Israel, and neither king nor humblest subject was exempt from the obligation to obey the will of Yahweh. The application of this fact to mistaken modern notions of an"individual" versus a "social" gospel is obvious.

Third, though explicit monotheism and universalism were a late development, their nucleus is implicit in all prophetic preaching. The ceremonialism of Israel, though understood by the people as the mark of Israel's particularity, had actually much in common with other primitive religious rites. This similarity was one reason why they found it so easy to take over Canaanite worship. It was in the ethical insights of Israel, as these were seen most clearly by the prophets, that the greatest distinctiveness lay, and in their vision of the God of righteousness was the germ cell of monotheism. The gods of the nations were many because the nations were many; the God of righteousness was one, and in his hand laid the destinies of nations. As we noted earlier, no sharp distinction was drawn between nature and history; God was the Maker and sovereign Ruler in both spheres. From this conviction, implicit in the whole idea of the covenant but seen with fullest clarity by the prophets, it was a logical step to the conclusion that God had given to Israel special privileges in order to be the special servant of all mankind. This insight, glimpsed by Amos, was destined to come to full expression in the second Isaiah.

Fourth, the prophets saw with utter clarity the persistent fact of sin, and saw it not as maladjustment or even as failure to "hit the mark" of some objective human standard, but as sin against God. It was rebellion against God and disloyalty to God that made the self-centered luxury of the rich, the exploitation of the poor, bribery, drunkenness, and harlotry such evils. This is not to depreciate the prophets' sense of social justice; they had it in splendid measure. But it was grounded in something more basic than human law or tribal standards.

And fifth, in everything the prophets said, they spoke to the current situation. They spoke from a perspective that was more than "current," but they never spoke in abstractions. Where they enunciated general principles, they spoke to the people as they were in terms of what ought to be. The prophets saw and set forth visions that still stir us, but they were not "visionaries." It is because of their utter realism as they spoke within the conditions of a social and political community - or to adopt a current term, a responsible society - that next to the teachings of Jesus we find in them our firmest basis of social ethics.

4.0 CONCLUSION

An examination of both the philosophical and Christian ethics points to the role of ethics in affecting positively the way people live and relate with each other. All over the world and in every culture, men have genuinely sought for the right form of behavioral pattern that will make the society a better place to live for all.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has examined the sources of ethics in a general sense and Christian ethics with the purpose of ascertaining the factors that brought about their existence and the way these sources have affected what today has come to be known as Christian ethics.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. How will you explain the seeming universal similarities of ethics in human societies?
2. What is the role of the law in the formulation of Christian ethics?
3. Does the covenant relationship between the Israelites and God determine the way they live?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

J. M. Powis Smith. (1923). *The Moral Life of the Hebrews.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

G. Harkness. (1943). *The Sources of Western Morality.* Princeton: Prentice-Hall, pp.67-84.

Harry Emerson Fosdick. (1938). A *Guide to Understanding the Bible* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1938).

UNIT 3 THE ETHICS OF JESUS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is dedicated solely to the examination of the concept of morality as held by Christ. This is done in relation to his conception of the Old Testament. Although the Christian faith has often been described as a clear departure from the statutes of the Old Testament, the study in this unit may however reveal otherwise.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

know the relation of the ethics of Jesus to the Old Testament understand the underlining factors behind the ethics of Jesus
evaluate the ethics of Jesus in the light of ethics in the Church today.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Jesus and the Old Testament Ethics

3.1.1 Jesus as a Jew

Jesus shared with the Old Testament thought the general structure of God-centered moral living. It apparently never occurred to him to give ethical injunctions derived from any other source. The biblical view (both Old Testament and New) makes obedience to the will of God the final criterion of the good life. Did Jesus accept the idea of the covenant and with it Israel as God's chosen people? This question is crucial for the universality of his message. Apparently, at the beginning of his ministry he conceived his mission as to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was to this group and not to the Gentiles that he commissioned the twelve (Matt. 10:5-6), and his encounter with the Canaanite woman (Matt. 15:21-28) is significant in the fact that he both at first demurred and then yielded to her entreaty for the healing of her daughter. This gives the key to Jesus' attitude. His own people were precious to him, and he never expressly repudiated the covenant relation. Yet to him so universal was the love of God, so compelling the need to serve every human being that the covenant with its exclusive bounds was left behind. It remained for his followers in the early Church to make concrete the break which his acts and attitudes foreshadowed.

3.1.2 He Practiced Judaism

The ethical principles of Jesus were those of Judaism, yet with a difference in emphasis which makes their impact new. Point for point, there is nothing in the teaching of Jesus which cannot be found in the Old Testament or in the rabbinical teaching. Pharisaic teachings, though it had its faults which called forth Jesus' rebuke, had also in it much that was great and good. For example, this passage from *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,* written toward the end of the second century B.C. depicts this.

"*Love ye one another from the heart; and if a man sin against thee, speak peaceably to him, and in thy soul hold not guile; and if he repent and confess, forgive him. But if he denies it, do not get into a passion with him, lest catching the poison from thee he takes to swearing and so thou sin doubly. . . [But] if he be shameless and persist in his wrong- doing, even so forgive him from the heart, and leave to God the avenging."*

Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the ethical teaching of Jesus leaves an impression which nothing in Judaism does. This is due in part to the conviction of Christians that Jesus fully exemplified his message, as no

individual in prophets among the Pharisees fully did. But it is due also to the extent to which Jesus always made human need the criterion of acts of obedient love to God. If the law of the Sabbath stood in the way of human service, it was to be suspended; he ate with publicans and sinners to win them to the Kingdom even at

the cost of ceremonial uncleanness. Love of neighbor becomes freely given, uncalculating, unrestricted service, such as is epitomized in the parable of the Good Samaritan, and this flows from the nature of the love of God. The love of God, though it appears not infrequently in the Old Testament and in the rabbinical writings, there carries with it a connotation of God's love for the people of Israel which was too small for Jesus. He took the moral framework of Israel and transformed it into something so universal, so compelling, that it became new.

3.1.3 His Eschatology Depicted the Ethics of His Time

Jesus took the eschatology like the ethics of his time and made it into something different. His inheritance from the prophets affected his expectancy of divine intervention; his own sense of relationship to God gave a new turn to both eschatology and ethics. Probably because of a conviction of the nature of his own messiahship, but certainly because of his conviction that the kingdom of God meant the righteous rule of God in a redeemed community for this world and the next, he made the kingdom of God and not the triumph of Israel the supreme note in his teaching. With all the ambiguities that surround the records of his teaching regarding the Kingdom, it is clear that it embodies the goal of God's reign over the hearts and lives of men, and thus sets forth the great hope of a better world both now and in the world to come. To make Jesus' conception of the Kingdom solely into a better society on earth is to lose its great overtones and foreshorten its vista; to deprive it of ethical content is to emasculate it into something Jesus himself would never have recognized.

Thus it comes about that Jesus, the greatest of the prophets, the fulfillment of the law, inaugurated a new covenant for the redemption of mankind. It is to him, and not to any other teaching or teacher, that we must look for our basic moral insights. It is with good reason that one is reported as saying of old, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."*

3.2 The Ethics of Jesus

3.2.1 Jesus Taught an Ethics Completely Integrated with His Religion

This is seen in its clearest expression in the two Great Commandments, where the duty of love of neighbor is not an addendum to the obligation to love God without reservation, but it rather implies it. It appears repeatedly both in Jesus' words and in the total tenor of his life. It was his sense of calling by God that led him at the beginning of his ministry to read in the synagogue the words of Isaiah to announce that the spirit of the Lord is upon him.

3.2.2 Jesus Laid Primary Stress on Ethical and Spiritual Inwardness

This is not to say that he was indifferent to outward acts, or to the way men conducted themselves toward one another. On the contrary, his most stinging words are directed toward those who "*preach, but do not practice*"; to those who

"bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger"; to those who "*devour widows' houses and for a pretense. . . make long prayers";* to those who are "*blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel"* (Matt. 23:3, 4, 14, 24). Yet the same passage, as well as many others, indicates that his chief concern was with right attitudes from which right acts might proceed. Jesus was completely opposed to the substitution of either ceremonial acts or correct outward behavior for humble obedience to God and loving concern for one's neighbor. This is the main burden of his indictment of the scribes and Pharisees.

3.2.3 Jesus set Forth a Clear Pattern of the Demands of the God-Centered Life

What is meant by clear pattern is not, of course, a blueprint or easily applicable to set of rules. But that we can today speak of "Christian virtues" is due to the fact that one who reads the Gospels seriously is left in no doubt as to the general structure of what a life lived in obedient love would embody. We see it in Jesus himself; we find it on every page of the record; it is epitomized in the Beatitudes. Its primary qualities are a God-centered faith and love. Its preference of spiritual to material treasure and compassion towards those in need. The good life is that of generous and self-giving service to derivative aspects purity of heart, sincerity, humility, forgiveness, love toward enemies, mercy, charity in judgment, honesty in speech and action, sexual purity, renunciation of worldly aims with all men and unbroken, unworried trust in the goodness of God.

3.2.4 Jesus Had a Realistic Knowledge both of Human Sin and of the Possibilities of the Redeemed Life

It is significant that Jesus does not talk about sin nearly as much as Paul. A concordance shows that the word "sin" as a noun appears in his recorded sayings very few times in the Synoptic Gospels, though more in John, and with one exception (the sin against the Holy Spirit, Matt.
12:31; Mark 3:29), when he uses the term, it is in the plural. The Lord's
Prayer in Luke contains the petition *"Forgive us our sins* (11:4), and it is perhaps unfortunate that we do not commonly use this form instead of *"debts"* or *"trespasses."* To the paralytic (Matt. 9:2-6; Mark 2:5-10; Luke 5:20-24) and to the woman who brought the alabaster flask of ointment (Luke 7:47-49) he said, "*Your sins are forgiven."*

3.2.5 Jesus Declared the Supreme Worth of Every Person to God

Every person was of supreme worth to Jesus because every person was beloved of God. His total ministry was a ministry of the redemption of persons - whether it was redemption from physical illness, mental disturbance, error, or sin - because he shared the love of God for every person and so gave himself completely to a ministry of helpfulness to all.

3.2.6 The Central Teaching of Jesus was the Kingdom of God

There are both great clarity and great ambiguity in the records as to the message of Jesus with regard to the Kingdom. Everybody agrees that it was his central message, yet there is nothing in the New Testament interpretation and scarcely anything in Christian theology about which opinions differ more. The disputed elements center mainly in the bearing of the Kingdom on the ethical demands of the present life in relation to what lies beyond it in a realm that transcends human history - that is, in the relations of ethics to eschatology. Fortunately, the matters most directly related to the practical requirements of the Christian life are those most fully agreed upon.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The ethics of Jesus may not be adequately understood if it is not examined in the light of the way Christ understood it and its relation to the prevailing world –view of his time.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit is dedicated to the understanding of not only the ethics of the Old Testament as Christ understood it, but also to the 'new' ethical standards as promulgated by him. This is done by examining his view on the human person, the religion that is acceptable unto God, his understanding of sin, ethical and spiritual inwardness, the kingdom of God and the acceptable way of relationship with others.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. How will you explain the relationship between Jesus' idea of ethics and that of the Old Testament?
2. What is the central teaching of the ethics of Jesus?

7.0 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READINGS

M. Powis Smith. (1923). *The Moral Life of the Hebrews.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

G. Harkness. (1943). *The Sources of Western Morality.* Princeton: Prentice-Hall, pp.67-84.

Harry Emerson Fosdick. (1938). A *Guide to Understanding the Bible* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1938).

UNIT 4 CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this unit is to look at the foundations and some of the problems of personal Christian living in terms of what we learn from Jesus, and secondarily, from the Bible as a whole.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

understand the Biblical concept of the character of God know the acceptable way of behavior for the Christian evaluate effectively the biblical concept of sin.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Believe in God

As the primary note in the ethical outlook of Jesus, we noted the inseparable union of faith in God and obedient love for God with his attitudes towards men. The Old Testament is God-centered in its moral perspectives, though in a more limited sense in terms of the covenant with Israel, and so also was the early Church, though in identification of God with Christ himself as redeeming love. At the very threshold of Christian character stands belief in God as that faith comes to us through Jesus Christ.

3.2 The Christian Character

Belief in God, even as ascent of the mind, is not irrelevant to Christian character. The postulates of naturalism and humanism may be held by good men, but to be a "good man" does not make a person a Christian. To see why, let us look briefly at these assumptions. In general, they are:

1. The universe is self-existent and self-contained, within which man has evolved to the position of the highest form of animal life.
2. Man has intelligence and the capacity for social adjustment and control, but is essentially a part of nature.
3. There is no purpose in the universe except that which man gives it.
4. Right and wrong have no objective validation beyond group standards.
5. The good life is that which is expedient for happiness and the satisfaction of man's desires.
6. Evil and maladjustment exist, but sin is an outmoded concept.
7. All improvement comes through education and the application of various forms of social pressure, psychological, economic, or political.
8. Man has no source of support, for either the good life or the conquest of suffering, except the resources in himself and his group.
9. Each man's personal existence ends with his biological death.
10. Jesus has no special significance except as an influential historical figure around which the church, as a social institution

and phase of culture, has been organized (Harkness, 1948).

These postulates, so widely held that they might be regarded as the new Ten Commandments of our time, are radically at variance with the Christian view of God and of man. One who holds them as his basic convictions may be a respectable, law-abiding, and even altruistic person, but he is not a Christian.

1. It is the Christian's faith that God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, the "*Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth*." In the creation of the world through long evolutionary processes, God has made man "*in his own image*" — that is, with spiritual qualities akin to those of God. Christian ethics presupposes a God-centered view both of the physical world and of the worth of human personality.

2. Man's biological life is embedded in nature, and in a more complex form he shares many attributes with the animal world. He is, however, essentially a "*living spirit*," with a soul that is

capable of worship, faith in God, and outgoing, uncalculating love for one's fellow man. Through these endowments of the Creator man is free to make moral choices. Christian ethics, therefore, cannot be deterministic in its view of man's moral life.

3. The Christian doctrine of creation implies neither a static perfection nor automatic progress. Yet it is the Christian's faith that both the goodness and the power of God are dependable and that a divine purpose underlies all existence. In this faith he can work with courage and hope as the servant of God for the conquest of evil. Life as a whole therefore becomes meaningful.

4. Man's ideas of right and wrong are greatly influenced by group standards. Yet it is the will of God as this is revealed in Jesus Christ that, for the Christian, is the ultimate point of reference. To the degree that this is discerned and lived by, social standards are transcended by *agape* love.

5. The good life is neither determined by, nor is it indifferent to, human happiness. The good life is the "blessed" life portrayed in the Beatitudes, the "abundant" life Jesus said he came to bring. It is the life of obedient love towards God and selfless service to men disclosed in the words and deeds of Jesus.

6. Sin, as self-centeredness with regard to both God and other persons, is man's most persistent evil. It is expressed both in moral dullness to the love commandment of God and in positive acts of rebellion against God and injury to one's fellow men. It is "original" in the sense that human nature, if undirected or unchanged, is always self-centered.

