

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**Christ's Consequentialism in Light of
Abelard and Mill**

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by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

At first glance the utilitarian norm of happiness seems to resemble the ‘blessedness’ of which the Beatitudes speak in the Gospel. But on a closer look, the difference between utilitarian and Christian ethics becomes evident: in the Christian life the ultimate goal is not to seek happiness, singular or plural; rather, it is to be faithful to the will of God, even if that means suffering and pain.¹

It may seem a bit off base to open with a quotation that is set against the central theme of the work. However, this quote is a perfect starting point, for two reasons. First, it represents the general low appraisal of utilitarianism by Christian ethicists. Mark Foreman, ethicist and professor at Liberty University states, “There are many great minds who have studied it and found it to be incompatible with Christian thought.”² The utter disregard alone is enough to make one want to dig into it deeper and make sure nothing has been missed. Second, and most importantly, this quote represents the exact opposite of what this thesis will defend. It will be the overall effort of this work to demonstrate that utilitarianism and the ethics presented by Christ in the Gospels are not in fact at odds with each other-person-focus Consequentialism like Utilitarianism.

This leads to a few opening ideas that must be handled before this work takes off into its subject matter. First, it should be understood that utilitarianism, as a moral system, is not one that can stand on its own two legs. However, it must also be understood that no moral system can stand on its own two legs. Every moral system is, in fact, informed by some outside source.

¹ Waldo Beach, *Christian Ethics in the Protestant Tradition* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1988).

² Mark Foreman, Interview by author 2016.

Generally, that source will be a worldview or religion.

Second, this thesis will, by necessity, make some assumptions. The primary issue to be assumed, when comparing the efficacy of moral systems, is that these moral systems are informed by the Christian Bible and by rightly-formulated doctrine therefrom. With this small detail out of the way, the heart and intention of this thesis can be disclosed.

The main drive of this thesis is to demonstrate that (contra the opening quote) consequentialist thought, rightly informed by Christian Scripture and doctrine, is the ethical system that most closely resembles and makes best sense of the ethical teachings of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel accounts. This main aim will be supported by three primary discussions: first, an exegetical investigation of the words of Christ from the Gospels; second, the life and work of Peter Abelard; and third, the life and work of John Stuart Mill. There will also be some discussion of the grounding of ethics altogether—that is, what makes a moral good a moral good.

Before moving into definitions a few points from the above paragraph require a bit of expansion. First and foremost, the Bible will be treated as complete and correct in its ethical information. If righteousness before God is what He desires for His people, it seems safe to understand that all information needed to do so would be included in the Scriptures He provided to His people. Specifically, this work will engage with the words of Christ in the Gospels. The passages selected are not parables, but rather are passages dealing with real world events taking place before Christ and the Disciples. To add clarity to these passages several commentary series will be utilized. While the Bible scholars who created such texts may have theological bends, it is hoped that they will be nearly free of bias towards any given metaethic and therein can provide a less biased interpretation of Christ's teachings. Second, as to the investigation of the lives of Abelard and Mill, these sections are included for the sake of honesty. One cannot pretend that the

life and times and environment have no effect of mortal minds. Therein, the backgrounds of these great minds will be included so that any potential biases may be properly investigated. Further, it should be understood that the works of Abelard and Mill are not meant to be understood as all-inclusive and/or inerrant. Mill, in particular, tends to pull his focus away from Scripture too much to be considered completely authoritative. He is, however, useful for his highly formalized approach. Therefore, his work will give a backbone of a more scripturally informed approach to other-focused Consequentialism. Alternatively, Abelard is less useful for a highly formulated approach but does seem to have a better grasp the information available from the Bible and will be used thusly. The specific works of Abelard and Mill that will be investigated are *Ethical Writings* and *Utilitarianism*, respectively. These works and their authors will be given their own chapters, and will then be supported further by a chapter of more modern authors. Joseph Fletcher's *Situational Ethics* will be the ultimate modern Christian Consequentialist. Preceding his work will be a brief overview of modern Consequentialism in the areas of biomedical ethics and wartime ethics. Foreman, Meilaender, Tanssjo, and Bester will round out the consideration given to biomedical ethics. The works of Wynia, Hurka, and Rodin will give clarity in the often murky area of wartime ethics.

As mentioned above, the Gospel accounts will be the primary source of scriptural input. This is not to say that the Epistles, histories, major and minor prophets, or anything other section of the Bible cannot support a Christian Consequentialism. Rather, it is beyond the scope of this study to provide any that would look like a complete investigation of the ethical teachings of the whole Word of God; particularly of the input given by the prophets. The words of Christ alone will still leave the reader with a nigh unto completed ethic.

The Language of Utility

“Is it intrinsically wrong to torture children for fun?” Scoffed a deontologist professor.

“Well, yes, of course,” replied the consequentialist student, “but only because you used consequentialist language.”

As it was mentioned earlier, Consequentialism has gained much ill repute among Christian ethicists. The quote is from a Liberty University professor, and a profoundly well thought one no less. The student’s reply, however, is accurate and serves well to introduce the two-fold intent and purpose of this chapter. First, the word types native to and found useful by Consequentialism will be examined. Second, it will be demonstrated how such word categories make little to no sense when adapted into other ethical systems, particularly deontology.

Before doing so, it should be noted that the philosophy of language can become a tricky business if boundaries are not set quickly. Inasmuch, before any discussion of the differences in word use between deontology and Consequentialism can occur, it is worth saying that any definitions used here are sourced from a standard Webster’s dictionary. Word root and etymology may be investigated, but will only serve to support Mr. Webster. With this smallest of disclaimers in place, we can proceed more confidently.

To begin, let us revisit the action proposed as “intrinsically wrong” by the deontologist. “[Torture] [of] [children] [for fun],” bears most of the marks of a statement native to the consequentialist thinker. Those are, respectively;

1. pre-emptive Intention,
2. direction,
3. target, and
4. intention of personal gain/outcome.

First, consider the word *torture*. Imagine, if you will, a man. This man is standing over a

second person, who is lying on a table. The lights of the room that they are in are focused in on the fellow laying on the table. The man has, in his hands, a pair of plyers. He uses this pair of plyers to, with some force, remove a tooth from the mouth of the second person. Do you have the image? Now, what is it that has been described? In earnest, it would be hard to tell without more information about the intention of the man with the plyers. Perhaps this man is a corrupt moral agent performing a tortuous act against the second fellow. However, it could be a well-meaning and skillful dentist performing a simple extraction. This illustration serves well to bring out a point regarding language that will be revisited time and time again in this chapter, that being the problem of *sterility of language*. The concern of the deontological ethicist must remain locked on the external action. Therein, any discussion of the intention of the moral agent as he or she enters into moral decision making is moot and bears no ability to be explained; at least not so far as such explanation would relate to the moral rightness or wrongness of an action.

It seems possible that a deontological ethicist may try to smuggle language of intention into their framework, but it is done so wrongly. It seems to be the case that the intention of a moral agent and the action of the same are ontologically different. Intentions are a totally separate category, and to just claim them as part of a deontological ethic without significant justification is cheap, at best. It seems like the problem of an atheist ethicist trying to hold to an objective “good.” With no higher power as basis, the work that has to be done to justify a consistent and objective good is nearly insurmountable.³ In the same way, an ethic that does not, from the offset, admit that actions are not that which determines the rightness or wrongness of an action seems to be one that will struggle to accept intention towards a consequence into its

³ David Bagget, “Modern Apologetics” Lecture (Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, Fall 2016). The point cited here was brought up numerous times throughout the semester, so no one specific date can be given.

ethical framework. Consider a second example, one that is a bit more common to such discussion. Imagine a man taking hold of a firearm and shooting another human being multiple times, ending the physical life of the one being shot. Is the action right or wrong? Again, it is difficult to tell, because all that was given was a description of the mechanism at work. It may well be the case that the shooter is again a corrupt moral agent who has found another fellow who is doing nothing wrong. However, it may also be the case that the shooter is a man who has been made to wield the firearm in response to someone attacking his family. With his wife and children safely behind him, the man shoots the attacker dead, preserving the lives of his family while so doing. Further, it could be a police officer who has, while making rounds, happened upon a victim who is about to be forcibly raped by a thug with a firearm of his own. After the thug lets the woman go he points the weapon at the officer. The officer, in defense of his own life, shoots the would-be assailant dead. Yes, that last example carried within it a particularly vicious immoral act, that of rape. Why is rape so offensive? The act of sexual intercourse is not, in itself, sinful or hateful, so where does the disgust and cry for justice come from? It comes from the intention of the moral agent committing that heinous act.⁴ In our example, he is proceeding to force his will over and against another human being for his own gain and to her detriment. However, one cannot discuss such things when addressing the morality of such an action in the realm of the deontologist.

Definitions Relating to the Discussion of Utility

Before continuing further in this work, some space must be given to providing definitions for the semantics common to consequentialist conversation. As to the non-specific terms used so far, they seem to be so rudimentary in their importance to the English language that further

⁴ This point will be covered in the next chapter.

definition should not be required, but will be listed for sake of setting them up as terms of importance. There does not seem any reason to give priority to a more biased source for these, and the definitions are only needed to maintain clarity. Where the terminology becomes more specific, the *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Utilitarianism* will be used.

As to the non-specific terms, they are as follows: environment, person(s), condition, intention, direction, target, and outcome/consequence. There are two others that, despite their rudimentary nature, seem to require specific definition given the scope of this work. Pre-emptive will be understood as that which precedes an event, and it should be understood to carry the relationship to a moral agent, and thus it is regarding a mental process that precedes an action. Utility should be understood as the measure by which an action serves the goodness of an outcome. Thus, that action which has maximal utility will be one that maximally serves the good.

As to terms specific to Consequentialism at large, there are only three that require attention at this point. The first, utility, has been defined broadly above. Bloomsbury's Encyclopedia adds the idea of "its meaning in ordinary discourse simply [being] 'useful,' 'profitable,' or 'advantageous.'"⁵ The final two terms are "Consequentialism" and "utilitarianism." "For the sake of this thesis, "Consequentialism" will be understood to mean: any ethical system that delineates right and wrong by the outcome attained or intended to be attained. This definition is very broad, and is so intentionally. Intention is the key to tying in certain of Christ's teachings, and is thus a necessary element of this term.