7. Self-discipline and social forces contribute to the achievement of maturity, and these are important elements in the development of Christian character through Christian nurture. However, to be brought up in a good home or a good society does not automatically make one a Christian. The process of becoming a Christian occurs only through personal decision and the acceptance of divine help. The will then becomes unified, motivated, and consciously directed toward the effort to be a follower of Christ.

8. Neither sin nor suffering can be fully eliminated from human existence. Yet through the power of God in Christ, moral victories over temptation are won, often to an amazing degree, and suffering can be borne with courage and inner enrichment through trust in God's providential care.

9. The Christian lives in the hope and in the vista of eternal life as the gift of God. This enormously transforms his perspective upon the present life, less through hope of future reward or fear of punishment than through a sense of the enhanced worth of the present as preparatory to eternal life in the presence of God.

10. To the Christian, Jesus is more than a great, good man who has exerted an influence upon the course of Western civilization. He is the supreme revealer of God, through whom God is known, personal salvation comes to men, and society is changed in the direction of a fuller embodiment of the principle of love. The Church, as the community of his followers united by his living presence as Holy Spirit, is more than a social institution; it is a divinely grounded fellowship.

Even so, a brief survey of the affirmations of Christian faith in contrast with the assumptions of naturalism should make it apparent that the viewpoint from which the Christian looks at life is different. The Bible, as the framework from which this faith is derived, becomes a primary source of insight, and the structure of life to which it points has an orientation and a quality not to be derived from naturalistic or humanistic assumptions.

3.3 The Christian Virtues

The Christian virtues are the qualities of a God-centered life as one seeks, in the totality of his being, to follow the pattern of faith and love set forth by Jesus. The Bible presents them again and again, always vitally and not schematically, but with a consistency that makes the picture clear. Let us look at some of the greatest of these portrayals.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus analyzed certain Christian virtues that lead the righteous to the kingdom of heaven. The mood and spirit to refrain from anger and lustfulness and the severing of the marriage bond, positive injunctions to straightforward speech, outgoing and uncalculating service, and love of all men including one's enemies as befitting sons of the God whose love is limitless are the basis for attaining such kingdom.

Again, the Christian virtues are epitomized in the Beatitudes. Who are the blessed ones - not simply the happy ones who have satisfied their desires, but those who have found their supreme happiness in God? They are those who are humble in spirit; comforted by God in their mourning; un-possessive, yet possessing God's richest gifts; eager and persistent in the quest for righteousness; merciful; pure in heart; peacemakers, as the Sons of God ought to be; faithful to duty even under persecution; able to endure misunderstanding and scorn for the Kingdom's sake. In the immortal words of Matt. 5:3-11 there are nine affirmations which cannot be run into a list of virtues, if virtues are conceived abstractly, yet no clearer picture of Christian character was ever drawn.

Turning to the words of Paul, we have the Christian virtues again stated, not this time in nine sentences, but in nine words. The fruit of the Spirit, says Paul in Gal. 5:22, is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Several points beyond the words themselves must be noted. First, these virtues are not the product simply of human cultivation; they are the "fruit of the Spirit," the result of the indwelling presence of God as he comes to us in Christ. Second, the verb is "is" and not "are"; they make a constellation of personality, not a collection of nine traits joined at random. And third, Paul

disclaims legalism, as we must, when he adds after this inclusive picture of the Christian life, "against such there is no law."

There are other portrayals of the Christian virtues in the New Testament. Rom. 12, as a whole, is devoted to this portrayal, as is I Cor. 13. Doubtless the reason why the twenty-third psalm and the Corinthian ode to love, with the Lord's Prayer, are the most familiar passages in the Bible is that they gather up so perfectly the faith and love which lie at the base of Christian character.

4.0 CONCLUSION

To return to the question raised at the beginning of this unit, is this type of character, which means this total structure of personality, just as evident among those who are not Christians as among those who are? After one has finished citing cases of "fine people" who are not Christians and some who "profess Christ" but are not very attractive, the answer is clear. Christian character, though not flawless in any person, is a self-validating witness to the power of Christ to transform human nature. To the degree that a person is genuinely - not merely nominally or institutionally but actually - a Christian, his total life bears witness to the fact that Christian character is a reality.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has examined the basic and the over-encompassing roles played by believe in God as the pivot of Christian ethics. No one can deny God as postulated by the Christian faith and claim to be genuinely embracing the Christian moral standard. Also, the basic teaching of Christ on the behavioral pattern of lifestyle of a Christian is also examined.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is the role of believe in God in molding the character of a Christian?
2. Can Christian ethics be meaningful without the teachings of Christ?
3. How justifiable is the ideas of a moral life without believe in God?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

M. Powis Smith. (1923). *The Moral Life of the Hebrews.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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UNIT 5 THE CONCEPT OF SIN

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the words which appear most frequently in most Concordance of the Bible is "sin." From first to last, sin is the story of man's behavior, even as salvation from sin is the great theme of the Bible. Christianity is through and through a religion of redemption, and while the whole gamut of salvation is not expressed in redemption from sin, this is its central core.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of unit, you should be able to:

understand the nature of sin
relate this to its overbearing influence on humanity
assess the role of the redemptive work of Christ in salvation from sin understand the necessary prerequisites for victory over sin.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Nature of Sin

Today, various other language usages have been coined to explain away sin in human society. Naturalism and humanism tend to think of sin as an outmoded concept and talk instead about maladjustment, insecurity, neurosis, or antisocial conduct, but the term remains firmly in the diction of Christians.

To some persons, and probably to the majority of ordinary Christian laymen, sin means transgression of those standards of conduct usually accepted by the people around them. A Christian is expected not to kill, steal, lie, commit adultery or other sexual infractions, or get drunk. How far he can move in these directions, as in exploiting others to one's own gain, driving a shrewd deal or pursuing an advantage, stretching the truth, "having a little affair," or drinking in moderation, depends for most persons less on the will of God or the revelation of God in Jesus Christ than on what is and what is not done in one's community.

3.1.1 The Prevailing Social Situation

The concept of sin has often been determined by the prevailing moral standards of a given society. The community, though it embraces the geographical area in which one lives, is a far more pervasive thing than this, for a community is in a large part defined by the social standards of like-minded people. For this reason conflicts as to what constitutes sin often arise between the younger and older generations, or between ministers and their laymen, or between the people of one church and another.

Take, for example, the matter of drinking a glass of wine or beer. To some Christians this is a sin. To others, if it is done in moderation, it has no more significance than to drink a cup of coffee. Some regard it as sinful for a minister to drink, but not for a layman - and still more is this disparity in evidence with regard to smoking.

What this illustrates is the ambiguity that emerges when the attempt is made to define sin, or "a sin," by accepted social practice. A large part of the message of Jesus was the challenging of both Pharisaic and Gentile ideas of sin by a higher law.

3.1.2 The Problem of Christian Ethics

The major problem of Christian ethics as experienced in today's societies is the danger in defining sin by accepted social practice. This, if recognized, can be made the basis of mutual tolerance while holding to one's own convictions. The danger lies, rather, in taking social standards as the voice of God, and condemning all whose opinion differs from ours on such matters. Thus, Christians may sincerely differ as to the duties of the Christian. But if one forms his opinion only by the standards of his group and then calls it the will of God for all, God has actually been left out of the picture. This procedure constantly happens, from the most insignificant matters to the greatest, and is a major source of the perversion of Christian ethics.

3.1.3 Sin as a State of Being

At the opposite extreme is a view of sin which regards it as *state of being*, rather than as a set of concrete acts, and as a state of being in rebellion against God. It is in this context that Paul says much about the natural man being "in sin," until its burden is lifted and victory is won through justification by faith in Jesus Christ. Luther, in the Pauline tradition but with more realism as to post-conversion sin, speaks of the Christian as being *simul justus et peccator* (at the same time justified and a sinner). It is this view of sin that lies at the base of the Reformation doctrine of total depravity. It is to misunderstand the latter to suppose that the Reformers thought an unconverted man could perform no moral act, such as being a good citizen or a kind father; what they meant was that man's nature was corrupted by a pervasive self-will and self-centeredness which made even his good acts sinful. Such sin is "original" in the sense of being born in us.

3.1.4 Sin and Morality

Morality stresses the need of avoiding particular wrong acts, but gets its frame of reference from social standards and conventions. Yet in stressing man's permeating sinfulness it often seems to give a too pessimistic view of human nature, with too little recognition of the God- given capacity of some persons to live victorious and highly virtuous Christian lives. Furthermore, in its stress on pride and rebellion against God as basic to the meaning of sin, it does not always give sufficiently concrete moral guidance as to how a Christian should conduct himself with relation to his fellow men.

3.1.5 The True Nature of Sin

Is it not possible to understand the true nature of sin in a way that avoids these pitfalls? We can, if we draw our perspective from what is to be learned from Jesus. There, as love for God and one's neighbor is the supreme virtue, so sin is its opposite. Sin is an attitude of the soul, and the prime essential for the elimination of sinful acts is that "ethical inwardness" which Jesus proclaimed so vitally in the Sermon on the Mount. Yet there are sinful acts, which are to be defined not by Pharisaic or Gentile or twentieth-century social standards but by the eternal will of God. *Any attitude or act in which one rebels against, or fails to be adequately responsive to, the love commandment of Jesus is sin.*

In this view of sin, relation to God and to one's fellow man is in inseparable union. No works of love are Christian unless they are God- centered, but no God-centeredness is truly Christian unless one is impelled by it to attitudes and to works of love toward one's fellow men. This is why any moralistic substitution of human good and evil and on the other hands, any legalistic or ceremonial view of the demands of God, fails to do justice to the full seriousness of sin.

Sin, then, is self-love and self-centeredness with regard to both God and other persons - all persons with whom our lives either have or ought to have connection. With reference to God it may be called rebellion, or alienation, or estrangement, or simply "unbelief," but these attitudes all center on not caring enough to desire to

render to God, obedient love. Regarding man's relation to man, it means the negation of what Jesus taught, and the opposite of what was outlined in the last unit as the Christian virtues.

3.2 The Bondage of Sin

The importance of human freedom and its bearing on the Christian moral responsibility is of great importance to this discussion. To be a sinner in the eyes of men, and presumably also in God's eyes, requires enough maturity, knowledge, and freedom to enable one to make moral choices. This is why a little child, even though self-centered by nature, is not a sinner, and sin is "original" only in the sense that the natural self-centeredness of childhood, if uncurbed, becomes sinful as the individual matures to the point of responsible decision. To the degree that any physical, psychological, or social restriction makes it impossible either to know what is right or to act responsibly in Christian love, our best impulses tell us that understanding and sympathy rather than condemnation are in order. Modern psychology and psychotherapy have done much to soften the sting of what formerly without qualification was called sin. This is good, if it is not carried beyond rightful limits, and much more work needs yet to be done before the relations of neurosis to sin can be clearly defined.

Yet this must not be allowed to vitiate the reality of sin. Granted that there are limits to human freedom, what of the person who can know, and feel, and do otherwise than he does? Though it is not humanly possible to draw absolute lines at the point where our "cannot" ends and "can" begin, sin is a persistent reality. To sin, is not simply to be maladjusted, or mentally ill, or socially conditioned in a certain way, or otherwise to be a victim of bad circumstances. Nobody is responsible for what he could not know, or be, or do: yet to sin is to continue in self-will and self-love at those many points of decision in which, for a normal person, one's outlook and action ought to reach far beyond himself.

Sin, then, presupposes knowledge and freedom adequate to those attitudes and acts required by love, and without taking a "soft" view of divine judgment we may believe that God does not require of us the impossible.(Ps. 103:13-14.)

Yet both sin and judgment are stark realities, and the most pervasive type of sin lies in the complacency, lethargy, and moral dullness of self- love at those points where both knowledge and freedom are available. We all know what is right to do far better than we do it; we all, in our dispositions and overt acts, place premature limits around our love and our service to others. Every man, if he is honest with himself, must echo the word of Paul, "None is righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:11).

3.3 Victory over Sin

Sin and judgment are never God's last words, for "God so loved the world" that he gave his Son for our redemption. That is the message of Good Friday and of Easter, and of our total Christian faith.

It was said earlier that sin is a persistent state of the soul. This is true in the sense that self-love and self-centeredness are never fully conquered even in the most saintly Christian. Yet decisive moral victory over sin by the grace of God is real, with fruits manifest in the way one treats his neighbor as well as in reorientation of the soul toward God. We shall do better to speak of this with regard to others than ourselves, lest we think of ourselves "more highly than [we] ought to think," but the fact of it is basic to Christian character.

How does this victory take place? Here again Jesus tells what we need to know. The experience of Paul and of the New Testament community and the total history of the Church gives helpful amplification if we do not distort it into supposing that the change involved in becoming a Christian must always come about in just the same way.

Such conversion may be gradual or sudden. In the moral decisions of a lifetime that are involved in it, one of them may or may not overshadow all the rest to become the kind of dramatic reorientation that Paul had on the Damascus road. It must be a thing that is done through personal decision, and background as well as foreground, and in the total experience, Christian nurture, Christian worship, and the acceptance of opportunities for Christian service plays an essential part in this process. Thus it comes about that no man needs helplessly to struggle under the burden of his sin, and no man ought to assume that without personal commitment to Christ he is good enough. Both courses lead to frustration and defeat. To the degree that personal Christian experience becomes a reality - whether it is called redemption through justification by faith or in more popular language simply "becoming a Christian" - it makes a profound difference in personality. It touches life at its center. By it, the whole of life takes on a new orientation, vitality, and power. To enter into this heritage of Christian faith at first hand, and to become a "new creation" in Christ, is the most important step that can be taken by any soul.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The overbearing influence of sin over man can always be dealt with only through the redemptive work of Christ. But this will not be possible unless man will be willing to embrace the free salvation of God through Christ.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has addressed the nature of sin, the power of the bondage of sin and finally possibility of victory through Christ.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Does a moral life free one from sin?
2. Can man be convicted of sin in a state of ignorance to the law of god?
3. How can you explain the spiritual implication of salvation?

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MODULE 2 THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

UNIT 1 THE ETHICS OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The challenges that we are faced with having to live as genuine Christians in today's society are truly enormous. It is an evident fact that modern life is not simple. It was not wholly simple in the Galilee or Jerusalem of Jesus' days, or in the time of the early church Fathers or in the medieval era. Nor is it possible to escape entanglements by withdrawing to a cloister, for problems of the soul are there as well. It is an illusion to suppose that in some other time and place, being a Christian would be easy! Nevertheless, in terms of things and activities, with competing demands and possibilities, our lives are more complex than in any previous day, and this remains so in spite of our most earnest efforts at making things simple as much as we can in our own way. And when duties to self, to those near at hand, and to the larger community conflict, how is one to know what to do? The more sensitive the Christian, the more he feels the impossibility of doing all that he ought in the service of human need.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

understand the prevailing circumstances that the Christian is faced with living in the modern society
know the directives of the word of God concerning our relationship with others
examine the need for commitment and steadfastness in our relationship with others and members of our own family.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Duties in Interpersonal Relations

In this unit we will examine what has ordinarily been termed "individual ethics," or sometimes "personal ethics." Both terms are ambiguous, and have tended to draw too sharp a contrast with "social ethics." Every duty to another person is "social" in the sense that the obligation exists within a society of persons, in which there are greater or less degrees of intimacy of connection. Yet the setting within which Christian decisions must be made and the obligations of Christian love must be met differs as between persons with a face-and-name relationship in the family, school, church, or other group of personal acquaintances and the vast complexities of society as a whole. No human being can be personally acquainted with more than a few thousand other persons, while there are many millions of other human beings who are beloved of God and toward whom some obligation of Christian love is presumably owed. It is within the circle of life touching life in direct relationship that our opportunities for the fullest expression of divine love are found, yet with some of the greatest perils of perversion.

The scope of Christian relationship with others in the world has always been a thing of controversy. There has been a general recognition of the difference between the way Christians respond to the love commandment in personal relations and the large-scale indifference or "immorality" of Christians in the complex structures of political and economic life. It is clearly more possible, even though still difficult, for one to "love his brother whom he has seen" than one whom he has not seen, may never see, and is related to only in terms of political or economic subjection or dominance, if he feels related at all. This fact has led some writers on Christian ethics, to maintain that the scope of Christian love is necessarily limited to individual relations, and to substitute justice as the norm elsewhere. Christians, as well as other men, may well believe that love evokes particular obligations to those nearest to them and possibly others beyond (if situation permits).

3.1.1 One's Own Jerusalem

This idea readily comes to mind when one considers the magnitude of the need in our world and the ever limited resources that are available to meet such wanton need. Unless a Christian is to go to the length of saying that he has no more

obligation to provide food for his own children than for the hungry in Korea - and not many Christians in practice, at least, would go this far - this appears to be indisputable. Yet this does not settle for us the many problems that emerge in daily life as to whom to serve and how best to serve them when human need is overwhelming and time, strength, and money are limited. If we can draw some directives from our gospel, we must find them, even though to find ready-made answers to all these impinging dilemmas is a very difficult problem.

3.1.2 Brotherly Love

What is "brotherly love"? Even a parochial Christian hesitates to say in principle that it means only an obligation to one's own family, or next- door neighbor, or fellow member of one's own local church! The brotherhood of man is assumed to include everybody; the problems begin at the point of acting in a brotherly fashion toward one, of another race, or nation, or politics. Therefore, there is a common tendency to read into the recorded words of Jesus more than he says, while at the same time their application is far too complicated.

3.1.3 The Teachings of Jesus

An unbiased reading of the Gospels leads to the conclusion that most if not all of the sayings of Jesus preserved in the records were spoken to individuals about their relations to God and to other individuals. There is a conspicuous lack not only of large-scale social programs but of corresponding social directives. For example, *"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you"* (Luke 6:27), may well enough be taken to mean an attitude required toward the enemies of one's nation, but it is doubtful that Jesus had this context specifically in mind. One who is bringing a gift to the altar and remembers that his brother has something against him is enjoined, *"First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift*" (Matt. 5:24). In all probability this meant to Jesus and to those who heard him speak these words neither a blood brother nor a fellow Christian, but another personally known individual. Even the immortal parable of the good Samaritan fails to define for us precisely who "my neighbor" is; it makes clear the quality of neighbor love and leaves it to our Christian imagination to supply the answer to the lawyer's question (Luke 10:29-37).

3.1.4 The Need for Caution

Caution need to be exercised here, for Christians have often gone to one extreme or the other. The more serious error has been to restrict the meaning of Christian duty wholly to individual, or more correctly, to "small group" relations. This has been the traditional impact of Christian ethics through the centuries, cultivating the virtues of almsgiving, ministry to the sick and helpless, chastity, personal honesty, and in general a responsive conscience in the presence of immediate need, but with little sensitivity to those caught in the grip of an evil social system.

To broaden the scope of the Christian moral perspective, and with it the scope of "brotherhood" and "neighborliness," the social gospel emerged. This was and is right in much of its emphasis on the need of applying the principles of Christian love to all men, but often wrong in its assumption that to Jesus, the kingdom of God and such a liberated and alleviated society were equivalent terms.

3.1.5 Man at His Best

The first fact to be noted is that within the borders of interpersonal relations lies man's greatest capacity for self-giving love and his worst temptations to selfishness. This must not be mistaken to be restricted into the family unit alone but in other relations as well. Only the cynic can say that it is the desire for personal approbation or for mutual benefits that prompts every act of patient, forgiving, unrewarded, and possibly even to others unknown service. There are too many examples, not only of outstanding personal service to humanity in ways exemplified by such men as Francis of Assisi, David Livingstone, Wilfred Grenfell, Albert Schweitzer, and Frank Lau Bach but among thousands of unsung Christian saints, to say that all human acts are egoistic. *"If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing."* The counterpart of this is the fact that without thought of personal gain Christians have again and again given all they had, even to the giving of their health or bodily life to be burned away, in sacrificial love.

3.1.6 The Need for Caution in Our Relationships

Yet this is not the whole story. Where do tempers most readily flare up, and where are caustic, stinging words most often spoken? In the home, among those we know so well that our inhibitions are down. Where do we most eagerly covet prestige and recognition? Among those who know us. There is slight comfort in being heralded by the world if among those near us we feel we are "not appreciated!" Where is self- pity most rampant? It is mostly amongst our kith and kin. Where is the temptation to manipulate and dominate other personalities strongest? Where it is possible - and this possibility is usually greatest in interpersonal relations. Where are the most subtle rationalizations of self-will? Precisely at the point where they can most readily be concealed under cover of friendship, of parental duty, of "doing the Lord's work," or some other pleasant-sounding excuse for following our own desires.

The deduction is clear. On the one hand, we must recognize and be grateful to God for genuine expressions of Christian *agape* as we see them in others, and be challenged by them to fuller self-giving. On the other, as we look at ourselves, the warning is always in order, "Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12).

3.1.7 The Universal Need and the Home Need

A second paradoxical situation with regard to Christian duty follows from what has been said. A person's first duty is to those for whom he has most direct responsibility. Yet it is this primacy of duty which most often narrows his vision and curtails his wider service.

To illustrate, it is the Christian's duty, as well as that of every other man, to provide for his (or her) family not only the material foundations of life but the conditions of happy and creative existence. One has a responsibility to one's own family that one does not have to any other. Not only by civil law and custom but by the obligations of Christian love it is wrong to sacrifice one's wife or husband or children to a diffused idea of "serving humanity." This does not mean that in the intimate relations of the home, sacrifices may not be shared; it is obvious that in most forms of devoted Christian service they must be. Still it mean that one party in this relation is justified in imposing his or her will upon the other under a selfish plea of being neglected. This is a too common form of self-love, and many an act of Christian service is inhibited by the partner's whim or by a self-pitying assumption of martyrdom. Nevertheless, it does mean that it is not Christian to neglect or injure one's own family in the service of others to whom no such direct obligation is owed. To serve the Lord is our supreme duty, but it may be doubted that God is well served in forgetfulness of immediate human duties or the immolation of those who ought to be loved and cherished. This applies to time, energy, and companionship as well as money and many "busy person" that are continually away from home and at church, should take heed.

3.1.8 Official Faithfulness

A similar observation can be made regarding one's work. When one has "a job to do," whether in the form of a definitely assumed voluntary responsibility or paid employment, it is his duty to get it done to the best of his ability, and not to let his time and energy be frittered away by a multitude of competing, and quite possibly more attractive, forms of work.

Quite often, our duties to family and work may conflict, we must decide as best we can, if possible by mutual agreement what is the prior duty in the particular situation. John Calvin felt impelled by a rigorous sense of duty to keep an engagement at the church while his wife was dying; one may well doubt that it was his duty. On the other hand, there are many occasions when major public responsibilities must be met at the cost of minor inconveniences at home - and this, with not neglecting the fact that one is never entitled to disregard or trample upon the personalities of those to whom one is bound by special ties of love and obligation.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Granted that there is a primacy of duty to those for whom one has most direct responsibility, what of its dangers? For dangers it certainly has! To protect one's family and enhance their status, whether in regard to material comforts, social prestige, or in general the securing of "advantages," many a Christian will violate known principles of Christian behavior. In order to make one's own work prosper, in a situation where motives of self-love and service to one's group are mixed, one will do what he would sharply criticize another, for doing. In such situations restraints of conscience are often less powerful deterrents than fear of the law or of social disapproval.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, the necessity of the need to strike a balance between our service and commitment to the things of God and the creation of enough time for our family, church and neighbors are examined. Furthermore, it is not in direct violation of known Christian principles that the most serious consequences occur. Where these are clearly confronted, there is a chance for the Christian conscience to operate in terms of repentance.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. How effectively can a Christian strike a balance of giving his time to his work and his family?
2. Explain the stand of the Bible in one's duty to the family?
3. Explain your own understanding of Jesus' teaching on good neighborliness?

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UNIT 2 THE CHRISTIAN DUTIES TO SELF

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Has Christian ethics any place for self-love? The question is not whether self-love is primary, for we have seen repeatedly that agape love is primary in the message of Jesus; it is whether self-love has any place at all in the Christian's moral outlook. This is a question on which Christians both learned and sincere have often disagreed.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

understand the Biblical Meaning of Self love
relate this effectively with the Biblical concept of love understand the natural law of morality
relate it to the best possible way of making use of this love without hurting others.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Position of the Bible

There is no specific defense of self-love in the New Testament, but rather there exist many warnings against it. The second is that if a justification for self-love is granted in any degree, this may lead

consciences to be too readily soothed and convenient rationalizations found for certain selfish actions.

Bishop Anders Nygren in his *Agape and Eros* has become the accepted and oft-quoted champion of this view. He holds that Augustine was wrong in admitting *eros* into the Christian's outlook even at the point of man's desiring and seeking after God. New Testament love, according to Nygren, is always giving love, never seeking, and Augustine's distinction of *caritas* (man's love of God) from *cupiditas* (the love of the world) he holds to be invalid. He maintains that Luther did a great service, as significant as that of his doctrine of justification by faith alone, to which it is related, in removing the *eros*, or self-seeking, motive from Christian love and leaving *agape* as the only legitimate type. Nygren is followed in this view by Paul Ramsey in *Basic Christian Ethics*, who regards the Augustinian position as essentially neo-Platonic, and the only right attitude of men toward God, to be purely responsive love. Albert C. Knudson, on the other hand, not only defends the position of Augustine as to man's duty to seek after God, but views the disjunction of *agape* and *eros* in general as a false abstraction. Says he: To reject the *eros* idea, to exclude self-love and duties to self as non- Christian, and to limit Christian love to an "unmotivated" love to others is to create an abstract Christian ethic and to fall into a sentimental immoralism. The Christian ideal is self-realization through self-sacrifice.

3.1.1 Self-Gratification

The objection to self-love from a practical standpoint is less subtle, and perhaps more persuasive. Certain it is that Christian ethics can never be stepped down to a policy of "look out for Number One," or "blow your horn, for nobody else will," without encouraging an egocentricity and arrogance that are the antithesis of Christian love and humility. Against this attitude such words of Jesus as, *"Seek first his [God's] kingdom and his righteousness," and, "Whoever would save his life will lose it,"* stand as a perpetual challenge (Matt. 6:33; 16:25). The danger of self-love, even in "spiritual" things, becomes apparent when God is used as a tool or instrument for curing neuroses and releasing tensions in order to have "peace of mind." The temptation to make of one's faith a pleasant emotional luxury ever besets the path of the Christian. When this happens, religion becomes the "opiate" that Karl Marx claimed it is.

Yet it is by no means certain that either theological or practical considerations rule out wholly the place of self-love in Christian ethics. What can be said on the other side?

3.1.2 How Can Someone That Lacks Self Appreciation Learn to Appreciate Others

Jesus said, quoting Lev. 19:18, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself*." There is no suggestion, in either its Old or New Testament context, that such love of neighbor excludes all love of self. Indeed, that men will love themselves - and that such love suggests a standard of generous love for others - seems taken for granted. This is also the implication of the Golden Rule, *"Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them"* (Matt. 7:12). But did Jesus mean by this that whatever I like, I must see that my neighbor gets? If so, there might be a duty to give him what is evil, for not all of our "likes" are good. "The Golden Rule, for instance, might be fully observed among sots and gluttons." Manifestly, Jesus did not mean this. We naturally and rightly assume it is *what we ought to want* that should in love be given to our neighbor. But if there is that which, as Christians, we ought to want for ourselves, then self-love cannot wholly be ruled out.

When Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself," he probably did not anticipate all the theological web spinning that was later to center on these words! But it is at least credible to suppose that in taking self-love as a base line for love of neighbor he was not condemning it as wholly evil.

3.1.3 The Natural Law

A second approach to the problem is by way of a "natural law" of morality, which though Stoic in its origin has been to a considerable extent taken over into Christianity. It appears in a familiar form in the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness', as stated in the Declaration of Independence in the American Constitution, in the Bill of Rights guaranteed by the Constitution, and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations. Such statements are, of course, not distinctively Christian. Yet they stand for precious values which Christians have usually felt impelled both to defend for themselves and to seek for others. And there is at least a suggestion of a natural law of morality in Paul's words when he speaks of the Gentiles "*who have not the law [but] do by nature what the law requires,"* and thereby "*they show that what the law requires is written on their hearts"* (Rom. 2:14, 15). Unless an absolute line is to be drawn between the law and the gospel, there is no need to abrogate as unchristian all those personal rights that the "conscientious feelings of mankind" have declared to be good.

3.1.4 The Ethics of Self Realization

A third type of argument is that which is basic to the making of self- realization the Christian's ethical ideal. This is *eros* doctrine. It may well be that the Christian's *agape* obligation carries with it the duty of the fullest possible self-development for the sake of service. We are bidden "*to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ"* (Eph. 4:16), and "every way" need not be limited to the specifically Christian graces.

It is difficult to find in the New Testament any justification for the identification of Christian ethics with the ethics of self-realization. This has its roots in a blending of the Platonic theory of the good with a sense of the worth and dignity of the human person. This is partly Christianity but also Stoicism and it was given its present place of recognition by the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Among the great classical ethical systems it is the best, and bears much truth. But it is not the ethics of Jesus and the New Testament.

3.1.5 The Real Duty to Self

Every one of the Beatitudes is "motivated"; we are to seek God's kingdom as we would, a treasure hidden in a field or a pearl of great price; we are told without qualification, *"Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."* Every such injunction carries with it the implication that a Christian not only may, but must, desire for himself that which is of greatest worth.

What does this mean in daily Christian living? First, that we must not only wait receptively before God for his proffered grace, but desire it enough to seek it in repentance and humble obedience. Daily we must seek the divine presence, and endeavor to find light and strength from God for the duties before us. Daily we must cultivate self-discipline and self-control, in small matters as in great, and do this in order to be not only "better persons" but better servants and sons of God. The orientation is towards God in true Christian character. Yet honest self- examination and self-correction by God's help are a duty which we neglect at our peril, and without which we cannot go far in the service of society.

But are there duties to self beyond the quest of these "spiritual blessings"? Yes, if they are kept within the structure of *agape* love, with this as the central motivation. Since every person is precious to God, one may well consider that one self is. This means respect for one's own personality, as God wants us to respect those of others, and the avoidance of anything injurious to body, mind, or spirit. Positively, it involves the duty of care for one's health, the pursuit of as much education as is possible without the neglect of other responsibilities, careful preparation for the best doing of one's work, the finding of work that is both serviceable and congenial, fruitful and enjoyable use of leisure, wholesome family life, and the acquiring of enough material goods to make possible these other values. While it is a mistake to equate the "abundant life" with either material abundance or cultural advantages, it is a mistake also to limit it wholly to spiritual blessings.