Finally, in defining "Utilitarianism," it seems useful also to define its relative system, "Egoism." The two are subsets of Consequentialism, and divide at the point of who is to be

⁵ *Bloomsbury's Encyclopedia of Utilitarianism*, edited by James E. Crimmins (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 554.

considered first in actions. At the most basic level Egoism puts the self first while Utilitarianism puts all within a community (sometimes at the expense of self) first.⁶ Thus, utilitarianism is a consequentialist ethical system that focuses on benefiting the most people by the outcome of any given action. Further, the system against which Consequentialism is often set, deontology, should be defined as well. Again, leaning towards a broad definition at this point, deontology will not be strictly limited to just Kantian ethics. For now, the definition of deontology will be thus; any ethical system that holds the basis of right and wrong as necessarily tied to the actions of a moral agent. Thus, the action, not the intention going in or the consequences coming out, is that which paints the morality of the moral event.

While these definitions do not plainly betray a tie to Christian ethics, the body of this thesis can now be developed from the foundation laid in these two opening chapters. First, the ethical teachings of Christ in the Gospel accounts will be discussed at some length. The third chapter will investigate the life and work of Peter Abelard, a medieval ethicist who is not often read as a consequentialist but who lays a great deal of foundation for a Christian consequentialist ethical system. The fifth chapter will turn to John Stuart Mill, one of the best-known names in utilitarianism. Mill wrote in a less biblically focused time but his high degree of formality will prove to be a powerful aid as utility is tied back into the biblical narrative.

Those three chapters will serve as foundation to the final two chapters, which will present the actual formation of a Christian Utilitarianism. The first of these chapters will address the distinction of the good and the right and how that distinction provides the basis for the ethical theory proper. The later of this pair of chapters will present the whole ethic.

⁶ James P. Sterba *Introducing Ethics*. (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2013), 52-3.

Chapter 2: The Words of Christ

Introduction

It seems best to start with the teachings of Christ in formulating a Christian ethic of any sort. This chapter will make use of several of Jesus' ethical teachings and correctives to try to demonstrate the shadows of an ethical system that present in the Gospel accounts. Some of the ethicists who will be the focus of coming chapters will be previewed here, and the views of Bible scholars will be brought in by use of various commentaries. It seems valuable to use such sources here to remove potential biases on the source. It does not seem to be the case that a theologian who is producing a commentary would be concerned with defending a particular metaethic so much as they are concerned with grasping the truth of Christ's teachings.

Fulfillment of Scripture to be Valued Over Other Goods

“Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?” (Matt 26:52-54, NIV. Parallel in John 18:11.)

There are multiple points within the Gospels where Jesus appears to present a hierarchy of goods within the real world. Most of these occurrences are directed at the religious elite of the day, so it seems fitting to begin the discussion of Christ's very words by unpacking the exception of audience we find in Matthew.

This passage from Matthew presents two fairly obvious 'goods.' The first, and apparently lesser, is the preservation of human life, and perhaps further the defense of a dear friend and

teacher. In this case, the preservation of such a person includes the preservation of God very God, in the person of Christ. Our brave swordsman [assumed to be Peter (John 18:10-11), who can be assumed to be largely untrained in swordsmanship] has decided that Christ's life is worth more than his own, and has struck out towards a temple guard, against whom he has no chance of winning.⁷ If Peter understood this in that moment, then this becomes an earnest attempt to give himself up so that Jesus has more time to get away from those who have come to capture him. This fits with the sacrificial picture of love seen in John 15:13, as Peter is literally laying down his remaining days in this mortal coil for God incarnate. As it goes, one would be hard pressed to find a better cause to give up thine own life for, but Jesus presents such a good after the sword lands its blow. "But all this has happened that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Without digging into the depths of the writings of the prophets (Jer 11:15, 16:10-13; Joel 2:12-13; 1 Sam 21:1-9 to show just a few), it seems to be the case that the greater good here is for God to see through the promises that He gave through the prophets in what is now the Old Testament. The honor, dignity, and honesty of God were more important than the preservation of His own life. For further context, bear in mind that the preservation of human life and cries for mercy stirred the heart of God away from judgment a few times in the Old Testament. God takes His word seriously! To say that it is more serious than the preservation of life is to say that there is a hierarchy of goods. Granted, hierarchy in one place does not prove Consequentialism; but, this comment from God regarding the ultimate importance of God keeping His word is a fine start towards meeting that end.

Division, Not Peace

⁷ Raymond Edward Brown. *The Gospel according to John (XIII-XXI)*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007). Bruce, F. F. *The Gospel of John*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1994.)

“I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.” (Luke 12:49-53, NIV).

This passage is peculiar even compared to its fellows here in this work. This passage carries the sentiment found in (Luke 14:26) but in a more general sense. Here, while family is mentioned, Jesus leads off by plainly stating that His purpose on earth is not to “bring peace” but to rather “bring division.” The nature of the division brought should be obvious to the average believer, and even more so to those that did not grow up in a Christian family. The division brought by Christ is that of separating households, turning “brother against brother,” as Christ Himself said. Nolland puts it well in his commentary on Luke, “Jesus Himself becomes the point of division that will set people against one another, in conflict and not in peace.”⁸

The greater good that is sought here is not plainly mentioned in the passage. However, it is fairly easy to derive. The greater good, in all likelihood, is based out of the three main components of Christ’s preaching; the repentance of sin, the healing of the sick and possessed, and the coming of the kingdom of God. The last of these three, the coming kingdom, seems to be the good that trumps the good of peace among human lives. The good, more formally, is the salvation of sinners. While it is not always the case today that division results, division can come of a single salvation. Bock’s commentary supports this idea, “Division is clearly the point... Reconciliation to God can mean separation from people.”⁹ There are friends within my own circles who have had to separate themselves from their own blood kin (and some who were

⁸ John Nolland, *Luke 9:21 - 18:34. 35b World Biblical Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2008), 710.

⁹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 1192.

disowned by the same) for the sake of the cross. At a much higher level, one need only get online to hear about new converts in the Middle East being killed by their own family for following Christ. Perhaps at the highest level, Jesus knows that His mission will divide Israel. Green, in his commentary on Luke, adds "...and as Jesus has endeavored to teach His followers, the realization of God's purpose will engender opposition from those who serve a contrary aim. Both Simeon and John had prophesied Jesus' role as one who would divide Israel."¹⁰ As sad and terrible as these things are, and despite the family and friends that are lost, a far greater thing is gained. The high value of human love and affection and relationship is not to be thrown out here! Rather, it is meant to be put in proper context, in its right place in a hierarchy of relational goods. Also, as per the words of Jesus Himself, the good of human relationship seems to take second place only to the greater good of relationship with God through Christ. Further, Christ is not only teaching the fact that division will occur, but He also seems to be implying a willingness to sacrifice those relationships for this new relationship with God. While willing acceptance does not define right or wrong, when taught by the most moral teacher in history, it does seem to add greater depth to what is stated in this passage.

Greatest Commandment

"Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt 22:34-40, NIV. Parallel in Mark 12:29-34 and Luke 10:25-37.)

¹⁰ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 511.

It is here that John Stuart Mill comes forth as the source of a simple but solid explanation. Mill points to the internal nature of the command and how no external issuance is described within. Mill's demonstration of this can be found in the second chapter of his work *Utilitarianism*. The explanation is given in rebuttal of the potential godlessness of utility, Mill goes right to the greatest commandment (his "Golden Rule") for demonstration of the theistic plug in of his system. While it may be admitted that this is a rather indirect attempt at interpreting Scripture, it remains a useful one.

In short, Mill wants the reader to grasp the foundation of the command being found outside of the action of the moral agent. The command to love, Mill would assert,¹¹ is a command towards internal affairs, not the external actions of men. It is that which drives the believer towards action, thus making the action right. This seems to be the foundation upon which Mill builds the rest of his system. While it has already been said that Mill is acting as a German high critic because of the times, and one cannot read it right from the pages of his work, it remains safe to state this point: Mill understands doing that which glorifies God is the greatest good because it will lead to his stated good of supreme happiness. It shores up his formulations of quality versus quantity of good and the nature of self-sacrifice towards the good. Further, it reinforces the duty to pursue good and the potential (yet conquerable) complexity of the good.

Besides Mill, Richard France's commentary on Matthew supports a similar idea. France elaborates, "...by focusing on love rather than on more tangible regulations to be obeyed it lifts the discussion above merely adjudicating between competing rules, and gives priority to a principle which has potential application to virtually every aspect of religious and communal

¹¹ This idea cannot be quoted, but is rather a summation of the ideas found surrounding his explanation of the passage.

life.”¹² As alluded to in this quote, France mentions that the Pharisees of the time deliberated on a hierarchy of the commandments in the Law. This was not to say that one Law was greater than the other, per se, but they recognized that certain laws might conflict at certain points and a priority might ought to be given to one command over another. France also includes a note from the Mark version of the passage, that the inquirer here is a positive figure, who is seeking an earnest answer.¹³ Bearing this in mind, and seeing no correction from Christ on the idea of hierarchy, Christ is here giving the actual answer sought; that command that sits above and founds all other aspects of the law.

A short defense to both utilitarianism and any ethic founded out of the greatest commandment passage is due before closing this section. It may be contrived that being concerned with the greatest good for the most people or putting others above yourself may endanger the self. While there is certainly room for discussion on the point, it is not one necessitated by this passage. Rather, as demonstrated by Makujina, the second greatest commandment (“Love your neighbor as yourself”) is best understood as a passage that promotes the self for the sake of being able to provide care for others at all.¹⁴ He asserts that nearly every modern Christian appeal to self-esteem is made from this very passage. Therein it seems safe to conclude that while certain situations may occur where the self must be denied for the sake of the maximal good, it is not a principle that necessitates this outcome.