The list of "good things" just enumerated may not, at first glance, look very different from those prized in a humane and cultured secular society. It is well that there are points of contact, for the Christian must often work with "men of good will" who are not Christians in order to secure these values for himself and others. Yet for the Christian, the perspective and the motive are different. Not because he loves himself on a hedonistic, pleasure-seeking basis, but because he knows God loves and prizes him and calls him to service, he must make the most worthy response he can. In short, he must be the best and most fully developed person he

can be — not in moral excellence only but in every aspect of his nature — if he would seek to attain "*to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*" (Eph. 4:13).

3.1.6 Self Acceptance

A particular problem is involved in what is a familiar term on the lips of psychologists and psychiatrists, the need of self-acceptance. Often it is asserted that the Christian view of sin and guilt accents the lack of self- acceptance, induces feelings of inferiority, and therefore stands in the way of achieving personal maturity. Should not one be encouraged, then, to believe in himself, prize himself highly, come out of his shell of timidity and self-depreciation, and boldly take his place in society?

The issues are complex, and can here be only suggested. The major point in question is the total framework of meaning from which these charges are made and alternatives suggested. If it is contended that man has only the resources of himself and other persons to rely on, with a good social adjustment as the only criterion of excellence, the viewpoint is too narrow and by its narrowness becomes false. To the Christian, God is the ultimate source of strength, as his will is the final standard of what is good. But if the need of self-acceptance is acknowledged in a Christian frame of reference, it becomes a very important matter. One certainly cannot render his best service to God or neighbor when weighed down by timidity, self-depreciation, or excessive self- excoriation. A sense of sin in due humility we must have; this does not mean we must be torn apart by the tortures of remorse or rendered impotent by a crushing weight of inferiority which induces unhappiness and inhibits action. It is a Christian duty to try to find release, and in this process both repentance and respect for one's own personality are important. We are bidden to "*rekindle the gift of God*" that is within us, *"for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control"* (II Tim. 1:6, 7).

4.0 CONCLUSION

The duties to self which have been suggested in this unit is better not called self-love without qualification, for the term readily suggests a self-centeredness which is not what Jesus taught. *Agape* is still the basic and covering category of Christian ethics. Yet within agape, there are certainly very important, God-given duties to one's self. These ought not to be pursued either selfishly or in a morbid and unhealthy self-concern, but neither should they be depreciated. Without serious and resolute attention to them, we shall be feebly equipped to serve God or our neighbor.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has examined the idea of duties to self. But the inherent facts that are involved in the issue are also to be well addressed. This stems from not being overtly selfish and at the same time not allowing ourselves to become liabilities to others in the faith.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. How will you define self-realization?
2. Is this idea alien to the teachings of Christ? Explain.

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UNIT 3 THE CHRISTIAN DUTIES TO SOCIETY

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is the sphere in which most discussion of "social service" and "social action" centers. The larger society of individuals not personally known to us who are related to us indirectly through large-scale and often very complex social institutions but not directly as persons with a face and name. Most relations in politics and economics, except in the immediate local community or small business unit, are of this type, and as schools and hospitals and churches increase in size to the point of including several thousands within one system, these traditional centers of personal ministry become more and more impersonal. There is a flexible line of division, varying with both situations and the capacities of individuals, between interpersonal and impersonal social relations, but somewhere the line must be drawn. What, then, is the Christian's duty to those on the other side of it?

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

know the right duties of the Christian to the larger society understand the concept of social sin
know the meaning of social evil
understand the role that the Christian can play in stemming the numerous social evils
assess the size of the problem and the possible solutions to them.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Meaning of Social Sin

Social sin, like any other sin, is compounded of attitudes and acts contrary to the will of God. It is social rather than individual sin when it is directed by groups of persons toward other groups. War is the major example of such collective sin. It appears, however, in peace times as in war on many fronts. Economic exploitation, waste of natural resources, acquiescence in or encouragement to preventable hunger, illness, disease, or delinquency, political tyranny or irresponsibility, racial discrimination, or any other voluntary curtailment by one group of the "abundant life" for another group is social sin.

It is hardly debatable that the world is full of it. But this is not to say that every form of social evil is sin. The presence of cancer, for example, which to date the best medical research has not been able to eliminate, is an evil fact to be combated; it is not something to repent of. Any decision made by an individual *responsibly and in the light of the fullest knowledge it is possible to get* is not sinful if it turns out badly, and the same may be said of group decisions. To the degree that the German people under Nazi control and the Japanese under Japanese militarism were kept in ignorance of the true situation, they ought not to be judged sinful for supporting evil systems, and the same is true to a large degree of the people who lived under Communist propaganda and censorship. Under varying aspects, it is true of every people who have not had the opportunity to have their minds informed or consciences stirred as to the evil in their accepted patterns of thought and action.

3.2 The Prevalence of Social Sin

No individual or group acts as fully or as well as *could be done* to bring about the "good society" or the "abundant life." Motives usually come mixed, and in such matters as defense of racial segregation, or the economic status quo, or autocratic political power, or ecclesiastical domination, or the curtailment of civil liberties, who but God is to say how much is due to sin? In such disputed matters there is usually a combination of knowledge with ignorance, of heavy-handed tradition with the confrontation of new and untried situations, of self-interest with concern for the status of one’s group. A sincere defense of conviction often merges with a stubborn and willful resistance to what others regard as the Christian way. In short, in every major social issue *sin is present,* but seldom *sin only.* To attack such a situation as if sin were the only factor involved is to breed the counter-sin of arrogance and unkind judgment; to overlook the fact of sin is to bypass evil with smooth words and by acquiescence, to become a participant in it.

3.3 Combating Social Evil

What we have to do in such situations is easy to state but hard to do. We must attempt by God's grace to "hate the sin but love the sinner," meanwhile endeavoring by such ways as are open to us to increase our knowledge of the situation and to support the best modes of changing it. Courage, resoluteness, patience, sympathy, are required — virtues not always easy to acquire in combination. But to the Christian, he does not have to acquire them save by fidelity, for they are the gift of God.

It is certainly more difficult to carry out the principles of Christian love in large-scale group decisions and in matters of social policy than in interpersonal relations. Some degree of compromise is always necessary. Nevertheless, according to Edward Leroy Long in his book *Conscience and Compromise,* it makes a great difference whether one compromises at the point of having done all that he can within the particular situation in which social evil must be challenged, or simply conforms to the existing situation and accepts it as inevitable. Paul put the principle with tremendous potency when he wrote, "*Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect*" (Rom.
12:2).

This conjunction of adjectives is significant. What is the "good and acceptable" will of God? Not that which is ideally or abstractly "perfect," but that which is the best we can do — provided it is really the best we can do, and not some premature substitute. In every case of social decision there is *an ideally right course, a best possible course,* and *the course we are tempted to take* because it is easy or alluring or in conformity to the standards of our culture. Our guilt lies in choosing the third rather than the second of these alternatives.

With this in mind, what can a Christian do to challenge and change the gigantic structure of social evil and social sin that infests our world?

Social Service

Social service consists of such matters as the relief of hunger and want, and the support of hospitals, homes, settlement houses, recreation centers, medical research foundations, and many other forms of "social welfare" and "charitable institutions". It calls for the projection of Christian love through sympathy as well as through financial support into a multitude of situations of human need. Discernment must be exercised to know where to give preferentially, whether of time, effort, or money. Yet that through such channels we can give, and ought to give, in Christian love is hardly debatable.

Social Education

A second type of duty to society is social education. It was noted above that in most evil situations, there is a mixture of willful sin with ignorance, provincialism, and narrowness of outlook, the blindness induced by the pull of the past through entrenched emotional attitudes, and in general a very complex set of social forces that thwart change under cover of identifying the will of God with things as they are.

Political and Economic Action

The third form of social action is political and economic. It is here that the knottiest problems lie, for such action requires not only the peaceful casting of a vote on election day or the decision to buy or sell certain goods, but the exercise by our representatives if not by ourselves of coercive force. It is the difficulty of combining coercion with love, particularly in the clashing relations of nation with nation and of powerful unions with great capital-holding corporations, that leads some to say that in such matters it is not love but justice that is the Christian's norm of action.

The Need for Love

If what has been said to this point is true, the way out lies neither in a sentimental reliance on love as the sole solvent of social tension nor in its repudiation. Love is relevant to every human situation; love is always our ultimate norm. It is political and economic realism, as well as Christian ethics, to believe in the rightness of reconciliation and to use every available channel to put this spirit into action. Justice that is not derived from love of persons becomes vindictive retribution. Yet coercion must be used in order that, security, and the conditions of justice in a free society may be maintained. It is not the will of God that either anarchy or tyranny should prevail in the earthly relations of his sons. How best to use coercive force to secure justice without canceling out the claims of love is the Christian's eternal problem. That it has no perfect solution is no excuse for failing to confront it squarely, and as far as possible, to meet it in every situation with the spirit of obedient love.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Love does not always "work" in the sense of securing the desired results. Yet without it, nothing else is more than a temporary palliative for the checking of evil. Giant structures of power in conflict with one another breed other conflicts, until man's status upon earth grows more and more precarious. Justice we must have, but justice directed by good will and concern for persons. The only effective road to a good society was

described centuries ago in the words, "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."* If an earnest effort is made in faith and devotion to follow this route, God can be trusted to give us light and direction along the way.

5.0 SUMMARY

The study in this unit has examined the problem of social sin or evil and has made an attempt in proffering solutions to them. This includes social education, social service and political and economic action.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is social evil?
2 Explain what is meant by social service?
3. What is the role of social education in eradicating social evil?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4 THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The family occupies a unique place in the divine order of things. From the standpoint of the "orders of creation," both the Bible and anthropology agree in asserting the primacy of the family among all social relations. The Genesis story of creation comes to a great climax in the words: "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.*'" (1:27-28.)

In the study of primitive origins, the family is universally found to be the basic unit of society. This is not, for sure, always a father-mother- and-child, monogamous family in the modern sense, but with varying degrees of blood relationship and with the family varying in size from the small unit to the clan. Yet everywhere the family is that social structure within which economic, political, and cultural patterns have come into being and are perpetuated. This important aspect of human nature will form the basis of our study in this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

understand the Biblical meaning of the family know the teachings of Jesus on the family
understand the need for monogamy as postulated by Christianity examine the problem of divorce and the biblical solutions to it.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Foundation of the Christian Family Life

The biblical use of the relations between *agape, eros,* and *philia* form the basis of the teaching on the family. *Agape* means uncalculating, self- giving love. *Eros* means the love of what is lovable, or desirable, or for some reason desired by the one who loves. Within the relations of the sexes it connotes romantic love with the desire to possess the beloved, and has as an important, though not its sole, ingredient the desire for sexual pleasure. *Philia* suggests a love based on compatibility and kindred interests, and is more accurately rendered in English by the term "friendship" or "affection."

It is important in Christian marriage that all three types of love be present, but with *agape* as the controlling factor. No marriage is likely to be successful without strong ties of romantic love and adequate common interests. The first requires deep emotion, the second rational judgment, as the marriage is contemplated. Yet neither an emotional love based on desire for self-gratification nor a calculated balancing of tastes is sufficient to carry a couple through the stormy days which, almost inevitably come. To quote again the marriage ritual, it is "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health" that vows of faithfulness are taken. Unless one is seriously able to pledge permanent fidelity in days that are "for worse," "for poorer," and "in sickness," he ought not to marry, and it is only *agape* love that makes this possible.

The type of fidelity, therefore, that roots in self-giving, selfless love is very vital to Christian marriage. It is the only foundation that will hold a marriage steadfast through a clash of dispositions over matters minor in themselves but cumulative in a multitude of daily flurries and irritations, that will forgive hurts and avoid jealousies, which will outlive fading physical charms that will under gird "affection that hopes, and endures, and is patient." The absence of such *agape* love is the major cause of the appalling percentage of divorce in contemporary marriages, and the root of much unhappiness in legally persisting but inwardly severed marriage bonds. Much that goes under the name of "mental cruelty" is simply self-centered, erotic love turned back upon itself.

3.1.1 Respect

Respect must also be added to the unselfish commitment to the other through every possible situation. This may come in two forms. One of these is respect for personality. Though these words do not appear in the New Testament, the idea they connote was basic to the attitudes of Jesus, and is central to the Christian outlook wherever this is spiritually sensitive and discerning. It means within the family a due sense of the

importance - and equal importance - of every member of it, father, mother, and children. It does not mean that every member will have the same duties, functions, gifts, or opportunities, for these vary with maturity and circumstances; but it does mean that every member shall have such treatment as will afford to him or her the fullest dignity, the fullest possible opportunity for self-development and creative growth, the fullest happiness the circumstances permit.

3.1.2 Care Giving

It is fairly well established in our society that due care shall be given to the physical health of each member of the family; it is by no means established that mental health shall be thus safeguarded. Among the most frequent causes of disturbance is continual "nagging" with sharp words and temper tantrums. No family life can be wholesome in such an atmosphere.

3.1.3 Submission

There is the ever-present problem of authority. Whose word is to be "law"? The putting of the question suggests the root of the problem, for Christian ethics cannot be legalistic within the family any more than it can be elsewhere. Yet decisions must be made. They are best made by family counsel and mutual consent. Parental authority must be exercised over the immature, or no child will learn self-discipline, but it ought not to be exercised dictatorially. And as between husband and wife, who is "the boss"? Again the question suggests perversion, for neither can dominate the other when a Christian respect for personality is present.

3.1.4 Financial Justice

This should not in any way be misinterpreted to allow for wantonly and unbridled spending of the family resources. Problems relating with money and work and the related issues of recreation and leisure time must be amicably settled within the family fold. In all, it can be said that every member of the family who is able, children as well as adults, ought to have some money to spend as he or she desires, some responsible work to do with reasonable freedom from interruption, some chance for freely chosen enjoyment. But this is not to sanction the selfish individualism that too often prevails in the modern family. There should be family sharing, family work projects, and family fun. *"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord."* (Rom.
12:9-11.)

3.1.5 Healthy Sexual Relationship

It is a mistake to regard sex either as something base and degrading or as something to be indulged in simply for personal pleasure. Beyond the function of the sexual act for procreation, shared with the animal world, lies the fact that on the human level it is a symbol, ordained of God, that the "two shall become one." James A. Pike has spoken wise words upon this subject which may well be quoted:

“Sexual intercourse is meant to be a sacrament. A sacrament, of course, is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." The inward and spiritual requisite is the total and permanent pooling of hopes and fears, of strengths and weaknesses. The outward and visible sign is, as in other sacraments, both expression of spirit and means of grace”.

3.1.6 Responsible Parenting

In other matters, such as providing for food, clothing, shelter, health, traffic safety, employment, and the like, it is generally accepted that the will of God requires of us rational and responsible action. One who would leave these matters wholly to chance would not be thought to be accepting providence but acting in a foolish if not foolhardy manner! And if in other things care and planning are required, why not in this most important of human events, the birth of a child?

If children are as precious to us as they were to Jesus, we shall believe that every child has the right to be wanted and to be born into a home where adequate care is possible. This is not possible where financial resources are too limited, or the mother’s strength depleted from too rapid bearing of children, or for any other reason the well-being of the parents and children requires that there be no more. The principle of *agape* love for one another, applied within the intimate relations of the home, necessitates what might better be called, instead of birth control, "responsible parenthood." To exercise such responsible parenthood with regard to the birth as well as the rearing of children is not to thwart the ways of God but to be responsive to them.

Yet it is still true that within the family is a nucleus of growth, action, and character development which determines largely the course each individual will take, and through the aggregate of many individuals the course of society as a whole.

3.2 Jesus and the Family

We must now look more explicitly at the way in which the Christian outlook upon family life is rooted in the ethics of Jesus. We shall do this by examining both his explicit teachings and the implications to be drawn from his general structure of life and thought.

The primary words of Jesus about the sacredness of marriage and the home are those which link it with the order of creation:

Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, 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"? So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder. (Matt. 19:4-6.)

This is the bedrock foundation of Christian marriage, and on it all that is best in Christian family life has been erected.

It is evident from this focal passage, his desire of equal treatment of persons, and Jesus' attitude toward the family was never one of expediency or mere social conformity, much less of personal indulgence. The family to Jesus was a holy relationship, marriage a holy bond not lightly to be broken. Within it there were obligations and responsibilities as well as joys; all were centered in the creative act of God and the blessing of God upon the union formed under his sight and in his name.

In a day when marriages are too easily and too selfishly entered into and soon severed, this word of Jesus stands as a beacon pointing toward security, goodness, and truth. None may disregard it save at the peril of losing his happiness and his home.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The foundations of Christian family life is expected to be lived in faithfulness to the Church, family worship, grace at meals, the practice of individual prayer, the atmosphere of Christian devotion that pervades the home. This is not because they are unimportant, for they are all- important. It is in the home that Christian experience is most surely nourished and made vital, and where this is lacking, there is great loss.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has examined the sacred institution of marriage as it is established in the Bible, the teachings of Christ and the doctrinal teachings of the Church.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Mention three most pressing problems of today's society?
2. How best can these problems be addressed?
3. Under what conditions can divorce be granted?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 5 THE CHRISTIAN AND DIVORCE

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Once a marriage has been contracted, is it legitimate, never to be dissolved. Also closely related to this is the question of whether it is ever right for divorced persons to remarry. The Roman Catholic Church, holding marriage to be a sacrament, regards all divorce as sacrilege and hence as sin. However, with the adaptability which has made this church so often able to deal with practical situations without seeming to contradict a principle, the possibility of annulment is recognized. When a marriage is annulled, it is declared in effect never to have taken place. This, to the Pentecostal mind leaves the dubious alternative of assuming that the couple up to the time their union was declared void were living in sin, and hence falls short of a satisfactory answer to the problem.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

know what divorce means
understand the problems attributed to divorce assess the causes of the problem
examine critically the stand of the church on the issue
proffer possible solutions to the problem.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Problem of Divorce

The first thing to be said is that divorce when it takes place is always a frustration of the true intent and purpose of marriage. Monogamous marriage involves in its very nature the pledge and intention of unending fidelity. Marriage entered into without this intention is not only a travesty of Christian marriage but a violation of the purpose of the legal contract involved.

Divorce is nothing but a negation of the natural law and also against the plans of God for humanity. These negations, if so viewed, would enormously cut down on

the present state of easy and frequent divorce which seriously honeycombs our culture and undermines the foundations of the home.

Divorce is unjustifiable even when permanence in marriage is not intended in the first place. It is not justified even when the couple makes their union simply a legalizing of sexual passion or any other form of selfish personal indulgence. It is *not* justified before and until every effort has been made at reconciliation where there is quarreling or incompatibility. It is not justified when one simply tires of one mate and desires to marry another. It is not justified in selfish disregard of the effect of such a broken home upon the children.

3.1.1 The Biblical Point of View

But is divorce ever justified? The words recorded in Matt. 19:8 as spoken by Jesus state that "*for your hardness of heart"* Moses allowed divorce, though it was not so in the order of creation. Twice in Matthew, Jesus forbids divorce "*except for unchastity*" (5:32; 19:9); in Mark the word is stated with stark simplicity, "*Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery*" (10:10). It is the opinion of many biblical scholars that the form in Mark is more likely to be what Jesus really said. The question then is whether divorce may ever be justified without disregard of the express command of Jesus.

The answer is to be found in the total spirit of Jesus rather than a legalistic interpretation of his words. What Jesus is apparently here doing is setting forth the requirements of pure, selfless, faithful love as the basis of marriage. Such love and consequent fidelity are, as we have seen, fundamental to Christian marriage. But is it never the will of God that a marriage be terminated? To say so would be to doom some persons not only to a lifetime of unhappiness but to a frustration of the "abundant life" that Jesus said he came to bring.

As for the exception "*except for unchastity*," it is true that adultery breaks the marriage bond at its foundations. However, it can hardly be said that this in every situation justifies divorce, or that nothing else ever does. The message of Hosea in restoring his erring wife, Gomer, to his home is a symbol of the forgiving love of God, which ought to be practiced in the human relation before there is any easy recourse to divorce. But human sinfulness and stubborn wills being what they are, there is no guarantee that the broken marriage bond can be reunited. And when, even without direct infraction of the sexual code, life becomes so intolerable that the marriage in spirit is shattered, there may be no proper alternative but to dissolve it in form.

Divorce is always a compromise with the highest ideal of family life. It is unequivocally wrong to compromise prematurely, or for selfish, petty, and individualistic reasons. Marriage is not a game to be played or terminated at will; it is a sacred and holy relationship. Only when it is clear that its sacredness has been irrevocably shattered should divorce be contemplated.

In those circumstances where divorce is right, so is the remarriage of the "innocent" party, if such innocence can be determined. Divorce simply for the sake of remarriage to some other mate is not to be condoned, for longing for another too easily encourages infidelity. Though love cannot be commanded, it can be restrained, and the marriage vow ought decisively to narrow the circle of erotic love. Yet when the marriage has been broken in spite of one's best efforts at forgiveness and reconciliation, the victim of this situation ought not to be forbidden ever to begin again. To condemn such a second marriage as adultery is to contravene the spirit of Jesus and make of his words a legalism that is incompatible with his total message.

The foundations of Christian family life in the form of faithfulness to the Church, family worship, grace at meals, the practice of individual prayer, and the atmosphere of Christian devotion that pervades the home are necessary prerequisites for the attainment of the good life in the family. It is in the home that Christian experience is most surely nourished and made vital, and where this is lacking, there is great loss.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Our examination of Christian ethics in marriage and family life in this unit as it relates to the issue of divorce is of great importance to this course bearing in mind the prevalence of this scourge in our society today.. As the total moral outlook of Jesus centered in his relation to God, so must everything that has been said in this unit find its foundation in the relation of the family and its members to the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." On no other foundation can Christian marriage achieve true fulfillment; on this foundation in spite of much human shortcoming the grace of God can find a way.

5.0 SUMMARY

The problem of divorce will always remain a direct affront to the divine institution of marriage and family. Only through a life of adherence to the dictates of the word of God as nurtured in an atmosphere of love can only stem the seeming upsurge.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Define what is meant by divorce?
2. Does divorce has anything to do with assumed failure of the human society?
3. Suggest ways of stemming the upsurge in the divorce prevalence in your society?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

J. M. Powis Smith. (1923). *The Moral Life of the Hebrews.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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MODULE 3

UNIT 1 CULTURE AND ETHICS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is intended to study the relations of the Christian ethic to our total environing society. Today in the world, emerging issues that borders on our very existence in the world are beginning to rear their heads more than ever before. The relationship of the Christian to his environment in the face of global warning, environmental pollution and the role that can be played by the Christian to affect his environment positively for the better will be examined here.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

define culture
know the relation of culture to the environment understand the relation of ethics to culture
understand the need for proactive action to save the world environment
understand the role of the Christian in addressing the difficult cultural problems that are inherent in our society.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Culture and Ethics

3.1.1 What is Culture?

Culture is an unusually slippery and ambiguous term. But for our purpose, we shall examine the biblical and theological foundations. The word "culture" has two meanings, not sharply separated but not identical, and we shall have to consider both of them. Both present difficulties and opportunities for the Christian approach to life.

In the broader meaning of the term, culture is synonymous with civilization. Every people has its culture, whether primitive or advanced, and this culture is discerned in the folkways and moral standards, forms of family life, economic enterprises, laws and modes of dealing with lawbreakers, forms of recreation, religion, art, education, science, and philosophy that constitute the social aspects of human existence as contrasted with the bare biological fact of living.

3.1.2 The Cultured Person

There is, however, a narrower use of the term which is related to but not identical with this inclusive meaning. In ordinary speech, who is a cultured person? By what canons does one judge another to be uncultured? Superficially but with widespread potency, one’s degree of culture is judged by his manners and conformity to correct social usage, good taste in dress and appearance, cleanliness and freedom from offensive odors or habits, ability to converse agreeably and to fit smoothly into any social situation. If a person is cultured, he is not a bore! On a deeper level, one’s degree of culture is to be judged by the extent of his education, the breadth of his interests, and his knowledge

and appreciation of such "cultural" pursuits as good art, literature, and music.

3.1.3 Conformity to a Given Culture

Culture in this second sense has many manifestations, but all converge to constitute the secularism of the modern world. Social conformity plays a major part in it, even though at the point of education and the arts the right of individual differentiation is recognized. Culture in this more limited sense, as defined by the attributes of a cultured person, is an important formative factor in the total culture of a people but cannot be identified with it. For example, the prophet Amos was an uncultured person by the standards of his time or ours, yet an important contributor to Hebrew culture. Abraham Lincoln is lauded in the American tradition because from such a lowly and uncultured background he rose to such heights of greatness.

In whichever sense the word "culture" is used, it is a distinctly human phenomenon. There is nothing like it in the instinctual organization of the anthill or beehive or in the gregarious impulses of animal life. Its roots may indeed be traced to defensive, acquisitive, or reproductive traits which the human shares with the subhuman world, its manifestations are very different. Only men form civilizations, and only men insist on adaptation to the patterns of the cultural community.

It is always a social phenomenon. This is self-evident from the definitions given. Individuals may conform to or reject the prevailing social patterns, and thereby shape the direction a culture takes. But this never happens except in response to a social situation.

3.1.4 Culture as a Spiritual Phenomenon

It is, furthermore, always in some measure a spiritual phenomenon. This does not mean that it is always a direct outgrowth of religion, though religions are always to be found in interplay with culture. Rather, every culture is the product of the human spirit, as the spirit of man wrestles with its total environment and seeks to work out a satisfactory adjustment to the material world, to other men, and to such invisible powers as are believed to control its destiny.

It is always rooted in a concern for values. That is, every culture presupposes in some sense a "kingdom of ends." These ends may be high or low by other standards, but to the people who live within a given culture, prize it and seek to preserve and exalt it, they are always high. There may be room for differences of individual opinion, as democracy preserves the right of minority dissent, but no culture can endure without general support by its people of the values central to it. This is why patriotism and group loyalty, though subject to perversion, not only are but ought to be regarded as virtues of great worth.

3.1.5 Culture as a Manifestation of the Divine

Is culture an "order of creation"? The existence of culture as a whole may be so regarded. The framework within which cultures develop is God-given, as are the foundations of family, economic, and national life which constitute so large a part of any civilization. It is apparently the will of God that men live together in civilized societies. Yet this is far from saying that any particular society or cultural group is as God would have it, or wholly the product of divine activity. The particular form a culture takes is the product of many forces, in which geographical location, economic resources, historical contingency, the pull of tradition, and voluntary human effort all play a part. This fact, with the resulting intermixtures of good and evil, is clearly illustrated by differing attitudes toward racial segregation in the North and South of the United States, or the presence of non theological social factors in the creation of the various denominations of the Christian Church.

A culture, even one of long duration, can be modified by human effort under the impact of a new ideology. For example, the radical transformation of China under Communist influence or the other revolutionary changes now taking place in the Orient from an emergent nationalism. This malleability is what makes both advance and decline in civilization possible. Yet there is always a "raw material" of culture which no amount of human effort can erase. The eternal human problem, as man seeks to change his status and that of his group, is how to deal with the intransigence of nature and the inviolability of the divine order in that interlocking structure of natural, human, and divine forces which Constitutes a given culture.

3.1.6 The Church and Culture

The Christian faith must come to terms with culture in both the senses in which it has been defined, and with full regard for all these considerations as to the nature of culture. The perennial problem of the Christian is how to be a Christian within "the world," that is, within one's total environing society. When this surrounding culture is at the same time "worldly" - cultured in the narrower sense, demanding conformity at the peril of loss of social status - the problem is intensified. The average Christian of today lives in a nominally Christian but largely worldly culture. What shall he do with it?

3.2 Biblical and Theological Foundations of Culture

The Bible as a whole is the record of man's effort to conform to, and to transform, his culture under the impact of spiritual insights conceived to be God-given. That these were in large measures actually, God-inspired is what gives the Bible its "holy" character as the bearer of universal and timeless truth. Yet at every point it must be read in reference to the culture within which it emerged, so that its "situation-conditioned" and temporal elements may be seen in their true perspective. To disregard this surrounding culture is to nullify much of the Bible's spiritual meaning by reading into it what is not there but is imputed to it from the

thought patterns of a different day.

3.3 Jesus and His Relation to Culture

Here we shall examine the relations of Jesus both to his own culture and to culture in general. It has often been charged that by focusing attention away from "the world" to God, the kingdom of heaven, and eternal life, Jesus introduced an ascetic and otherworldly element that nullifies human culture. Others within the Christian tradition have felt considerable uneasiness lest the words of Jesus about nonresistance imperil the civil power of the State, or his words about having no anxiety for food or drink or other material possessions curtail an economic motivation essential to society. Sometimes in direct attack, as in the Roman persecutions of early centuries and the Nazi and Communist movements of the past century, sometimes through sneers and the opposition of hostile public opinion, Christianity has had to defend itself against those who believed the false or utopian ideas of its founder to be dangerous. This opposition has been most overtly urged on political but often on intellectual grounds, and Schleiermacher's defense of Christian faith against its "cultured despisers" is a procedure that has again and again proved necessary.

This struggle to co-ordinate Christian faith with culture is not temporary but has lasted through twenty centuries of Christian history. There, he
points out that the answers given have taken five main directions: Christ
in opposition to culture, Christ in accommodation to culture, Christ as transcending culture but with some elements of synthesis, Christ in paradoxical relation to culture, and Christ as the transformer of culture. He also says wisely that "when one returns from the hypothetical scheme to the rich complexity of individual events, it is evident at once that no person or group ever conforms completely to a type."

3.3.1 Culture must be Person-Oriented

In the first place, Jesus' supreme concern was with persons, not in any humanistic sense of man's self-sufficiency, but because persons are of supreme worth as the recipients of God's love. Moreover, he cared about persons in their total bodily-spiritual unity, and with their life on earth as well as in heaven. Both his deeds of healing and his words repeatedly attest this fact. Whatever impulse his followers have had to labor for the amelioration of human life in ministering to the sick, the weak and helpless, the ignorant, the poverty-stricken, the imprisoned by any kind of chains, owes its primary origin to the love of God for persons as this was manifest in Jesus.