Between the input of Mill given here and to be seen in Chapter 4, the brief input from Fletcher from the end of Chapter 5, and considering the insight of France here; a case could be

¹² Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 843.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 842-3.

¹⁴ John Makujina. “The Second Greatest Commandment and Self-Esteem.” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 8, no. 2 (1997): 211-225. Accessed December 2, 2017. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

made for this passage itself being the corner stone of a Christian Consequentialist ethic.

Formulation not being the aim of this chapter, the point will rest here until the seventh and eighth chapters. For now, let it be left at this: that the nature of the command to love God and love your neighbor are best understood as commands towards the inner being, the same inner being or will that chooses actions based on its motivation and intention towards a particular end.

Fasting of the Disciples

Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast. No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved." (Matt 9:14-17, NIV. Parallel in Mark 2:18-22 and Luke 5:33-39).

These passages, much like what will be seen in the last section of this chapter, reflect two elements of the Law that the Pharisees and even the disciples of John the Baptist had missed. First, Christ is sovereign of the Law and thus has a greater depth of understanding regarding it. Second, the Law contains hierarchy. The Lordship over the law will be described more in the last section, so here the focus will be on the hierarchy within the Law. Almost going back to the notion of "to everything there is a season" in Ecclesiastes, He here demonstrates that the season is simply not one that would be right to fast in. The language of the presence of the bridegroom in regards to the moral implications is meant to demonstrate that times of Holy celebration are not congruent with fasting, at least not to God. It is an odd observation to make, that a moral duty can be relieve by something the modern onlooker may not put much weight to; but the point remains that this is what Christ does. His own presence among the disciples is enough to relieve them of any potential moral duty to fast. Guelich, in his commentary on Mark, adds "The

response centers upon the themes of fasting, groomsmen and the presence/absence of the bridegroom.”¹⁵ Inasmuch, this passage brings into focus the environmental aspect of Christ’s ethic. His presence changes things, which does not mesh well if He was only focused on actions themselves. This notion is echoed in Hendriksen’s commentary on Matthew’s telling of the event, going so far as to say the idea of the Disciples fasting (which Hendriksen equates to mourning) is “absurd.”¹⁶ The work they have to do for Christ while he is present on Earth supplants any need to fast.

Sermon on the Mount Ethics, Murder and Adultery

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny. You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.” (Matt 5:21-30, NIV.)

At this point a passage will be presented that is best able to be explained by the work of Abelard. While Abelard has been covered at length in Chapter 3, only the briefest of reviews will be presented here. To say no more of Abelard for the moment, the passage to be investigated

¹⁵ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26* World Bible Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 108.

¹⁶ William Hendriksen, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1973), 428.

now is Matt 5:21-30. This is, perhaps, one of the most morally terrifying passages in the New Testament. The two sins addressed are murder and adultery, both very serious sins in the eyes of the Jews, and both sins that carried very stern repercussion from the Mosaic Law (both carried the death penalty, Exod 21:12-14 and Deut 22:22). As one reads, though, Christ says that the very internal actions of anger and lust are equal to murder and adultery, respectively.

It is here that Abelard shines most brightly. The two principles from Abelard that apply best here are: (a) the morality of any action begins inside the moral agent with the willing concession to either vice or virtue and (b) the rightness or wrongness of an action is determined by the concession to vice or virtue and NOT to the action itself. An additional principle may be required here, this time from the Gospel account of Matthew. In the beginning verses of chapter four, one reads of the temptation of Christ. This adds an interesting dynamic, one that strengthens another Abelardian principle; that to receive temptation from an outside source (and perhaps even to be genuinely tempted) is not a sin. Abelard concluded instead that there are certain actions preliminary to the choice of vice or virtue that could not be morally bound. These principles seem to bring Christ's teachings into the best possible understanding. It seems to be the case that Christ means that once you have succumbed to anger enough to kill, then you have already sinned to the degree of the external action of the sin (Matt 5:21-22). In the same way, once one has decided to give into lust, then one is accounted equally to the one who has committed the outward of adultery (vv. 27-28). Abelard used a slightly different metaphor, that of taking a rose from a private garden. Suppose, then, that a young man is passing by a rose garden. He is taken in by the scent of roses wafting in the breeze, and comes in closer to the garden to take in the sight of the flowers in bloom. Roses of all colors present themselves upon his eyes, and he desires to have one. He decides that he *will* take one, even though the roses are

not his to take from. The only hindrance is a chain-link fence, and the owner of the garden standing nearby, tending the garden. Seeing the gardener, the man knows that he would be an out and out fool to try to steal a rose. However, he had already made peace with the *vicious* decision to take the flower, and he would have taken one if not impeded by the gardener. Thus, Abelard concludes, the man has already made himself accountable to the sin of theft. In the same way, the man who looks on a woman with lust and decides that he would have her for himself has already sinned, even if the woman's husband or the righteousness of the woman prevents him from taking part in the physical act.

In support of Abelard's idea, France's work on Matthew surfaces again as hitting the nail on the head,

...Jesus goes far beyond its outward observance (which can be observed and judged) to the thoughts and attitudes which underlie the action, whether they are carried into effect or not... (1) It promotes an 'inward' concern with motive and attitude above the 'outward' focus on the visible and quantifiable observance of regulations. (2) It goes behind specific rules to look for the more far-reaching principles which should govern the conduct of the people of God. (3) It is concerned not so much with the negative goal of the avoidance of specific sin but with the far more demanding positive goal of discovering and following what is really the will of God for His people.¹⁷

No citation to Abelard is given in the commentary, so it seems that France came to this by other routes of study. Now with two independent sources finding nearly the same meaning in the passage, the internal aspect of Christ's ethic seems fairly well founded.

Warnings against Hypocritical Teachers

As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely." (Mark 12:38-40. Parallel in Luke 20:45-47. Expanded passages Matt 23:1-39 and Luke 11:37-12:12).

¹⁷ Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), F196-7

This may be among the best sources of understanding why Consequentialism is what Jesus taught. Through four passages we gain insight into at least two separate instances of Jesus using the religious elite of the day as a teaching device against an empty externally driven moralism. First, looking at verse 5 of Matthew 23 we see Christ calling out the Pharisees in front of the people, “everything they do is done for people to see.” Do bear in mind, that in verses two and three of this chapter Jesus tells the people to follow the commands of these leaders, for their authority and the nature of their message. His complaint against them is for not ‘practicing what they preach.’¹⁸ Bear in mind, their external actions are as prescribed by the law, if the law is to be read as a dictate towards action only. This leaves only the internal state and intention to be what Christ is correcting here. This concept is further bolstered within the same chapter. Verses 25 through 28 read as follows:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

Christ again admits that their external actions meet what the law seems to require of them. And yet His disgust in their missing the mark is obvious. In plain English, Christ here demonstrates that the external actions perpetrated by the Pharisees are not satisfying to the Law of Moses that said Pharisees pretend to adhere to. Rather, it seems to be the case that the internal state of the moral agent is of the greatest value in consideration of the righteous standing of an action and moral agent. If taken seriously, this points to no ethical system besides an other-focused Consequentialism. *First* clean the *inside* of the cup and dish, and *then* the outside will be clean.

¹⁸ Paraphrase of Matt 23:3b

The progression from internal to external cannot be avoided, neither can the necessary relationship thereof.

Morris' commentary on Matthew's version continues this theme. Using the language of piety and ends, he nails down the correction of the Pharisees squarely into consequentialist formulation:

This chapter brings us to understand that the Pharisaic system, like any system that puts its emphasis on *rule and regulations*, all too easily degenerated into the observance of requirements that we doubtless intended to help people along the road to godliness but that could become *ends in themselves*. When this happened, there was an appearance of godliness, but not the reality; the correct performance of outward rites and the firm hold on orthodox teaching became ends in themselves, and *genuine piety* suffered.¹⁹

Piety is a word that has not been addressed so far. For the sake of brevity, we will consider it in the way the context implies, as an internal attitude towards obedience to God. With that definition in mind, it is here given again that the Pharisaic focus on outward works and appearances has missed the moral mark, and radically so.

Widow's Mite

As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." (Luke 21:1-4, NIV. Parallel in Mark 12:41-44).

To further the understanding of the external focus of the times leads beautifully into the narrative of the widow's mite. Here seen again is the emphasis on the internal painting the value of the external. Lane's commentary puts the point well as it related to Jesus trying to get this point across to the 12, "Jesus overturned this assumption of conventional piety. What the twelve had failed to appreciate was the total commitment to God that the widow's gift represented."²⁰

¹⁹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: IVP, 1992), 570. Emphasis added.

²⁰ William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 443.

Looking to the final verses of Mark 12, we find Jesus giving commentary over the monetary offerings given at the Temple. The word choice here seems to betray something of the motive of giving. The rich, as it is written *threw* in their large donations. The widow, on the other hand, is said to simply put in her two small copper coins. The implications of throwing money in should not be ignored. Americans are used to a paper monetary system at the church, largely through checks or occasionally cash; normally both given in an envelope. A \$10 check falls the same way a \$100,000 check does. There is no ego to be seen there. However, in a coin based monetary system, a larger donation gives the chance to, literally, make some noise. Pitching a bag of coins of any size is a noisy affair, one that would certainly be noticed by anyone within earshot. The weight and density of gold coins in particular give a rather loud report when they land. It seems to be that we are looking into the ears more than the eyes of Christ here. That which is done to be heard by men is given to being worthless. The humility and lowliness of the widow's donation is what is lifted up here. Marshall's commentary on Luke echo's this notion, camping the main idea of Jesus' teaching here on the valley between true and false piety, and thus the condition of the hearts that gave.²¹ She is giving next to nothing by way of monetary value. But, she does so knowing what it costs her. She likely will not eat for a while unless cared for by others. This by itself demonstrates a certain quality of good that she achieved in her giving. She has given of her own well-being and comfort for the sake of the work of the Temple, which is something that the rich had never tasted.