Cultures are of many types, and some have much and others little concern for the individual person. Yet as we noted, every culture is a human, social, and spiritual thing in which the values precious to the persons comprising it are exalted. Those cultures which approximate the view of Jesus as to the worth of every person are high cultures, democratic in political organization, peace-minded in international outlook, altruistic toward those in need, person-centered in education and a wide

range of social services. These are the goals of a Christian civilization, imperfectly realized, to be sure, in any society but sufficiently manifest in Europe and America to make it evident that a Christian democracy is not merely a utopian dream.

3.3.2 The Culture of Faith, Hope and Love

Second, Jesus called his followers to faith, hope, and love. This particular conjunction of terms is Paul's, but what they signify abounds everywhere in the message of Jesus. And these are very important foundations for the stabilization or the progress of any culture. With faith in God people can endure dark days, even the jeopardy of their nation or personal martyrdom, and know that all is not lost and their cause is not in vain. With hope for the future, not in any illusory "progress of mankind onward and upward forever," but in the confidence that the issues for time and eternity are in the hands of God, remarkable staying power is generated even in the midst of what appears to be social retrogression. With love as a basic conviction, not even the awful carnage of war can wholly erase human sensitivity, and foundations remain for building in love beyond it. Every age has had need of these qualities, but ours more than most has cried out for them as indispensable. "In God we trust" has taken on new relevance in the darkness of our times.

3.3.3 Culture Transformation through Jesus

Third, Jesus called his followers to challenge evil and to transform the world. It is impossible to say precisely what Western civilization would have been like without the influence of Jesus, but it most certainly would have taken a very different course. Few would question the judgment of H. G. Wells, "*His is easily the dominant figure of history. . . . A historian . . . without any theological bias whatever should find that he simply cannot portray the progress of humanity honestly without giving a foremost place to a penniless teacher from Nazareth."*

Cultures, even with all their values which their people do well to prize, need to be challenged and transformed through the influence of Jesus as this is mediated through his followers in every age. More than once this has happened through the work of a devoted and persistent minority when the Church as a whole, enmeshed as a social institution in its surrounding culture, lagged behind. This happened with reference to the abolition of human slavery, and it is happening now in regard to race discrimination and war. Often this comes about in conjunction with other agencies, as in the factory legislation which has made obsolete the twelve-hour day and the seven-day week, established minimum wage levels, and eliminated the grosser forms of economic exploitation.

New evils emerge, and these too must be challenged with wisdom and patience. New forms of work, of recreation, and of social organization bring both opportunities and perils to the human spirit. Both intelligence and persistence are required to cope with these problems, and the use of the best types of secular knowledge in a Christian framework, as in the growing convergence of Christian faith with psychotherapy in pastoral counseling. Christians in many matters must act with others outside the Christian fellowship. Where political action is required, it is not often that Christians alone bring it to pass. Yet Christians who keep witnessing about their convictions and thereby molding opinion contribute vitally to the fashioning of a better society.

In view of these facts, it cannot justly be said that either the message of Jesus or the Christian ethic derived primarily from Jesus is irrelevant to culture. In fact, nothing else is so relevant to the preservation and growth of right social attitudes, and from these attitudes the establishment of the "good society."

4.0 CONCLUSION

Previous units have dealt with the relations of Christian ethics to the culture of our times in reference to family life, economic relations, race relations, political structures, and the problems of war and peace in the

international scene. These issues cover a large part of the terrain of culture in the inclusive meaning of the term. But as important as they are to human society, these core values need to be steadfastly hinged unto the gospel truths of Jesus to give them a sane, humane and divine face.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has been specifically dedicated to giving culture a human face and ways of influencing our various societies for the better. Human nature cannot be made to embrace justice, peace and mutual development except it is firstly hinged on the godly spirit of selflessness and love.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is the meaning of Culture?
2. How can the culture of a given society be positively influenced through the gospel?
3. What is meant by culture of faith, hope and love in this unit?

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UNIT 2 THE CHRISTIAN AND THE STATE

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will concern itself with the study of one of the most difficult and complex aspects of Christian decision: the relations of Christian ethics to political power. Although the Christian acts within a system of law in reference to his family, his job, and his relations with those of other races, these are essentially matters of personal contact and adjustment. We come now to his relations with what is by its very nature an all-encompassing, impersonal framework of his life.

Almost every Christian is at the same time a citizen of a national state, and those few who are not citizens in the official sense of having explicit political rights and duties are still required to obey laws. Ever since Augustine, early in the fifth century, drew a distinction between the *civitas dei* and the *civitas terrena,* the interrelatedness and at points the conflict between the demands of the "city of God" on the one hand and the earthly power on the other have been crucial issues in Christian ethics.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

define what a state is
understand the biblical basis for a state
see the need to build a state on love and justice
understand the need for love liberty and democratic society understand the underlying problems that Christians may face with the State.
examine critically the coercion in the society

understand the need for genuine equality in a given social system

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Meaning of a State

What is a State?

A State is a sovereign political unit to which its citizens as members of a national community owe allegiance. It offers protection to its people and in turn demands obedience to its laws. Though in strict accuracy the term "nation" refers to the people and "State" to the political authority exercised upon and through them, in practice the two words are generally used interchangeably.

3.2 Difficulties Faced By the Christians in the State

People Make Up the Government

There are certain inherent difficulties in considering the ethical dilemmas of citizens in relation to the State. The first of these is in the difference yet convergence of nation and State - that is, of people and political authority. Even in the most totalitarian regime the State is never wholly an impersonal thing. Government "of the people, by the people, for the people," is the explicit aim of democracy, but there is no government of any kind unless some persons govern. Thus it comes about that no State, even the most autocratic, is morally neutral, for those who exercise authority within it are morally responsible people. On the other hand, a State always contains elements not directly subject to change by acts of will - accumulations from the past in the form of tradition, law, or constitution that can be changed but slowly if at all, competing interests within its membership, interlocking relations with other states in which the interests of justice and of security at times conflict. For these reasons it is a mistake to assume either that states are solely impersonal mechanisms of coercive power or that they are responsive to the moral demands of love and justice to the same degree that individual persons can be expected to be.

States Exercise Authority

Another inherent dilemma appears at the point of the definition of a State as a "sovereign" political unit. It is here that many difficulties regarding world government in principle, and the United Nations in practice, are focused. No nation can be a State unless it can exercise authority over its own people.

These difficulties and dilemmas are present even before one says anything about the claims of Christianity in reference to the State. But at

four points there is bound to be a difference in the demands made upon the Christian citizen by the two "worlds" in which he has membership.

These are:

1) The State tends to regard its power and authority as supreme; the Christian owes his ultimate loyalty to God alone.
2) The chief concern of the State is with its own national community; the Christian sees all men as beloved of God and hence envisions a world community.
3) The State has as its primary moral demands the maintenance of justice and security; the Christian finds his highest obligation in love to God and his fellow men.
(4) The State must use coercive power to enforce its authority; the Christian can accept some forms of coercion as right and necessary, but at others his conscience is bound to rebel. How to act as a Christian should, within this tension be a matter on which directives are discernible in the gospel, yet no arbitrary authoritative word can be found. But let us see what help we get from the Bible and from the assured convictions of Christian faith.

3.3 The Need for Love and Justice in the State

Our biblical basis in the word of God serves us a great deal in giving wing to the ethics of love and justice in the state. In the Old Testament we find, particularly in the messages of the prophets, a more explicit reckoning with social problems than is reflected in the New Testament. Israel, unlike the early Christian community, was a political State, and during much of its history its leaders had civil as well as religious authority. This dual relationship, gave a particular turn to the significance of the covenant, the Law, and the prophets. It is both asset and barrier as we try to apply the moral insights of the prophets to our own times.

The Old Testament and Social Justice

No literature of any people reflects a keener concern for social righteousness than is found in the writings of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah, and in a different setting in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The prophets did not hesitate to rebuke kings, as well as people, who disobeyed the commands of God. The evils reflected in their words, and indeed portrayed throughout the Old Testament - avarice, exploitation, bribery, chicanery, and attempts at seizure of power for personal gain - are perennial human tendencies which appear in every State. Both the situation and its remedy are timeless. In the message of the prophets

there is a call to personal and social righteousness which stems from the sovereign rule of a righteous God. They spoke to the conditions of their times from the standpoint of both the judgment and the proffered deliverance of Yahweh, and proclaimed their faith in a divine Ruler who moves within political events as in all other events of human history.

Social Justice in the New Testament

In the New Testament the most direct political reference in the words of Jesus is the familiar *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's*" (Mark 12:17). This is ambiguous because it does not tell us how to distinguish between what is Caesar's and what is God's. As we have noted repeatedly, Jesus was concerned to set up a spiritual, not a political, kingdom, and it is unlikely that he gave much thought to the structure of the political state in which his followers were to find themselves. He did foresee that they would endure persecution as he sent them out *"as sheep in the midst of wolves,*" but his call was to fidelity in witness rather than to assumption of the wolves' prerogatives and power.

This passage through the centuries has had very great value, and it is so today. For one thing, it recognizes the right of duly constituted civil authority to exercise control - and this at a point before which human nature is chronically reluctant, the payment of taxes! More significantly still, it recognizes that God has claims upon the citizen that cannot be wholly subsumed within the claims of the State.

Entrenching Justice and Love

It has been said that the Christian's love commandment is to *agape* love and not of necessity to *eros* or *philia,* though these may often be subsumed within it. But what is justice?

The time-honored and seldom disputed definition of justice is "giving to every man his due." It goes back to classical Greek thought, was accepted both by the Roman Catholic Church and by the Reformers, and is generally cited today when a definition is called for. With such a weight of evidence behind it, it requires temerity to dispute it.

Belonging and Denial

In every issue of justice or injustice some element of "belonging" or possession is involved — whether of material goods, status and prestige, power over another, personal opportunity, or any other of life's many intangibles. A situation is just when a person, or a group of persons, has

what he (or they) ought to have; a situation is unjust when for some reason this is denied.

To say this is to affirm that there are certain rights which cannot be set aside or infringed upon without injustice. From the playground, where even young children sense the difference between fair play and its opposite, to the relations of governments to their own citizens and to other states, justice involves the preservation or the securing of basic rights. What these rights are may be a matter of differing opinion; that there are such rights is inherent in any consideration of justice.

Justice in a Social Context

Yet when this has been said, it must also be pointed out that the definition is seriously defective at the point of its ambiguity. When does a man have "his due"? Aristotle, who gave the definition its classic formulation, regarded slaves as instruments for the use of free men, held that barbarians had no rights that the free-born Greek was obligated to respect, and regarded women as an inferior group existing only for the bearing and rearing of children. This was corrected somewhat within the Christian Church, though Aristotle's scorn of manual labor was carried over into it. Christian history shows progress toward an equalitarian conception of justice, but the Church has never fully divested itself of aristocratic assumptions. Even with the present democratic and Christian emphasis on the dignity of personality and concern for "liberty and justice for all," we are still far from agreement as to what constitutes for every man "his due." Every clash over racial status, labor and wages, or the legitimacy of some particular form of power gives evidence of the ambiguity of this principle.

Can justice be rescued from ambiguity by equality? Where basic human rights are at stake, they ought not to be denied to anybody because of "class, color, creed or previous condition of servitude." Brunner is right that there is certain impersonality about a system of justice, definiteness and a structured quality which is not dependent on attitudes of personal like or dislike. Yet justice within a family requires adaptation to individual need, and justice within an economic order requires some variation in income according to contribution as well as need. Even in those structures of justice aiming to be completely impartial — the apprehension of lawbreakers and the affixing of penalties for crime — the best jurisprudence takes into account the maturity and the motive of the offender and the possibilities of remedial as well as of punitive treatment. Hence it appears that no rigid equalitarianism, but only equality of opportunity according to individual circumstance, will give to every man his due.

What is just, can never be determined apart from a social context. A young child is not treated justly if responsibilities are placed upon him beyond his years, or a mature adult if treated like a child. A just system of grading in school, or of compensation in work, must take into account the legitimate expectancy of performance of the individual within his group.

The Relation of Justice to Love

What, then, is the relation of justice to love? According to Brunner there is a radical difference between them, with love belonging to the sphere of personal relations and justice, because of its fixity and impersonality, to institutions and systems. Justice then must precede love to give to society an ordered structure; the Christian must seek to ensure it as a foundation for the exercise of love, but justice and not love is the principle of the social order.

If the above meaning of justice is true, no such separation of justice from love or substitution of justice for love is consistent with it. As contrasted with love, justice has this statutory quality, this sense of things fixed." In between this inflexible and impersonal view of justice and one which blurs the distinction between justice and love is an intermediate view which I hold to be the true one.

Justice is the "harmonious relation of life to life" as this harmonious relation is determined by concern for other persons in *agape* love. Where it is felt towards persons who are not known in face-to-face relations, it takes the form of good will, respect for personality, eagerness to serve, willingness to be helpful at personal cost. It is not the sole prerogative of Christians, but Christians who do not have this attitude can scarcely be said to be either loving or just.

3.4 Love and Coercion in the State

But can justice be maintained — or an approximation of justice — without coercive force? The answer is clearly no. Even within the intimate relations of the family where love ought to be most regnant, there can be no justice without the exercise of authority, and authority sometimes necessitates coercion. Children have their "just rights" within a family, and excessive domination by their parents is neither good psychology nor good religion; yet the undisciplined child suffers severely from his lack of restraint, and without some coercion there can be no "harmonious relation of life to life." This is clearly evident within the State, which would not be a State at all unless it could exercise coercive force upon recalcitrant and thereby ensure a measure of security and order for all its members.

Coercion is necessitated by sin. All men are sinners; all are in some respects self-seeking. For "law-abiding citizens" this does not generally require the penalties of the law to be invoked. In some, a sinful and selfish defiance of the rights of others leads to crime, and coercion must be invoked for restraint and punishment.

The need for coercion does not stem from sin only. As in the family immaturity necessitates coercive authority, there are immature adults in every State. Coercion is

required also by the sheer complexity of human existence, where even mature and law-abiding adults "tread on each other's toes" unless their proper bounds are marked out and these enforced.

Granted that coercive power is necessary if a State, or even a harmonious lesser order of society, is to exist, several very basic questions remain. Is Christian love compatible with the use of physical force? What of competing coercive groups within a State and their relation to law? When, if ever, is revolution justified? Is it ever right for one State, to use coercive force upon another?

3.5 Liberty, Equality and Democracy

Democracy has always been defined as the government of the people, by the people for the people. This is both an ethical ideal and a form of political government. As an ideal it stresses the worth and dignity of every man, and hence the need of securing for every man his basic human rights and his highest attainable self-development. This has Christian roots in the New Testament, though its roots are also to be found in Platonic *eros* and in a natural law of morality which has come down to us from Stoic philosophy. As a political system democracy stresses not only the "rights of man," but the opportunity and obligation of every mature citizen to have a part in shaping the direction his government will take. However far from the ethical ideal it may be in practice, it is always in a measure guided by it and responsive to it. Where democracy prevails, men are never perfect, but their worst impulses are held in check both by the inner discipline of responsible citizenship and by external coercion upon the irresponsible. Reinhold Niebuhr rightly opined: "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."