Conclusion

This chapter should be understood to have served as the most primary step of the groundwork for a Christian Consequentialist ethic. This has been done through a theological

²¹ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 752.

avenue rather than a purely ethical one in an attempt to avoid potential biases. It seems, just from this cursory investigation, that Christ's teachings do focus far more on the motives and outcome of a moral action. This idea will now fall under the lens of Peter Abelard and John Stuart Mill. Their works, with some supplemental input from modern ethicists, will further refine the intention based ethic that seems to be present in the Gospel accounts.

Chapter 3: Peter Abelard

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the more theologically focused of the ethicists relevant to this thesis. Peter Abelard, as a medieval thinker, was more saturated by Christian thought than the second thinker, John Stuart Mill, was. While Abelard was far from a slave to his environment, the power and influence of the church during this time allowed for his high level of thought to be steeped in Christian doctrine far more than Mill's.

Here at his introduction, a good measure of transparency is necessary. While sources may disagree on Abelard's usefulness in ethical and theological discussion, they all agree on the details of his early life. He was a brilliant young man in his own right, winning debates against great scholars of his time despite having limited formal education, at least as it related to his demonstrated brilliance. This brilliance led him to a post at the cathedral at Notre Dame where he met Heloise. To any church historian, the rest is well known. Abelard would fall in love with Heloise, but their relationship was interrupted by her uncle Fulbert. They continued meeting in secret, and Heloise became pregnant. They married in secret, but Fulbert found out just the same. Heloise fled, and Fulbert took this as Abelard trying to send her away. In a fit of rage, Fulbert and a group of men castrated Abelard, thus ending Abelard's employ at the cathedral.²² That, oddly enough, is the general end of discussion. Historians will record that Abelard and Heloise stayed in contact, that Abelard grants Heloise the monastery of the Paraclete, and that

²² Everett Ferguson, *Church History*, vol. 1. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 439-40.

their correspondences revealed an understanding of their fault in their acts of passion. The discussion stops there, generally. It is worth considering that the acts of his youth may have painted the ethical system Abelard would create years later.²³ It is impossible to know, truth be told. Further, it cannot be said whether the effect was one of seeking justification or of repentance. Whether Abelard would say that his actions were the product of vice or virtue cannot be known as it escapes records. It is, however, a possible bias that one would be remiss to not bear in mind.

The Work of Abelard

Being brilliant and organized are not necessary companions. It is noteworthy that Abelard is no Plantinga, or even Mill, by way of organization. Thus, his work from *Ethics* requires a little more of an interpretive touch than the other sources given here and will require more scholarly input.

Abelard's formulation focuses even more on the 'inner man' than other consequentialists, particularly Mill. While most, if not all, consequentialists would admit that a significant part of the ethical calculation is given over to the intention of the moral agent, Abelard hangs the whole determination on the internal processes that proceed action. For Abelard the whole calculation comes down to submission, either to vice or virtue. While this may sound far too simple to be feasible, Abelard employs a metaphor and the teachings of Christ to demonstrate the strength of the notion, the metaphor is as follows:

Someone is going by another person's garden and on seeing the delicious fruits falls to craving them. But he doesn't consent to his craving so that he takes something away from there by theft or plunder, although his mind has been inflamed to a great desire by the deliciousness of the food. Now where there is desire, no doubt there is will. So he desires to eat the other person's fruit, and he doesn't doubt that there is pleasure in eating it.

²³ Ken Cleaver, "History of Apologetics," Lecture (Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, September 2015).

Indeed he is driven by the very nature of his feeble state to desire what he may not take without its owner's knowledge and permission. He curbs the desire; he doesn't destroy it. But because he isn't drawn into consent, he doesn't fall into sin.²⁴

Two crucial points of Abelard's theory present here; first that it is the consent of the moral agent to either Vice or Virtue, and second that there is a "pre-moral" period of temptation that occurs in the face of a stimuli that tempts a moral agent. These two notions shed good light on two passages from the Gospel, oddly, only one of which is mentioned by Abelard. Perhaps to avoid assuming on the mind of the Lord, Abelard does not mention the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. However, this very metaphor explains how Matthew's Gospel can even mention that Christ endured temptation and yet did not sin. Christ, in all He did, consented only and ever to Virtue. The second passage of importance is mentioned plainly by Abelard, this time taken from the Sermon on the Mount.²⁵ Abelard purports that the strictures given by Christ regarding lust and hatred are seen best through an understanding of consent to Vice. The man "who looks on... with lust" (Matt 5:27) has already consented to Vice, despite no outward action, and has thus already fallen into sin. The same applies to hating your brother, the consent to kill is already present even if the action of murder has not (or even never) occurs. To expand the metaphor quoted above, consider if the man had given consent to vice, and had decided to take the fruit knowing that it did not belong to him. Upon making this decision, he sees the owner of the garden walking about the fruit trees. He notes that the owner could easily out match him in a struggle and has already seen him, so the options of both plunder and theft are existentially impossible. However, the man has still fallen into sin, for he *would* have taken the fruit had the owner not been present. The same very much applies to the Scripture. The man who looks on a

²⁴ Peter Abelard, *Ethical Writings*. Translated by Paul Vincent Spade. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company Co., 1995), 6-7.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 6.

woman with lust, and consents to vice but then sees her husband and knows he cannot succeed has still sinned.

Modern Support

Abelard's ethic gains a small bit more ground thanks to a recent study on the neurology of the human ability to perceive intention. The study, published just in 2013 through the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, provided fMRI data that measured differences in brain activity when observing the infliction of harm.²⁶ The study demonstrated that certain parts of the brain activated differently depending on the intentionality of the harm. The right temporo-parietal juncture (hereafter, RTPJ) reacts consistently under the observation of fMRI when one witnesses the infliction of harm that one believes (or has been made to believe by backstory) to be intentional. The reaction of the RTPJ is absent in cases of observing harm that is deemed accidental.

Admittedly this study does not found any one principle by itself. In light of Abelard's work, however, it may demonstrate an important tie in to forming an ethical system. It may be that humans are hardwired for an intention focused Consequentialism. The RTPJ is linked, albeit loosely, to the neural interpretation of the emotions and intentions of others. While the study does not nail down all the functions of the area of the brain, it does demonstrate the effect of the area in neurotypical adults, for whom (if we are honest) ethical systems are meant to be applied. If we are able to, even from the outside (of the brain) looking in, map a difference in the reactions of intentional and accidental harms, it ought to hold our attention and our consideration in an ethical approach.

²⁶ Jorie Koster-Hale, Rebeca Saxe, James Dungan, and Liane L. Young, "Decoding Moral Judgments from Neural Representations of Intentions," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 110, no. 14 (Fall 2013): 5648-53, Accessed December 1, 2016, ScienceDirect.

Abelard's ethical construction is likely best called "intentionalist."²⁷ He may even be accused of basing his whole ethic on natural law theory.²⁸ No matter what his system is called or based in, it seems to cooperate very well with consequentialist thinking. He may also have captured an element of Consequentialism that later thinkers did not, that consent is among the most important elements in moral judgment.²⁹ Also, all of this is not to say that Abelard's Intentionalism is *not* a type of Consequentialism. Quite the opposite, it is just unlike anything other writers have produced or categorized as such. Further, it remains that an intention is aimed towards an end, which is part-in-parcel to Consequentialism. As it was seen in the third chapter his ethic is the central pillar of a Christian consequentialist ethic.

Connecting Intention to Consequence

While it remains that Abelard's work does not connect itself to Consequentialism necessarily, a connection can and has been made. Through investigation and adding to the work of Bentham, Adams presents something of a combination of Intentionalism and Consequentialism.³⁰ Adams' article ultimately leads to motives adding to the overall utility of a moral act, and thus the motive or intention has a moral aspect by itself. It does not seem that Adams means to portray motive as having moral value in a vacuum, but rather that the value occurs in concert with the act and outcome. It is also worth note that Adams is critical of Act-Utilitarianism throughout his article.

²⁷ Peter King, "Abelard's Intentionalist Ethics," *The Modern Schoolman* 72, no. 2 (January 1995): 213-31. Accessed February 12, 2017. Paul L. Williams, "The Objective Basis of Abelard's Subjective Ethics." *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism* 77 (2005): 125-50. Accessed January 20, 2016.

²⁸ Jorge J. E. Gracia, and Timothy B. Noone, *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010), 480-90.

²⁹ As will be seen in the next chapter, Mill's Utilitarianism leaves the agent responsible if the outcome is other than intended, which does not match with what is seen in Abelard's work.

³⁰ Robert Merrihew Adams, "Motive Utilitarianism." *The Journal of Philosophy* 73, no. 14 (1976): 467-81.

His points still add to the overall case of this thesis. Mill's Act-Utilitarianism, highlighted in the next chapter, is an important cornerstone of the Christian Consequentialism; however, Mill's work is not the end all and can be made to work with Adam's points. That is because neither work admits of their whole grounding. Both borrow heavily from Christ's teaching. It does not seem that there should be a necessary moral aspect to motive as Adams demonstrates besides the demonstration of the idea through Christ's teachings.

Conclusion

Presented in this chapter is the particular importance of the motivations and intentions of a moral agent setting out into a moral action. Building on the words of Christ, Abelard presented as one who bases his who ethical outlook on the motive of persons. Adams, looking through the lens of Bentham, presents a modified version of the ethical implications of motive and how those connect to Utilitarianism at large. Altogether, the moral value of intention and motive has been established. The point of this chapter has not been to prove Abelardian ethics, but rather to demonstrate the importance of intention and how to applies to Utility, particularly a Christian formulation thereof.

The next chapter will bring to light the work of the second central ethicist for this thesis, John Stuart Mill. His work will round out Abelard's Intentionalism, and bring a more formalized ethic to bear. Once Mill's work is reviewed a brief overview of modern Utilitarianism will be given, and then the formulation of the final ethic can begin in the last two chapters.

Chapter 4: John Stuart Mill

Background

By way of introductions, John Stuart Mill (1806-73) requires far less than Abelard did. His studies began at age three with learning Greek. At age eight he was elevated to the study of Latin and arithmetic, and finally onto economics at age thirteen. His father, one James Mill, is believed to have started his son's education early in hopes of shaping him into one who would continue the "Benthamite campaign into the next generation."³¹ In a way, modern ethicists might say that he succeeded. To Mill's own admission, his father had succeeded for some time. He was a Benthamite for time. Mill's early twenties were spent as a fairly outspoken philosophical "radical," founding a utilitarian club to facilitate discussion and debate of various philosophical topics with his fellow radicals.³² It is not perfectly clear when exactly he began to depart from Bentham's formulation, but it clearly occurred sometime before the first publication of his well-known work *Utilitarianism* in 1861.³³ Without stealing from the coming section of this chapter, the most notable difference between the work of Bentham and of Mill is Mill's insistence of quality of goods. Bentham, to Mill's eye, had left too much out by saying that "poetry is [in essence] the same [type of good] as push-pin."³⁴

³¹ John Stuart Mill, and Marshall Cohen, *The philosophy of John Stuart Mill: ethical, political and religious* (New York, NY: Random House, 1969), X-xii. Also, a "Benthamite," as mentioned in the quote, is a person who follows Bentham's teachings, or a moral movement driven by the same.

³² *Ibid.*, xiii-xv.

³³ Alan Ryan, *J.S. Mill* (Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 95.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, xxi-xxiii.

As to further personal background to make note of, there is precious little. Some sources mention that he took a shine to the wife of a London merchant but do not demonstrate anything more than a distant affection. More noteworthy is his kind gesture towards the Lady Amberley, taking her son as his own Godson. This boy, Bertrand Russel, would not grow to become the same sort of ethicist as his Godfather, but is undoubtedly indebted to Mill's presence and guidance in becoming as influential a philosopher as he has. Lastly, it ought to be noted that Mill was not a believing man, so far as sources reveal. He was not unstudied in Christian Scripture, but he was never a devout man to any meaningful measure. Even if he were, it seems, he would have hardly revealed it given the German high critical academic environment in which he lived and moved.

Work

To try to summarize the work of Mill so that it can be fitted to a thesis may be among the greatest travesties in academia. However, it must be done here, so, onward. There are a few principle points that must be discussed from Mill's *Utilitarianism*. They are as follows:

1. The goodness of an action is determined not by the action itself, but by the intentions and actual outcomes of the action.
2. There exists an actual, practical, hierarchy of goods. Thus, there is a greatest good and lesser goods.
3. The principles of utilitarianism are not antithetical to the strictures of Christian Scripture. Rather, certain tenures of those Scriptures well reflect the principles of utility.
4. The study of the relationship between action and end consequence is a necessary one, however it is as epistemically conquerable as any other necessary life skill.

These points now require a fair bit of expanding upon.

The first point to approach is a fairly straightforward one. Specifically, as it applies to Mill, the goodness of an action is related to the actual consequences of said action.³⁵ This is

³⁵ John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis, IL: Hackett Pub., 2001), 26.

partly at odds with what was seen in Abelard's ethic, and is perhaps the hardest line to hold with Mill's ethic. It is, as the name implies, the core of Consequentialism.³⁶ There is room to discuss a separation between actual and intended consequences, but that discussion will occur in the sixth chapter.

The second point of Mill's work is born out of his most principled difference from his Benthamic roots, that there are levels of goods. To say this is just to say that Mill recognizes that which maximizes pleasure or utility is that which is good. Often times there will be more than one action or direction that can be taken in moral decision making. Thus, it seems reasonable that there will be a scale of goodness that such actions would fall into, each maximizing utility to different levels. Those things that maximize utility to some degree are good, those things that work against utility are evil. Mill seems stricken that this is not perfectly common sense, but accepts that it requires expansion in his work. His foremost example of this variance of goods is the image cast between the "full allowances of the beast" and the temporary sufferings of higher beings.³⁷ He asserts that, despite the suffering attributed to higher faculties, that none learned would trade their faculty for the life of the "imbecile," and neither the imbecile for the life of the beast. He does readily handle the opposition from the bottom looking up, that one of low faculty may balk at those suffering with higher, stating that the man of lower intellectual station has only seen one side of the question.

Third, and perhaps most important to the aim of this work, Mill demonstrates that the principles of utilitarianism are not antithetical to the strictures of Christian Scripture. Rather, certain tenures of those Scriptures well reflect the principles of utility. It is important to bear in

³⁶ J. J. C. Smart, and Bernard Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 41-2.

³⁷ John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis, IL: Hackett Pub., 2001), 9.

mind that Mill was far from a devout Christian. However, he saw the accusations of such men and took them seriously. The Christian is handled favorably throughout his work, and the words of Christ handled with care in Mill's reply to the accusation that utility is incompatible with Christianity. Not being given to much build up, he moves directly to his main thrust in the defense: that the principles of utility are seen in the greatest commandment.³⁸ To love God and your neighbor, Mill contends, is helpful to utility not a distraction therefrom. Mill asserts that Christ himself is proponent of utility by His wording; that a command to love is not a command to any particular action. Mill seems assured, rather, that the command to love is the command to consider the outcome of any action done toward God or mankind.

Finally, and perhaps of second most importance to the formulation of this work, is that there is a necessary but altogether conquerable "training period" that comes alongside being an informed utilitarian. It is perhaps worth mention here that, despite Mill's silence on the same, utility is not the only ethical system that bears such a learning curve. Virtue ethics, while never called out for the same lack of "expediency" requires some learning and adjusting as one pursues the virtuous life. There seems to be little lashing out against this turnaround time from academia, so the rejection of utility on this point seems a little less founded.

Returning to Mill's point, it seems to him that most any area of knowledge requires training to bring about usefulness. He again turns to an example from a Christian problem, that not knowing the outcome of a particular action on the spot is like not knowing a certain portion of a biblical narrative when asked for a recounting thereof.³⁹ Mill grants that there will be times that the utilitarian will have to stop and ponder and calculate and perhaps even ask for help and

³⁸ Ibid., 27.

³⁹ Ibid., 23.

guidance in decision making. However, he asserts that this is not a weakness as it is common to one learning Bible stories. Not knowing the plot of a biblical narrative should not drive one away from learning said narrative, but rather should push the student further into the Scriptures. The same ‘problem’ in living the ethical life for the morally inexperienced would drive them to further study the relation of certain actions to their outcomes, to understand the strictures of psychology and sociology, as well as having a basic understanding of the physical laws of the world. Rather than a weakness, this effect of utility may be an unspoken strength; living consistently in such an ethic requires study of the world and of mankind. Could such a thing really be painted as so terrible a weakness?

The final chapter will contain answers to a few challenges given to Consequentialism and utilitarianism. One common one was anticipated by Mill in his work, and thus seems fitting to address here. It is rightly said that the jurisdiction of a moral agent needs clarification that utilitarianism itself does not seem to provide. If there is no jurisdiction given, then the moral agent may well become stymied in moral calculus as they try to determine every possible outcome that their action may have on the universe as a whole. Mill, as pointed out by Turner, gives some leniency there. Mill claims that it would be unreasonable to hold a moral agent accountable to those consequences that are early incalculable. Therein he draws moral jurisdiction down to the “local consequences.”⁴⁰ Admittedly, this answer feels a little soft and possibly arbitrary; however, it is likely a necessary step in building his ethic. It may also be said that “local” is too subjective, but this will be addressed further in the seventh chapter.

With Mill’s environment in mind, it is revealing that his ethical system ended up making room for Scripture more than aligning itself thereunto. Despite this flaw, Mill still provides great

⁴⁰ Piers Norris Turner, “Punishment and Discretion in Mill’s Utilitarianism,” *Utilitas* 27, no. 2 (2015): 165-78. Accessed September 1, 2016.

formal backbone to developing a Christian Consequentialism, on that could even be centered on his remarks on the Greatest Commandment. Abelard's theocentricism and capturing the value of intention alongside the depth and formality of Mill's work provide nearly all that is needed to start to make sense of Christ's ethical teachings throughout the Gospel accounts.

Chapter 5: Modern Consequentialism

Introduction

The state of consequentialist thought in the modern ideological marketplace is, at best, poor. There are, however, some holdouts of the system. There are a few modern thinkers who have produced whole formal systems of Consequentialism in light of their Christian faith. Further, there are those who have noted the particular value that utility serves in the discussions of biomedical ethics and in warfare ethics. This chapter will thus begin with an investigation of these two fields. Before setting off into those topics, it is worth mentioning that this chapter, along with the following, may appear to demonstrate something akin to a Divine Command Theory metaethic. Per the work of Wierenga, that should not come as much of a surprise.⁴¹ His article demonstrates that divine command theory and Utilitarianism at their base are very similar, so similar in fact that he works through six objections and subsequent defenses that apply to both. Thus, this religiously informed Utilitarianism should seem to carry some elements of Divine Command Theory with it.

Bioethics

First to the condition of utility as it regards biomedical ethics. By way of scope, “biomedical” ethics entail two sides of one coin, if you will. The obverse is the “medical” aspect, those practical ethical aspects regarding the medical and surgical treatments given to humans.

⁴¹ Edward Wierenga, “Utilitarianism and the Divine Command Theory,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21 (1984), 311-8. Accessed December 2, 2017.

The “bio” aspect is concerned with the ethical conversations regarding all other life forms as they relate to medicine, such as what animals to use for drug trials, disease models, and so on. While veterinarian practices would fall in somewhere between these two more distinct categories, it is not pertinent to the overall thrust of this work and will thus not be awarded further discussion. Further, to present the situation honestly, utility is not the only accepted system for the explanation of issues within biomedical ethics.⁴²

It does remain, perhaps, the most consistent and useful system for this area of application. A first example to investigate is one that is not blatantly consequentialist, but does point to similar guiding principles. Inasmuch as it is a principle approach that is demonstrated in Meilaender’s *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*. The first chapter introduces the background information that will be used throughout the text, and it demonstrates an intention based principle approach, not nearly a clean action-determinate system like deontology. For instance, consider the arguments given in the third chapter given against abortion. Meilaender approaches ideas like personhood, individualism and the rights of individual persons, and a short point on the value of children and the “welcoming” thereof.⁴³ This approach may not completely undo a deontologist’s agreeing with the work, but it certainly does take the focus off of the action by way of investigation of what the action actually does. It is not demonstrated just as an assault against divine order (though that is present in the chapter) but rather as that which produces outcomes that spit in the face of the value of human life. This consideration is very much in keeping with consequentialist theories. Further, in the tenth chapter, he gives principle based

⁴² Perhaps best evidenced by the authors disdain for utility as a whole in: Mark W. Foreman, *Christianity & Bioethics: Confronting Clinical Issues* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011), 29-34.