Basic to the principles of democracy are equality and liberty. Both are ambiguous terms requiring definition to avoid distortion.

Democracy as an ideal is not to be identified with equality, although it is closely related to it. Equality may mean

1) Equality of intrinsic personal worth (that is, spiritual equality before God),
2) Equality of endowment,
3) Equality of opportunity, or
4) Identity of function.

A democratic ideal presupposes equality in the first and third senses, but not in the second or fourth. It is obvious that not all persons are created "free and equal" from the standpoint of either biological or cultural inheritance and therefore ought not all to do the same things or enjoy the same experiences. Yet within a framework of disparate biological inheritance fixed by nature and of disparate social inheritance which is the result of both biological and human forces, the democratic ideal requires that every person be given an opportunity to experience the "abundant life" and do the work for which he is best fitted.

Democracy as a form of social organization clashes at some points with democracy as an equalitarian ideal. This happens when persons of inferior intelligence or ethical sensitivity are able by force of numbers to exercise coercion upon other persons in such a manner as to thwart their fullest self-realization. It happens also when for the real good of the greater number, legislation is enacted. The enforcement of this legislation leads to injustice to a minority. The former situation presents a problem to be dealt with through education, particularly moral education. The latter is embedded in the metaphysical problem of evil. Neither can be wholly eliminated in a complex social order.

The democratic ideal is a principle of *liberty* as well as equality, but again it is necessary to distinguish among types of liberty.

Liberty may mean

1) Freedom to do as one pleases without social restraint,
2) Freedom of thought, worship, or expression of opinion, or
3) Freedom to act in social relations within limits set by the group.

All three are types of individualism but with quite different social consequences. The first conforms to the democratic ideal of respect for personality only in small, highly moralized groups. Ordinarily it coincides with egoistic hedonism, anarchy, and "rugged" (that is, ruthless) individualism.

The second, which is a major presupposition of both secular and religious liberalism, is not only consistent with but essential to the maintenance of the democratic ideal, and is formally guaranteed in all democratic societies but often violated in practice.

The third is both an indispensable prerequisite to the democratic ideal and a primary source of its corruption. Rightly used, it grants "liberty under law," uniting freedom with order; misused it unduly restricts freedom for the sake of order or upsets order for the sake of freedom. A large part of the problem of social and political ethics lies in distinguishing between its use and misuse.

So essential is liberty to democracy that any setting aside of civil liberties, or attempts to stifle freedom of thought and honest, peaceable expression of it, must be viewed with much apprehension.

On rare occasions, a Christian may even be called upon to defy the civil law for the sake of the higher law of God. This ought never to be done without much soul searching, and with full willingness to take the consequences. It is more safely done for others than for one’s self, and there is no general basis on which it can wisely be encouraged. It is one of the truly great things about democracy that it provides so extensively for conscientious dissent and upholds the right of minorities to differ with prevailing opinion.

4.0 CONCLUSION

A democratic political system makes possible both more equality and more liberty in the right sense, and hence more justice, and also the practice of love within the society than any other alternative system. Under it the values the Christian ethic exalts can thrive and grow as in no other. Hence, not only from its roots but its fruits there is a valid sense in which it is possible to speak of Christian democracy. But always this needs to be spoken with caution. Democracy ought not by any superficial synthesis to be identified with Christianity simply because in the democratic West the majority of the citizens profess to be Christians. Political power and spiritual power are not identical, and no actual democracy has been, or will be, the city of God, while sin remains**.**

5.0 SUMMARY

The possibilities and the perils of entrenching justice, equality liberty and democracy in a society has been the concern of this unit. This is viewed dispassionately bearing in mind the need of divergent views in the society and the equality of all men under God.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Define love?
2. What is democracy?
3. How will the concepts of equality and liberty bring about a just social order?

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UNIT 3 CHRISTIAN AND THE RACE PROBLEM

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the world scene, questions of race and color mingle with those of national status and of economic abundance and poverty to create great restlessness and tension. Even in churches this virus is widely prevalent. It was not a theological, but a racial issue that split the Methodist Church in 1844 and kept it in sectional units for almost a hundred years, with the breach only partially healed by the formula of union in 1939. The northern and southern Presbyterians and Baptists are still separated with race in the background, though with important theological differences in addition to the racial attitudes that have prevailed in Methodism. Yet it is the existence not of separate denominations, but of segregation within virtually every denomination, that is the most telling evidence of the depth of the problem. This separateness, whether or not required by organizational structures, is everywhere present. One has but to enter almost any church and look around to discover it**.**

Paradoxically, it is this issue on which there is the greatest agreement in principle among all the social problems that the Church is faced today. Representative church bodies have again and again called for a "non segregated church in a non segregated society." The Federal Council of Churches in 1946 declared:

The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America renounces the pattern of segregation in race relations as unnecessary and undesirable and a violation of the gospel of love and brotherhood. Having taken this action the Federal Council requests its constituent communions to do likewise.

To cite one more statement from an inclusive perspective, the World Council of Churches at Evanston in 1954 issued an extraordinarily forward-looking statement on race relations which contains these words: When we are given Christian insight, the whole pattern of racial discrimination is seen as an unutterable offence against God, to be endured no longer, such that the very stones cry out. In such moments we understand more fully the meaning of the gospel, and the duty of both Church and Christian.

The skeptic is prone to say that the churches make these "ringing resolutions," yet hypocritically disregard them. That there is wide disregard is evident, but it cannot be charged simply to hypocrisy. The issues are complex, and we must attempt to sort out some of the interwoven strands that constitute the ugly net of race prejudice.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of unit, you should be able to:

understand the meaning of racism know the causes of racial prejudice
know the biblical foundations for fighting against racism know the effects of race prejudice
know the possible recommendations for Christian action.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Biblical Foundations

As has been done in other chapters, let us take a look at the biblical foundations of the Christian view. This can be brief, for the directives are unequivocal.

The Old Testament

In the first chapter of Genesis it is written:

Then God said, "*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth*." *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them*. (1:26-27.)
There is no suggestion here of a white God, or even of a Semitic God. Nor is there any intimation that some who are thus to "have dominion"

are to constitute a dominant race while others do the menial tasks of mankind. Even though Negroes be assumed to be the descendants of Ham, the Jews of Shem, and the Aryans of Japheth — a view which anthropologists discredit — all are equally the Sons of Adam and made in the divine image. There is not a little *religious* exclusiveness in the history of the Hebrews as it is recorded in the Old Testament, and this gave rise to a Jewish particularize which the greater prophets had to condemn as they stressed the love of God for all men. Yet the doctrine of creation that is the common heritage of Jewish and Christian faith asserts unequivocally the unity of mankind and leaves no standing ground for *racial* exclusiveness.

The New Testament

In the New Testament this becomes unmistakable. The equality of all persons before God was basic to the outlook of Jesus. The parable of the Good Samaritan is the most dramatic challenge to racial exclusiveness, but it appears again and again in Jesus' own service to human need regardless of racial or national backgrounds and in his portrayal of the conditions of entrance into the Kingdom. In the last judgment scene, it is not one's Jewish ancestry but care for the hungry and thirsty, for the naked, sick, and imprisoned, that will determine one's place (Matt. 25:31-46). In the great consummation, "*men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God*" (Luke 13:29). Jesus did not hesitate to condemn the shallow self- confidence of those who trusted in their Jewish prerogatives, or to commend the faith of a Roman centurion as being superior to theirs (Matt. 23; 8:10-13). Had Jesus been willing to be neutral towards Jewish exclusiveness for fear of causing trouble, he might have escaped crucifixion but he would not have been our Lord.

The Early Church

In the early Church, the contest between Jewish exclusiveness and Christian universalism was at first sharp, but the latter won out to become the settled policy. The decision recorded in Acts 15:19-21 thereby becomes a watershed in the history of the Church. Peter's vision (Acts 10) and its bearing on the acceptance of the Roman centurion Cornelius into Christian fellowship bears directly on the issue of segregated churches today, and the truth could hardly be more forcefully put than in Peter's words that clinch the matter, "*Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality*" (v. 34). Paul repeatedly declared that *"all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin*" (Rom. 3:9), but that Christ died for the redemption of all, and has reconciled us to God and to one another. *"There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*." (Gal. 3:28.) No greater charter of race equality need be cited than that found in Ephesians, "*For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility*" (2:14).

But why multiply citations? The record is so clear that almost any Christian will admit that in principle race prejudice is wrong. But do we acquiesce to this in our practice?

3.2 The Causes of Racial Prejudice

Race prejudice is a pervasive human phenomenon. Yet clearly it is not inborn. Colored and white children will play together when permitted to do so with full friendliness.

By the time of adolescence, unless positive steps are taken to counteract it, segregation has emerged as a dominant pattern. So powerful are the drives toward conformity in high school and college years that it is not uncommon to find an intense and irrational cruelty toward those of other races. On the other hand, young people are more apt than their elders to break through the patterns of racial discrimination if there are democratic and Christian influences upon their thinking and friendly group contacts are possible with those of another race. Where segregation is removed in practice, its justification in principle rapidly subsides.

Confront an adult with the fact of his race prejudice, and he will do one of three things. He will deny it, he will admit it but admit also that it is irrational, or he will begin to rationalize his attitudes. The rationalizations will usually take the form of words about being different from "our kind of people"; about inferior and superior races; about dirt and smells, or dishonesty and treachery and the "yellow peril"; about the danger of intermarriage; about how those of other races are "creeping up on us" and "don't know their place." When sifted out these rationalizations, indicate that psychological, cultural, social, nationalistic, and economic factors have been superimposed upon and confused with biological facts. As a result, we have a "color caste" of which the roots are not primarily to be found in biological differences, but with its evil effects irrationally transferred to great groups loosely designated as racial.

Race is a most ambiguous term, in which many national, geographical, cultural, and linguistic elements are mixed. Though race is sometimes correctly designated by basic biological types as Caucasian, Mongolian, or Negroid, in practice it is more often indicated by color, as black, white, red, yellow, or brown; or by nationality, as Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Mexican; or by geographical origin, as Oriental, Asiatic, European, African; or by a combination of ethnic, national, and geographical factors, as Nordic, Teutonic, Slavic, Latin American, French Canadian. A particular problem is posed by an attempt to classify the Jews, for while they are a Semitic people who have had relatively little racial intermixture through the centuries, it is an ever- present problem as to whether the terms "Jew" and "Jewish" refer mainly to a race or to a religion.

Such adjectives give evidence that the race problem is never wholly a matter of biological distinction and stratification. Racial intermixtures have produced some very white-skinned Negroes with blue eyes and fair hair, yet the product of such a union remains a Negro. Race as the term is commonly used designates very nearly what the Germans call *Volk* — a group sharing a common cultural tradition, whether of achievement or servitude, with some measure of national, geographical, and biological affinity. Our language being what it is, we must use the term "race" in

spite of its looseness.

What is Racial Prejudice?

Racial prejudice is, first of all, a psychological factor, rooting in collective egotism and pride and the pervasive human tendency to dislike the different. Though an ancient evil, it began to receive intellectual defense more recently than most evils, for it was only a century ago that Count Gobineau published in French his four-volume *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races,* in which he contended that color of skin determines mental and spiritual differences, and that mixture of blood produces degeneracy and the fall of civilizations. There was little, if any, racial discrimination in the early or medieval Church, the conditions of membership and fellowship being determined by faith in Jesus Christ and fidelity to the ordinances of his church. "Race and color did not count in the early existence of the Protestant church. It was when modern Western imperialism began to explore and exploit the colored peoples of Africa, Asia and America that the beginning of segregation and discrimination based on color and race was initiated." Nevertheless, the *roots* of race prejudice are as old as the human race in the tendency to like those who are like oneself and to dislike those who for any reason, biological or cultural, are different.

Another form of rationalization, we noted, was the *claim of "superior" and "inferior" races.* Count Gobineau's contentions were widely believed until quite recently, and are still bandied about by those who never heard his name. Yet for the past two decades they have been scientifically exploded, and no reputable psychologist or anthropologist now accepts them. In 1938 the American Psychological Association went on record as declaring that there are no innate mental differences among races. In the same year the American Anthropological Association asserted that there is no scientific basis for the biological inheritance of cultural traits, or of any traits implying racial inferiority. These judgments have been corroborated by medical science in reference to the Negro blood bank by declaring that there is no difference in the blood of colored and white persons, thus reinforcing the biblical word that God *"hath made of one blood all nations of men*" (K.J.V.) to dwell together.

There are, of course, primitive and advanced groups even as there are stupid and highly capable individuals within every group. These discernible differences have lent support to the myth of natural inequality. Informed opinion, however, agrees with Gunnar Myrdal in *An American Dilemma* that there is a vicious circle at this point. Denied the cultural, educational, and economic advantages held by others, underprivileged groups tend to remain in this status, as in America the restriction of Negroes to unskilled labor and meager educational facilities has prevented their advancement to positions of leadership comparable with the more privileged. Increasingly in the world scene, as in America, it becomes evident that there are persons of extraordinary ability in every racial group, and the flowering of such talent awaits only the opportunity.

3.3 Effects of Race Prejudice

Imperils Peace

Racism imperils the peace of the world. Not race, which in the order of nature has been established by God that there may be variety among his children, but racism. Racism is the perversion of this variety, the injection of attitudes of domination, superiority, and enmity where there ought to be fellowship within this diversity. Since this is a moral universe, racism cannot continue without injury and peril to all — to those who dominate as well as to those who suffer from the domination of others.

Affects both the Discriminator and the Segregated

Usually the question is: What does discrimination or segregation does to the person segregated, to the disadvantaged person? . . . But we seldom realize what discrimination does to the person who practices it. It scars not only the soul of the segregated but the soul of the segregator as well. When we build fences to keep others out, erect barriers to keep others down, deny to them freedom which we ourselves enjoy and cherish most, we keep ourselves in, hold ourselves down, and the barriers we erect against others become prison bars to our own souls.

Heightens Insecurity in the Society

A major effect in the domestic scene is what racism does to public respect for the principles of democracy and of Christianity. In both connections there are endless reverberations, which can be touched upon only in barest mention. When one becomes accustomed to perversions of justice with reference to those of another race, these are likely before long not to seem perversions, and the democratic conscience that should be demanding "liberty and justice for all" is dulled into acquiescence. Those on the receiving end of the injustice can scarcely avoid the feeling that democracy is being flouted, and the temptation to flout it in return is strong. Both of these reactions together are responsible for not a little of the domestic unrest and incidence of crime in our society.

It’s Effect in the Church

In the Church also there is a sheaf of bad effects. The most obvious one, by the continuance of segregation, is to negate the principle of the equality of all men before God, which even the most casual secularist recognizes to be Christian, and thus to bring the Church into disfavour. More subtle effects, however, are found in the thwarting of the growth of Christian personality by denials of opportunity and fellowship that should be open to all, and in the deepening of the sin of moral dullness through all the forms of rationalization that have been outlined.

3.4 Proposals for Christian Action

The security of the world calls for the mitigation of racial tensions through justice.

Yet deeper than the demand for security is the obligation of the Christian gospel to increase love in human relations.