⁴³ Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 26-38.

answers in regard to the use of humans for medical experimentation. Without taking a stance on the rightness or wrongness of human experimentation as a whole, Meilaender is write to demonstrate two very wrong examples. First, that of the Nazi use of Jewish prisoners for medical experiments. In a second, and perhaps less blatantly disgusting example, the case of children with cancer undergoing experimental treatments. The first example is obviously wrong to all ethicists, and the second likely isn't smiled upon broadly. But, there is a difference in reaction, is there not? Why is that? It seems, as discussed in chapter two, that the environment and persons involved make the action more or less heinous. The first example, again being frankly heinous, involves one who is motivated to cut and dissect persons that they consider less than human. The horrors that Jewish prisoners underwent at the hands of German "doctors" does not bear repeating here, but the evil in the hearts of the Nazis is beyond question. Rather different is the questioning and skeptical reaction given to children being given experimental cancer treatments. There is the desire to protect and speak up for the innocent and voiceless in general, even more so for the parents confronted with the thought. On the other side of this there is the doctor, who is harder to nail down. Perhaps the doctor deeply believes that this new medicine is what will save this poor beleaguered child. Though it may be the case that they are just trying to get more numbers and panels and information on the medicine, and are only driven to help the child as a secondary priority. The actions taken, the medicines given, and the other external actions when devoid of considering the hearts and intentions of the medical staff are the same. However, the thought of the doctor who genuinely means well with the new medicine who succeeds in saving his patient does produce more internal satisfaction than the doctor who heals due to secondary motivations. This satisfaction, it seems, is best explained by noting that the whole 'story' of

healing started in the heart of the warm-hearted doctor who is earnestly chasing the well-being of his patient no matter what.

An objection may arise here. Perhaps what is found above has done nothing to demonstrate the value of an ethical system as it has done nothing but appeal to emotions to try to justify the system. To this objection one ought to consider what it is the emotions are reacting to. Clearly, the dismemberment of Jewish prisoners and the gut-wrenching decisions that come from experimental treatments for children are emotional points; there will be no attempt to demonstrate otherwise. However, the emotional response itself betrays an important part of the human condition; we all may, in fact, be built to respond to evil and injustice. Again, considering the nuances of environment and intention as seen above, it is the whole picture of the event that pierces the heart, not the action of scalpel crossing anonymous skin, or drug entering unknown vein. The emotional response is meant as secondary effect here, but remains an important teaching tool in the whole case of Consequentialism as a whole.

Other sources to consider begin with a short article published in *J Med Ethics* by Tännsjö.⁴⁴ The article appeals to a directly utilitarian justification for informed consent; in that the end of informed consent is the end of patient trust in the medical system, thus the end of a great many more lives. The whole goal of medicine is to cure patients. If it is not and further cannot do that, it has not satisfied its good goal. So argues Tännsjö, that informed consent is a good, if for no other reason, than that it builds an understanding between the patient and the medical staff and thus a trust that will help people seek help when it is needed.

⁴⁴ T. Tännsjö, "Utilitarianism and Informed Consent," *Journal of Medical Ethics* 40, no. 7 (2013): 445. Accessed January 20, 2016.

Further example comes from Johan Bester, through *The American Journal of Bioethics*.⁴⁵ Covering the topic of infant circumcision, Bester takes an affirmative approach to the idea. He does so through multiple presentations of benefits of the procedure, including reduced risk of certain cancers, lower risk of urinary tract infection, and reduced risk of acquiring and passing along and STI/STD. The article demonstrates the moral uniqueness of the circumcision discussion. To the research used for this thesis, there is no ethicist who hangs onto an “objective” right or wrong answer that is lacking effect. Rather, all sources that speak to the issue base the rightness or wrongness off of the outcome for the male affected by the procedure. This may well be because (outside of the limited scope of the Mosaic Law) there is no comment to be made on the moral implications of such a procedure except for a consideration of the outcome.

As a final example, one may consider the input of J. Clint Parker.⁴⁶ His article revolves around two deductive arguments, one given against euthanasia and the other given against invasive pre-natal testing. Parker does not identify as a consequentialist or utilitarian, but only as a staunch Christian ethicist. His process, however, is reminiscent of a broadly consequentialist approach. This becomes obvious in certain of his premises. In the anti-euthanasia argument his first premise reads, “Either human life has irreplaceable worth or it doesn’t.”⁴⁷ Starting there, the argument moves around the value of life and its preservation as being in keeping with “the satisfaction of the theory of the good.” He never reveals what theory that is, but that does not change the core of his argument, that preserving human life is a good. The second argument helps demonstrate the ethical calculation demonstrated by Mill, in the fourth premise, “The risk

⁴⁵ Johan Christiaan Bester, “Ritual Male Infant Circumcision: The Consequences and the Principles Say Yes,” *American Journal of Bioethics* 15, no. 2 (February 1, 2015): 56-58. Accessed April 21, 2016.

⁴⁶ J. Clint Parker. “Implications of Christian Truth Claims for Bioethics.” *Christian Bioethics: Non-Ecumenical Studies in Medical Morality* 22, no. 3 (2016): 265-275. Accessed December 2, 2017.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 269.

of the procedure is too great to perform simply to help the parents prepare.”⁴⁸ In so saying he shows that while being prepared for a potentially severe disease is a good thing, the good is outweighed by the risk of harm to the unborn child. Thus, these invasive tests become a wrong on Parker’s view.

Warfare Ethics

Before this section begins, let it be said now that if there is an area of ethics that requires a more careful hand than biomedical ethics, it can be found here with warfare ethics. These discussions are not as shallow as considering the movements of borders and resource, it is to discuss something of far greater value; that being the nearly incomprehensible value of human life. As this section proceeds, it should be understood that nothing here is said tritely or without understanding of the implications. Rather, let the hard truths described here evidence the nature of the hell that war is.

War is, sadly, a nearly inescapable aspect of living in the real world; and thus, it is not a thing that ethical discussion can pigeonhole. Rather, it is a subject that ethical systems must have a robust understanding of and system of encouraging and disparaging. Yes, encouraging is sometimes what must be done. The Christian pacifist position has been demonstrated efficiently enough by the combined work present in *Holy War, the Christian Answer to an Old Testament Problem*, and will not be belabored here besides saying this, that pacifism is not consistent with the biblical narrative, and thus cannot be the ultimate answer for the believer. However, the authors echo in one voice that the end goal of all biblical conflict *is always* peace. The greatest display of violence in the whole of Christian Scripture, those events prophesied by John in Revelation, perhaps best demonstrates this. One watches as Creation is utterly undone, and the

⁴⁸Ibid., 272.

rebellious aspects of humanity along with it. What is left in the wake of this cosmic undoing is the foundation for lasting peace, the New Heavens and New Earth, where God reigns and lives among His people (Revelation 22). The binding of the Enemy in the Sea of Fire and the complete destruction of the enemies of God cannot be overlooked, but it ought to be understood that the wrong done in the wholesale destruction of human life is swallowed up and far outweighed by the consequence of lasting peace and justice found for the martyrs and the saints. This notion is further echoed in a brief article by Stephen Carter.⁴⁹ Carter's premise is based in the necessity of loving our enemies. He maintains that the soldier is morally justified in killing his enemy, but that he must never cross the line into dehumanizing that enemy. Carter does not say it plainly, but his work supports the idea of killing the enemy as a measure taken against sin, and as stopping their living in sin by ultimate means when needed.

As mentioned in the first chapter, none of this can be made sense of by the purely deontological approach. To lie to the enemy for the sake of preservation of human life is too big a pill for the deontologist to swallow. How much more must such an ethicist struggle with the language of end goals and lasting peace and coming justice throughout the Bible? While this example is admittedly outside of the scope of the Gospels, the coming of the kingdom is not, and the events of Revelation (hopefully) presents a palatable transition into a Christian warfare ethic. As with the ability of deontology to not be capable of handling warfare even from the Bible, the same problem applies immeasurably more to non-divine warfare. The consequentialist continues to have the categories and calculus necessary to divine its way through the fog of war.

⁴⁹ Stephen L. Carter. "Loving Military Enemies: War Does Not Exempt Christians from the Second-Greatest Commandment." *Christianity Today* 48, no. 9 (2004): 84. Accessed December 2, 2017. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost*

The first evidence to consider for this bold assertion is found between the works of Johnson and Wynia in their separate articles regarding torture and harsh interrogation, respectively.⁵⁰ The two reach different conclusions, but both of their discussions involve the language of end goals and intentions thereof. While Johnson reaches out through deontology and virtue ethics first, and reaches a conclusion that disagreed with by Wynia, he does plainly admit of the importance of the understanding of intentions, ending his article by saying “there are some things that a good person may never do; torturing involves intentions that are directly contrary to what it means to be a good human person.”⁵¹ While some may disagree with this ultimate conclusion, there is a nugget of truth yet to mined from the statement as a whole: that there are some actions that cannot be undertaken by a good human person. To err on the side of giving ground to the deontologist here, there do seem to be certain actions that do not coincide with a consent to virtue. To nuance this concept (and to take any given ground back) the fact that this concept comes out of a discussion of torture and not of pure mechanism of action has already imported intent of action into the concept of certain actions being unfit for good human persons. Thus, it is not the action itself that is unfit, but rather the consent to vice (i.e., intention) that leads to the action that is inconsistent. Therein, despite disagreement, Johnson’s work remains valuable. Wynia’s work is a bit more plainly useful, as it is demonstrative of the calculation that goes into weighing the benefit and harm that goes into such difficult decisions. Wynia does not take a formal stance on the rightness or wrongness of torture overall. What he does provide may prove to be more useful. The article investigates the psychological aspects of torture as regards

⁵⁰ Matthew K. Wynia, “Consequentialism and Harsh Interrogations,” *American Journal of Bioethics* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 2005): 4-6. Accessed April 21, 2016. *Philosophers Index*, EBSCOhost.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 5.

the ability to get useful information out of captured enemy combatants, and the implications thereof. It admits that torture, or “harsh interrogations”⁵² as Wynia prefers to call it, is much more psychologically complex than a simple “it works/it fails” answer. He does admit that it can be useful in gathering information, but only with practice and development and nuance of the skill set. He also admits that the concept of practice may unnecessarily involve innocents, which may be why he does not ultimately take a stance of affirmation. The article does seem to try to assert that with the right circumstances that harsh interrogation can be beneficial as it relates to the acquisition of information that shortens warfare and thus ultimately preserves human life. It does not admit of simplicity, but nothing in warfare could rightly admit thus.

To ease the lack of a simple answer, the works of Hurka and Rodin will be considered.⁵³ These two do find common ground in their ends: that warfare can be justified through Consequentialism and that it cannot ever be done lightly. Hurka does well to mention levels of good, such as the consistent rise in GDP of nations that go to war, and further rightly admits that this aspect cannot be rightly considered as a reason for justifying warfare. He goes through the considerations that must go along with going to war, mostly the ideas of human life and the preservation thereof. He is also right to admit that Consequentialism may justify aggressive warfare tactics that would serve to deter future aggressive acts against one’s nation or people, while also panning out that a traditional just war theory cannot justify such acts. To make no statement of the rightness or wrongness of deterrent warfare, the ability to discuss it at some depth seems another strength of the consequentialist approach. Moving to Rodin’s work, a short

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Thomas Hurka. “Sidgwick on Consequentialism and Deontology: A Critique.” *Utilitas* 26, no. 2 (June 2014): 129-52. *Legal Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed May 6, 2016). Rodin, David. “Justifying Harm.” *Ethics* 122, no. 1 (October 2011): 74-110.

word must be given to its incredible density. Add to that the length of the article sampled here, the text contains more information than some books on the subject. To be brief about the article, Rodin will be summarized thus; harm can be done to those who are given to such harm, and harm can be done to those who are not liable to such if a greater goal will be obtained by such harm. He gives two examples to illustrate this point:

Defense: a man happens across a villain attacking an innocent victim. The only way to save the victim's life is to kill the villain.

Nondefensive Rescue: a man rushes to save an infant teetering at the edge of a precipice. In doing so, he knocks to the ground an innocent bystander, causing painful temporary bruising to his [the bystander] ribs.

These two examples become the spring board for the moral calculus present throughout the rest of the work. Rodin's concept of liability does well to demonstrate the need to respond to wrong doing in the world, and his moral calculus provides an actual system by way to consider the way to respond and, perhaps more importantly, how not to reply. An interesting twist placed in here is the moral duty to make recompense to the bystander from the second example. Even though the goal is great and praiseworthy, the bystander was not liable to the injury sustained and is due at least an apology, per Rodin. It does put in check the common misconception that Utility can and will steamroll anyone in the way of the greater good.

Conclusion

As this chapter closes, it seems fit to give space to a final ethicist. While it seems that he would not want to be read as a consequentialist ethicist, Joseph Fletcher sits as a near perfect example of what this thesis will build towards in the coming chapters.⁵⁴ Fletcher, who calls his system *situationalism* (that is, an ethic built concerning situation and environment instead of

⁵⁴ Mark Foreman, Interview by author. December 28, 2016.

actions) builds his system around the principle of Christ's Gospel command to love (Matt 22:36-40).⁵⁵ Taking for granted the command to love God first, Fletcher's system focuses on the command to "love thy neighbor."⁵⁶ He seems convinced that this will satisfy every situation that a moral agent may encounter, and uses a guiding principle approach to the ethical calculus that comes with his system.⁵⁷ It is peculiar that Fletcher would not want to be read as a consequentialist in general, but this may be reducible to the poor rapport that Christian ethicists have with Consequentialism.⁵⁸

With the base information provided by an overview of Christ's teachings and the works of Abelard and Mill the formulation of a Christian Utilitarianism can begin. The basics provided by Christ's teachings, the importance of motive and consequences, have been refined and explained more fully by Abelard, Mill, and all the supporting thinkers included so far. Utilitarianism, broadly, has also been investigated by an overview of modern sources that demonstrate the particular strengths of Utility over other systems; particularly the strength of Utilitarianism over Deontology. The next chapter will work through a formulation that depends on the thoughts that have been established so far. This final chapter will investigate a Christian perspective on differentiation between the good and the right, and will work into the foundation of the Christian Consequentialism and then finally demonstrate that ethic.

⁵⁵ David K. Clark and Robert V. Rakestraw. *Readings in Christian Ethics*, Vol. 1. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 148-56.

⁵⁶ Joseph F. Fletcher and John Warwick Montgomery, *Situation Ethics* (Minneapolis: Dimension Books, 1972), 24.

⁵⁷ Clark and Rakestraw, 143-56.

⁵⁸ Mark Foreman, Interview. December 28, 2016.

Chapter 6: Formulation

Before jumping into the chapter properly, it seems fitting to give a brief review of the ideas that have been developed so far. The foundation of a Christian Consequentialism is laid from the words of Christ as seen through the various narratives given in the Gospels. Christ's language of intention, the inner man, and other environmental factors requires the reader to look at morality as more than just the external action of a moral agent. Abelard's biblically focused Intentionalist ethic came next. To Abelard, the moral standing of any given action is decided some time before the action occurs, in that the moral agent must first consent to either vice or virtue before an action is decided upon or undertaken. Then Mill's more formalized ethic, Utilitarianism, built up the idea of a hierarchy of goods unto a greatest good. The modern authorship considered in the previous chapter then demonstrated the effective nature of Consequentialism as it applies to particularly difficult moral areas. Further, a bit of distinction is due as well. The work of Joseph Priestly, a Utilitarian ethicist of the late 1700s is absent from this thesis. His absence is due to his formulation and its radical similarity to Mill's. Per the address of his ethical system given by Matsumoto, his formulation still revolves around doing the most good for the most people as his greatest good.⁵⁹ This is the same as Mill's, and he may be subject to the same criticism, that he makes room for Christian thought instead of founding his ethic on the same.

On to the first and most basic element, a brief differentiation between the Good and the Right. The principle difference is category. The Good (being the harder of the two to describe) deals with that which is beneficial. The Right has to do with conformance with moral

⁵⁹ Akihito Matsumoto. "Happiness and Religion: Joseph Priestley's 'Theological Utilitarianism'." *Kyoto Economic Review* 79, no. 2 (2010): 55-66. Accessed December 2, 2017. *EconLit with Full Text, EBSCOhost*.

standards.⁶⁰ The Right will be the focus of the most of these two remaining chapters. The Good, if necessarily linked to the right, seems appropriate to detail first. It seems to be that the most basically beneficial thing in the universe would be a God of the sort Anselm describes in his ontological argument.⁶¹ This maximally good being, whom Anselm knew as the Judeo-Christian God, will be the Good for the sake of this thesis and system.⁶²

A small caveat must be made before moving on to the relationship between the Good and the Right. When it is said that “God is Good” the word “is” requires some investigation. For the purpose of this thesis, the Platonic reading of the word “is” will be eschewed. It has a great many strengths, but the potential of equivocating a personal deity to an attribute is an issue that the platonic reading presents that frankly this thesis does not have the space to defend, if it can be defended. The non-platonic reading of the word “is” still leaves a robust reading of “God is Good.” To say this is to say that God, as that which none greater can be conceived, is in Himself Good and is the source of any other Goods (and thus any beneficial thing) in the real world.

With that handled, now the connection between the Good and the Right can be discussed. To say that the Good and the Right are necessarily connected seems to normally present something of a Natural Law theory. That is, that which is correct within the moral framework is going to be beneficial because the moral framework is determined by some mechanism in the Good. This is suitable, and perhaps even what Abelard supposed to be, but not what will be used

⁶⁰ William Meacham, “The Good and the Right,” accessed March 9, 2017. bmeacham.com. Jon Garthoff. “The Priority and Posteriority of Right.” *Theoria: A Swedish Journal of Philosophy* 81, no. 3: 222-48. *Philosophers Index with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 3, 2017), 222-3.

⁶¹ William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, *Christian apologetics Past and Present: A Primary Source Reader*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 370-94.

⁶² Ibid., (For the sake of this thesis, written in at a Christian University, and that has already assumed the moral usefulness and inerrancy of the Bible; Anselm’s jump from “being that which none great can be conceived” to “God,” will not be investigated.).

here. Rather, the relationship between the Good and the Right will be settled in something like a Divine Command Theory. The word “like” is used because when Divine Command Theory (DCT, henceforth) is brought up, it is generally reduced to the voluntarist horn of the Euthyphro Dilemma; that is, that commands of God are good and right because they are given by God.⁶³ The accusation given to this is that the commands framed in such a way become arbitrary, and it seems that they could have been different if God had wanted them to be so. C. S. Lewis provides a nearly platonic, but still altogether useful, out from the sticking point of this horn. His version is predicated upon God’s complete and perfect goodness. To read Lewis’ writings is to see him dive into platonic thought, that God is (in a normative use) Goodness and Righteousness.⁶⁴ His framework still works without biting the platonic bullet though.