In the first place, the Church must understand and proclaim its gospel. Vague generalities about the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man have often been spoken which do not cut down through our crust of convention to where the race problem is. We need to recover the insights of Jesus on this question. And one of the most amazing things about Jesus is how he met the racism of his day. Reared in a Jewish tradition that prided itself on being the chosen people of God, living in occupied territory where Roman superiority and Jewish superiority were always in uneasy tension, he lived on a plane that made a Roman centurion say of him, *"Truly this was a son of God*!" (Matt. 27:54). Jew, Roman, Samaritan, Syrophoenician, were to him equally the children of God. In the presence of human need, his healing knew no bounds.

4.0 CONCLUSION It is easy for one to preach love when one has not personally felt the sting of race discrimination. Yet the need becomes far more eloquent when it comes from the lips of one who bears the brunt of it, yet without hatred. It was put in words that ought to become classic by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., a few hours after his arrest as a leader of passive resistance against segregation in the Montgomery, Alabama, bus lines:

If we are arrested every day, if we are exploited every day, if we are trampled over every day, don't ever let anyone pull you so low as to hate them. We must use the weapon of love. We must have compassion and understanding for those who hate us. We must realize so many people are taught to hate us and that they are not totally responsible for their hate. But when we stand in life at midnight; we are always on the threshold of a new dawn.

5.0 SUMMARY

The race problem must, for the most part, be met by person to person contacts which create understanding. This calls for more intervisitation and social fellowship, both locally and nationally, and as occasion permits, in the world community. It is hard to remain hostile towards a people whose individual members, one has come to know and love. Such fellowship has been one of the major contributions of the ecumenical movement.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is racial discrimination?
2. What role can be played by the Church in stemming this in our society?

7.0 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4 CHRISTIANITY AND WAR SITUATIONS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We come now to the most basic issue that confronts mankind. With atomic and hydrogen bombs now stock-piled by both the United States and Russia in sufficient quantity and potency to destroy all human life upon the planet and with guided missiles to deliver them quickly to their targets, the annihilation not only of great cities but of entire nations in a matter of minutes has now become a staggering possibility. The phrase "coexistence or no existence" has become more than a neat play on words; it is a clear putting of the only two alternatives before us.

We all agree that war is a terrible evil, fought today with possibilities of destruction undreamed of in earlier days, and to be avoided by any honorable means. At this point, however, opinions diverge. Many Christians, and at present the majority, believe that there are occasions when war cannot be honorably averted and therefore must be participated in as a Christian duty, while Christian pacifists hold all war and moral support of war to be contrary to the teachings of Jesus, and hence to be rejected by the Christian conscience.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

understand the biblical injunctions concerning a war situation know what must be done to stop the advents of war understand that war is always a lose-lose situation.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Biblical Foundations

The Old Testament has in it much of carnage and strife, with Yahweh in several instances represented as calling his people to battle and contending for them against the enemy. The statement, "*For many fell slain, because the war was of God"* (I Chr. 5:22), is made once but implied often. Yet few would question that Isaiah's vision of a warless world, restated by Micah in nearly identical words, reflects a higher insight. For many centuries these words have been a rallying cry, not to battle, but to the ways of peace:

and many nations shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken. (Mic. 4:2-4.

In the New Testament, Jesus stands revealed not only as the Son of God but as the Prince of Peace, proclaiming the love of God, forgiving his enemies even at the point of death on the cross, calling all men to a type of neighbourly love which if put into practice, would abolish wars. His words, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called Sons of God*," are fully consistent with all that he was and did as he set before men, the nature and will of God.

What we derive from Jesus is a spirit and an outreach to persons that is the antithesis of war. Just as he spoke no specific word on slavery or slums, but gave an impulse that can let no sensitive Christian be at ease while they exist, so he injected into human history a spirit that must eventually lead to war's abolition. That mankind has been so slow about it is due in part to human sin, in part to the immense complexities of the international situation.

3.2 Christianity and Peace Making

When Christian faith is viewed as a whole, there are certain basic convictions which bear upon war and the tasks of peacemaking. Let us briefly review them.

God is the Creator and Ruler of Our World

The ways off God may be shrouded in mysteries the problem of evil may also be theoretically insoluble, yet the Christian knows that God made the world for good and not for evil. He knows that war's wanton destruction of human lives and property and its long aftermath of physical and social evils cannot be God's will. The passions that arouse war, the tragic events that occur within it in ever-mounting proportions, and the consequences that flow from it is almost wholly antithetical to what we know of the love of God as we see this love revealed in Jesus. Thus we are called to labor with all our powers for war's abolition.

God is a God of Judgment

God is a God of judgment who does not treat sin lightly. Any individual or any people who flouts his righteousness will stand under condemnation, though his judgment is always linked with love. The result in practice, is that sin always brings evil consequences in its wake. The world has been so made with a pervasive moral order that we cannot sin with impunity. When a society or a nation tries to direct its course on the basis of aggressive self-interest, denial of the rights and liberties of others, economic greed, lust for power, race prejudice, vindictiveness, and deception, situations are created which if unchecked lead to war. In this sense, then, war can be said to be a form of divine judgment, though we cannot assume that God deliberately sends wars to smite sinners with the wrath of his displeasure.

God Alone is Sovereign

This is implied in the doctrines both of creation and of judgment. Every State claims absolute sovereignty over its people. The Christian faith affirms that God alone is man's supreme Ruler, and in his will alone is man's final authority. This is why Christians have again and again felt impelled by conscience to defy their political rulers and to say with Peter, "*We must obey God rather than men*" (Acts 5:29).

God is Redeemer and Father

Neither creativity nor judgment nor sovereignty is the attribute of God by which we; know him best. It is as redeeming love that he comes closest to us. This means that in his creation of the world with an invincible order he is never indifferent to human need; in his judgment he is never merely punitive; in his sovereignty he is never arbitrary or despotic. God is seeking always to win individuals, societies, and nations to ways of righteousness, justice, good will, and peace.

3.4 Where is God in Times of War?

In this connection a question always arises in time of war: "What is God doing? Why does he not stop it?" The answer is far more complex than to say simply

that war is God's judgment upon human sin, for the suffering and disaster of war falls with terrible force upon the innocent as upon the guilty. Without presuming to give a final answer, the direction an answer must take can be found in our Christian faith. God is maintaining a physical order, within which it is possible to live in happiness and peace, but within which also fire burns, bombs destroy, and bodies starve and die. He is maintaining a social order in which we are meant to help one another, but within which the innocent suffer with and for the guilty. He is maintaining a moral order within which our goodness helps and our evil harms our neighbor. God's gift of human freedom, which makes possible the sin, error, and terrible folly of war, is also that which makes us morally responsible beings. We could not surrender it and remain human, and we would not surrender it if we could. Our task is to use it in obedience to his righteous will.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is the basis of the Christian faith that God rules his world. This has all- important consequences. Though it does not settle the pacifist issue, it does mean that all we do must be done in love and with supreme regard for the persons whom God loves. It means, furthermore, that in spite of our weakness and lack of wisdom, God can use in the making of peace, any gift that is brought in love for the service of human need. He is working always, even in the darkest of human situations, through redemptive love, and in this he summons us to be his co-workers.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has based itself to examine the gruesome problem of war in our world. This brings to the fore the issue of the stand of God in war situations. Also, the moral obligations for us as dwellers in this world are also examined.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. How will you define war?
2. How will you justify the statement, Where is God in the time of war?
3. How best can the love of God be displayed in the time of war?

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UNIT 5 WORLD PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The need for world peace has been a recurrent problem since the First World War was fought. As Christians, there is no way we can chide away from this impeding danger. This unit is therefore dedicated to the Christian at lending a voice to the achievement of world peace.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

understand the need for global peace
know the Christian's suggestions at achieving this. appreciate efforts at achieving this.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 World Peace and International Order

The World Council of Churches has spoken in unequivocal terms stated as one of the "two conditions of crucial importance which must be met, if catastrophe is to be averted in our world": "the prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction; including atomic and hydrogen bombs, with provision for international inspection and control, such as would safeguard the security of all nations, together with the drastic reduction of all other armaments."
This resolution is further highlighted in the following ways which have been stated not only as the theology of war and peace but also an analysis of the existing situation and procedures for acting within it, on which Christians can agree. Without necessarily reaching unanimity at every point, this consensus has been reached and stated again and again

in pronouncements of the World Council of Churches, the various denominational bodies.

The Frightful Character of Modern War

Opinions differ as to whether any war under present circumstances can be just; there is no disagreement as to the magnitude of potential destructiveness. The power of modern weapons to incinerate vast civilian populations with no available civil defense must now be reckoned with. A third world war would spell the doom of civilization, if not of total human existence, upon this planet. There is difference of opinion as to whether such a war is likely to be launched; there is no doubt among informed persons of its awful consequences if this occurs. War itself has therefore become the chief enemy to overcome.

The Rejection of "Preventive" War

It is now generally agreed that to launch a war with the idea of a quick victory would be ghastly folly. Earlier in the cold war this was advocated by some, though never by the churches, as a way of seizing the advantage and ending the tensions between East and West. Virtually no one believes any longer that this would do more than to precipitate the carnage and destruction that all sane men dread and seek to avoid. The folly of such an action was clearly displayed in the Iraqi War.

No War of Aggression Can Be Justified

There is, of course, great difficulty of interpretation at this point, for in the complexities of the international scene, the line is not easy to draw between aggression and defense, and every country regards its own cause as just. Nevertheless, it is significant that the World Council of Churches at Evanston stated as the first of the constructive steps out of the present impasse the following:

We first of all call upon the nations to pledge that they will refrain from the threat or the use of hydrogen, atomic, and all other weapons of mass destruction as well as any other means of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.
A resolution was also adopted and widely communicated to both churches and governments calling for the "certain assurance that no
country will engage in or support aggressive or subversive acts in other
countries."

War is not Inevitable

This is very important, for a fatalistic belief that war is bound to occur, breeds a defeatist attitude that militates against positive peace action. Furthermore, it is a reflection on the spiritual power for peace that God stands ready to impart through the gospel of reconciliation. Again the World Council spoke forcefully at this point:

"Because of their belief in this gospel of reconciliation and their experience of its power, Christians can never accept, as the only kind of existence open to nations, a state of perpetual tension leading to "inevitable" war. On the contrary, it is the Christian conviction that war is not inevitable, because God wills peace."

Theology is reinforced by history at this point. The Dun Commission of Christian scholars in 1950 in their report on *The Christian Conscience and Weapons of Mass Destruction* stated that "to accept general war as inevitable is to treat ourselves as helpless objects carried by a fated tide of events rather than as responsible men," and went on to say, "One reason why fascism and Nazism gained their dread power over great nations was because otherwise decent people bowed before what they regarded as 'inevitable' and allowed a 'wave of the future' to inundate them."

War Itself cannot be Creative or Curative

Caution is needed at this point, for to affirm this is not to say that no war has ever been just, or that no good has ever come out of any war. There is, of course, wide disagreement on these issues, some holding that war is sometimes necessary for the restraint of evil and the winning of time for positive steps towards peace, others holding that war itself erects such barriers to these steps that it is completely futile as well as unchristian. The point, rather, is that any positive, creative, curative processes for the improvement of mankind must rest on other grounds. There is large agreement among Christian leaders, and increasingly among statesmen, that if war is either to be averted or made to serve any good purpose, constructive service to human need must be our chief reliance. Without moral and spiritual power, military power may restrain aggression, but it cannot build international order. This conviction actuates the effort to remove poverty, hunger, ignorance, and disease by economic aid. It is also under girds negotiation looking towards disarmament and the effort to alleviate world tensions by conference rather than the threat or the use of military force. "Without the development of peaceful alternatives, collective military effort may win a temporary victory, only to plunge the victors into new conflict. **International Co-operation through the United Nations Must Be Supported**

Christians generally regard the U.N. as our best political hope of peace and an indispensable organ of law and order among the nations, though none would say that it has functioned perfectly. There are some few who regard international organization as being opposed to national interest, and some pacifists are unable to sanction the U.N.'s use of military force for collective security. Nevertheless, there is a wide consensus among Christian leaders that the formation of the U.N. was a long step in advance toward international order, that in spite of difficulties it has functioned helpfully along both political and social lines, and that it merits the active moral support of peace-minded and world-minded citizens.

The U.N. has provided a world forum for the discussion of controversial issues and by its mediation has almost certainly averted wars. By its program of technical assistance, World Health Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, UNESCO, various relief agencies, and care of refugees it has proved both a symbol and a channel of international co- operation. In its Universal Declaration of Human Rights it has given the world its first considered and inclusive statement of the rights of man. Collective security involves much more than the use of military measures, such as were invoked in the conflict in Korea. The Fourth National Study Conference on the Churches and World Order had this to say about it:

"We now live in the age of the hydrogen bomb. Therefore, we must explore every possible means of ensuring collective security, apart from the use of military power"

We urge our government, therefore, to press for the largest practicable degree of disarmament through the UN, as we seek the goal of universal enforceable disarmament. We urge also that the functions of the UN in developing moral judgment as to conditions causing tensions and threatening war be magnified. We ask our own government to take the lead in emphasizing all those activities of the UN which aim at the substitution of good offices, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and the counsel of the world community for armed force as a means of settling disputes.

The Armaments Race must be Curtailed

Sharp divergences have always appeared on the curtailing of arms rearmament. While church bodies have repeatedly opposed universal military training, some Christians favor it, and while many deplore the size of our military budget as compared with other peacetime services, there are those who would think it folly to lessen it. Christian opinion converges, however, with the best political thought in the desire to discover processes of securing universal enforceable disarmament. This cannot be brought about simply by new pacts without mutual trust and without safeguards for inspection and control. Yet the terrific economic drain of military expenditures, pre-empting about three fourths of all money paid for taxes, the psychological strains of conscription of youth for military service, and the perils to democracy of a militarized public mind require unremitting effort to lift the armaments burden.

The Living Standards of Underprivileged Peoples must be Lifted

Economic factors are not the only causes of war, but they are large contributors. In the present crisis, the hungry peoples of the Orient, long acquiescent in poverty and disease because they saw no escape, are filled with a new hope, and the Communists are feeding these hopes. On the basis of simple expediency, economic aid is a better preventive of war than atomic or hydrogen bombs.

Racial Injustices and Tensions must be eliminated

Unfortunately we cannot say that the churches are themselves free of racial tension

and discrimination. The opposite is altogether too evident. Nevertheless, in principle race prejudice is seldom defended by Christians, and there is a growing ferment in the Church to abolish in practice what is condemned in principle.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In these areas Christians, even without complete unanimity, have been able to a high degree, work together. These convictions give no complete formula for the making and preserving of peace, but as they are pursued earnestly, both security and justice are enhanced. Christians who believe in procedures based upon them have done much to stabilize our world. These same steps must be carried much further, and they can be advanced to the degree that Christian citizens are informed and motivated to action. It is one of the blessings of democracy that this is so, for in part these procedures depend on individual attitudes and in other matters on political action in which representatives in government must eventually be responsive to the people's demands. So let no Christian anywhere say that there is nothing he can do!

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit is dedicated to the highlighting of suggested facts that will bring about world peace from the perspective of a Christian.

18.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What role can be played a\by the individual Christian in bringing about world peace?
2. Can World peace be achieved without mutual armament?
3. Is the United Nations as it is presently constituted optimally achieving its statutory ideals?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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