In discussion of the Problem of Evil it is generally held that God is innocent of evil in the real world. It is said that all that God creates is good because He created it. This notion is helpful in settling the objection of the arbitrary accusation that comes with Divine Command Theory. If it really is the case that “In the beginning” (Gen 1:1a, John 1:1a) there was God, and if “He is before all things,” (Col 1:17a) then He is good and the source of the Good, and by logical procession the source of the Right; assuming the Right proceeds from the Good. That assumption seems safe, based on God’s existence predating the existence of everything else. This also seems to best tie to the image of God, incarnate in the Divine Person of Christ, as being supreme to the Sabbath laws, just as His human ancestor David was supreme to the command over the sacred priestly bread, as was mentioned in the previous chapter.

⁶³ David Baggett, Interview by author. March 9, 2017.

⁶⁴ Ibid., Here, Baggett quotes Lewis’ “The Poison of Subjectivism.”

Thus, if God logically and actually preceded all things, then He preceded moral commands, even the Right as a whole category. He is good, and is the source of the Good and all Goodness, and from His Good commands proceeds the Right and Righteousness. It is this Divine Nature Theory that stands as the foundation of the rest of this ethical formulation. With the base of the ethic considered, the rest of the chapter can now move into a basic formulation of a Christian Consequentialist ethic.

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:30-31, NIV) This verse, alongside its other tellings in Luke and Matthew, sit at the heart of Fletcher’s situationalism; and will do the same for this formulation.⁶⁵ Having now settled the Good and its relationship to the Right, the Right itself can now be described. This chapter, with its heart in place in the Mark quotation, will move through the basic biblical principles that will be imported into this ethic, how they work one with the other, and how they work with the concepts of intention, consequence, and environment.

If the Mark quotation (12:30-31) is the heart of affairs here, it requires some further investigation. The whole passage hangs on Love, and how it relates to the relationship between moral agent humans and God very God. Of all the ways the Bible describes God, the best description for the discourse here seems to be that of God as King (Ps 47:1-9, Rev 19:16). To love a king seems to entail a few aspects not necessarily common to other love relationships. Praise, adoration, loyalty, all perhaps common to some degree. But there is an aspect that only royalty rates, glory. Thus, a primary driver in developing a Christian Consequentialism based out of Divine Nature Theory seems to be; *that which will glorify God, do.*

⁶⁵ Fletcher and Montgomery. *Situation Ethics*, 24.

This idea, rather handily, brings up the first (and perhaps most problematic) objection this chapter will address. It seems reasonable to raise a challenge in light of the commandments against certain actions that the Bible contains from cover to cover. There are a few ways around this objection. First, it is likely the case that most of these *action* commandments are more than they first appear. Many of the moral commands given through the Pauline Epistles, particularly those relating to the role of women in the Church, are read with an eye on the environment in which they are given. Looking to the Old Testament Laws and commands, it is generally said that they are very similar to other Ancient Near East law codes given by a king to his people in the time that they were given.⁶⁶ However, these points alone may not be enough to sway the challenger. At its root one must recall that the Right, and thus any ethical system or conclusion is the creation of God. Therein, the decisions regarding such a system are completely up to Him and His regal authority. Inasmuch, it may be the case that there are certain actions that can *under no circumstances* glorify Him. It seems reasonable to think that the logical limits of reality itself might well reflect on the Right, and this may be where it presents. With this in mind, no good clean example comes to mind. To examine adultery leads to heavy discussion of persons and environment and intention, not just a sexual act (Matt 5:27-28). Murder leads to discussion of persons and intentions, not just a mechanical act of one biological entity to another (Matt 5:21-22). Even the common extra-biblical example of torturing children for fun is more than just a command against an action, but is legislation against one of the (if not the singularly) worst conditions of the heart and its intentions towards a certain outcome (Matt 5:21-28 and 18:6).

A second base principle for this ethic comes from the second command in our Marcan starting point. “Love your neighbor as yourself,” is the grow bed for a few guiding principles.

⁶⁶ K. A. Kitchen and Paul Lawrence. *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*. Vol. 1. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012.) XXIII.

First, is the preservation of human life. Then, the pursuit of human wellbeing. And from that, the wellbeing of community as it serves those within it. And so on. These are, of course, found to be subservient to the first principle of bringing God glory. This is evidenced biblically by divinely commanded wars in the Old Testament (Joshua) and even in Acts, when the Holy Spirit slays Ananias and Sapphira (Act 5:1-11). Human life is great Good, and its preservation one of the most basic Rights. However, human life is not the greatest Good and thus its preservation not the rightest Right.

This leads back to the point made in chapter 6two regarding the greatest commandment passage. Jesus would have been well aware of the discussion of hierarchy of commandments within the Mosaic Law. Nowhere does He correct it, and that is best explained by the concept of Him working by such a hierarchy, and commanding us to do the same. Thus did Christ keep his disciples from fasting, and picked grains on the Sabbath, and praised the widow for her two copper coins. Thus did He challenge His accusers with the image of helping a neighbor pulling an ox from the ditch on the Sabbath (Luke 14:5). These present not a discredit to the Sabbath, but rather a credit to life and glory to God and His ultimate authority over the commands He made in the first place.

This brings up challenge of not only the Divine Nature Theory (henceforth DNT), but also of Consequential use of it. What if, one might challenge, God decides to change His commands to reflect some new goal? The gut reaction is to point to the dispensationalist who says that such a thing has already happened. A more serious corrective, though, seems to come in three parts. First, there does not seem to be any evidence that He has done such before. When His people revolt against the Right that He has set up for them, He brings judgment on them. There is no evidence of a people pursuing His moral conscripts earnestly and falling under

judgment. Again, there is no evidence of such a change historically. The close of the canon seems to be the second element. In the hypothetical *if* that this challenge exists, such a massive change would require some communication on God's part. With the canon closed, there does not seem to be a reasonable way for such a change to be implemented, at least not one that includes His people. Lastly, it seems logical to conclude that there are logical bounds to the Good, and thus the Right, because they are a part and product of an immutable God.

This system being a type of Consequentialism, the calculus of actual decision making now needs to be addressed. Because of the significant theistic import, this becomes very easy. It is principle based, and the first of these is "will this glorify God?" If it passes this test, it is now within the realm of being a right thing to do. This first principle encapsulates not only Fletcher's previously mentioned situationalism, but also Abelard's intentionalism from chapter 3. It is best to equate Abelard's idea of conceding to virtue as conceding to that which will glorify God, and conceding to vice as conceding to that which will not, or cannot, glorify God.

Once this first principle is satisfied, Mill's Utilitarianism can take effect, nearly wholesale. Once an action is determined to be glorifying to God, the love for and care of one's neighbors and community fits the second of the greatest commandments. In fact, as per Dr Baggett, Mill's ethical system includes elements that the system itself could not account for, like the basic equality of all humans.⁶⁷ The Christian Utilitarianism presented by this thesis can account for them, because of the base in a Christian concept of the DNT.

Further, his system understands quale as it regards happiness. "...Better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied."⁶⁸ This fits readily into the system forming already. God's

⁶⁷ Baggett, interview, March 9, 2017. John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1988). This reference is a general one, as the principle of the text is that all humans are of equal value.

⁶⁸ John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis, IL: Hackett, 2001), 9.

satisfaction through glorification sits far above all other satisfactions. Further, on the Christian view, those actions that glorify God may carry some negative consequence in light of personal comfort, but will bring about great personal satisfaction and gladness; even if only in eternity.

Mill himself handled a weighty challenge against Consequentialism as a whole, the challenge of learning curve. Mill writes the challenge out as a challenge against the moral calculus employed by his system. His response, in short, is that there is no challenge here that is not common to all other sets of knowledge. There is precious little that humans are born knowing, and ethics are not an exception. The Christian import privy to this thesis seems that it would agree *particularly* to ethics as a learned knowledge set, as all humans are born fallen and thus in some way at odds with moral knowledge. The secondary principles related to ethics between humans that have been mentioned so far may be arguably brute facts of created order available very early if not immediately in life, but the principle concept of glorifying God must certainly be understood as a learned concept.

Conclusion

The ethic of Christ in its shortest version seems to be this: an intention, aimed towards a specific conclusion or outcome, decides the mechanism by which the conclusion will be reached. This notion, captured in part by Abelard and Mill, seems to serve as the best foundation for a Christian ethic. While Utilitarianism and more broadly Consequentialism may arise as dirty words among a majority of Christian ethicists, some type of Utilitarianism remains to be the best explanation of what is found in the Gospel accounts. One might want to skirt around the issue, as Fletcher might be accused of, but it seems best to hold one's ideological ground and call an ethic what it actually is, especially if it best reflects the very words of God. Thus, this Christo-centric ethic is a type of Utilitarianism, although it changes what "utility" refers to. No longer is human

happiness the primary driver or greatest good, but rather the glory and satisfaction of God.

Ultimately this does not change much of Abelard or Mill, both of whom presumed some level of Christian doctrine in their ethic.

While this work does hope to have provided a fair explanation of a Christian Utilitarianism, it is almost a granted that it will not have answered every question and objection available to the subject. As per Mark Foreman, “There is a reason men much more schooled... have not adopted the idea.”⁶⁹ It is also understood that there is always separation between the ideal version of a written ethic and the working out of such and ethic in day-to-day life.⁷⁰ What is hoped for is that this has provided some basis of proof that there are some great minds in the history of Christian ethics who have adopted this idea. Further, it is hoped that this may serve as some basic primer into a Christian ethic. It seems to be that what ethic a believer will ascribe themselves to is of secondary importance, but second only to coming to salvation at all. The topic of metaethic is one that will continue to create debate until the Lord returns, but hopefully the pursuit of and submission to a properly Christian ethic is never considered less than absolutely vital to the wellbeing of the believer.

⁶⁹ Mark Foreman, Interview by author. December 28, 2016.

⁷⁰ Lisa Sowle Cahill. “Teleology, utilitarianism, and Christian ethics.” *Theological Studies* 42, no. 4 (1981): 603. Accessed December 2, 2017. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost. Cahill is here parsing through the differences in what she calls teleological (goal oriented, and thus consequentialist) and deontological ethics, and concludes the point given here, that perfect separation is ideal but perhaps not practically possible.

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