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Toward a Biblical View of Collective Responsibility for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Twenty-first Century

Miroslav Danihel
Andrews University, danihel@andrews.edu

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ABSTRACT

TOWARD A BIBLICAL VIEW OF COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY
FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

by

Miroslav Danihel

Adviser: Miroslav Kiš

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

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Title: TOWARD A BIBLICAL VIEW OF COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Name of the researcher: Miroslav Danihel

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Miroslav Kiš, Ph.D.

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The notion of collective responsibility is an issue that is not very popular in the postmodern society. However, the idea of collective responsibility can be found in the Bible. This thesis examines philosophical, ethical, and biblical sources on the subject. The biblical evidence focuses on examining Josh 7 and Ezek 18, as well as some of the New Testament contributions to the topic. The relationship between collective responsibility, collective personality, and collective punishment is discussed. The thesis acknowledges collective responsibility as a valid biblical doctrine and proposes its

application for church members, leaders, and the decision-making process in the Seventh-

day Adventist church in the twenty-first century.

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FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
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A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

_____
Miroslav Kiš, Ph.D., Adviser

_____
Darius Jankiewicz, Ph.D.

_____   _____
Martin Hanna, Ph.D.   Date approved

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (Rom 12:4-5 ESV)

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. (Rom 14:12 ESV)

The church of God, enfeebled and defective though it is through yielding to temptation, is the only object upon earth on which he bestows his supreme regard.[1]

The church of Christ is a unique entity; it is divine and human at the same time. Christ is the Builder of the church (Matt 16:18), He is the Cornerstone of this building (Eph 2:20), and in Him the whole church is joined together and grows into a holy temple (Eph 2:21). At the same time, the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20), and is created as one body, with believers who are individually part of this body and, as individual members, they belong to each other (Rom 12:5). This unity of divine and human elements generates permanent tension within the church, which is not unexpected when it is reflected from the biblical perspective of the great controversy between good and evil.

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[1]Ellen G. White, "The Human vs. the Divine," *The General Conference Bulletin* (May 29, 1897), http://text.egwwritings.org. White goes on to say: "His interest, with all the interest of the heavenly host, is all with his people, who, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, are to shine as lights in the world. His Holy Spirit is giving rich and constant supplies of grace for every emergency. Not one needs to stumble, for Christ has said, 'He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'" Ibid.

The first apostolic church is described as a group of people who had not only common faith (Acts 2:42), but who took care of each other and lived in unity (Acts 2:44-47). The twelve apostles led the group of these early Christians; however, with the growing number of followers, there was a need for more leaders and a more complex organizational structure (Acts 6:1-6; Tim 3).[2] To complicate the situation even further, sin, formalism, and false teachers (2 Cor 11:12-14; Rev 3:15) found their way into the early church and started to create destruction of God's original plan for His people.

The acceptance of Christianity in the Roman Empire brought added tensions.[3] The church did not struggle only with the issues within the church but also with finding the right approaches to the interactions between church and state. The church structure changed once more and became even more formal, institutionalized,[4] and unfortunately, also detached from the people. The separation grew over the centuries to such a degree

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[2]Paul R. Spickard and Kevin M. Cragg, *A Social History of Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994). "In these early persecutions most of the remaining disciples and other eyewitnesses to the acts of Jesus died. A new generation had to decide how to replace the apostolic authority that had been a core structure for leadership. . . . Leadership apparently was further standardized by increasing the authority of the bishops. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, in about 117 asserted that communion could not be properly celebrated unless a bishop was present" (ibid., 39).

[3]David Chidester, *Christianity: A Global History* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2000). "An edict of the emperor Constantine issued in 313 – the Edict of Milan – made the Christian religion a legally recognized form of worship; an edict issued by the emperor Theodosius I in 381 made Christianity the only legal form of religious worship. In between these two decrees, Christian bishops and emperors formed new alliances. After Constantine's edict, they began to redefine the position of Christianity in the empire as both a religious and political force" (ibid., 91).

[4]Gregory Baum and Andrew Greely, *The Church as Institution* (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1974). "Where an authority occupies a pre-existing office and enjoys a permanent title, we have an institution" (ibid., 11). The authors later define the institution as "a changeable, but permanent, product of purposive social role behavior which subjects the individual to obligations, gives him formal authority and possesses legal sanctions" (ibid., 15).

that Paul R. Spickard and Kevin M. Cragg write, "For the average medieval Christian, most of this hierarchy of the church was so distant that it was not even an abstraction."[5]

The consequences of the tensions and power distance within the church and tensions created by the interactions between the church and the rest of the society resulted in discreditable and shocking actions in the past and the present. The Crusades (1095-1291), the condemnation of Jan Hus, Galileo Galilei, and Martin Luther, medieval witch hunts (1480-1750), promotion and defense of slavery (1500s-1900s), and collaboration with political powers in recent history (for example, with the Nazi regime and the Communist system) are just some of the painful and dishonorable cases.

Without yielding to the temptation to superficially judge such actions, we can conclude that the acts of the church during history differed exceedingly from the acts of the apostles. This statement raises many questions; one of them is the question regarding responsibility. Were those decisions and acts of the church the result of individuals, groups of individuals, or the whole church? Who is responsible for these acts? What is the biblical and ethical framework behind these deeds? Is there a way to protect the church from similar mistakes in the future?

In recent history, the problem of collective responsibility[6] was raised in the context of World War II, especially in association with the Holocaust. This theme is still

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[5]Spickard and Cragg, *A Social History of Christians*, 81.

[6]Even though this term will be the subject of future discussion, at this point according to a simple definition of collective responsibility, members of the group share responsibility for either actions of individual members of the group or actions of the whole group even without active participation on these acts.

present in the European churches and in many cases it is still unresolved.[7] Seeking for the

source of hatred and punishment for culprits is connected to questions such as: Were

Germans responsible for the Holocaust? Were they responsible as a nation, or should we

blame just some individuals? If the latter is true, who specifically? Was it Hitler as Führer

and Chancellor of Germany, the Nazi Party[8] or the SS,[9] which was under Himmler's

command? Who was the architect and executor of most of the crimes against humanity?

Speaking in a religious context, the approach of Christian churches toward the

Nazi regime and toward the Final Solution was also problematic. While some Christian

leaders were able to recognize the monstrosity of the Nazi government immediately,

others either supported the regime or cooperated with it in order to survive or benefit

from it.[10]

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[7]The WWII ended almost 70 years ago but its consequences are still felt in many of the European countries. Social tensions, uncertainty, unhealthy leadership styles (Communistic, post-Communistic), and growing hatred of one country against another feed from the unresolved tensions that originated in WWII. Therefore, for European countries, WWII is a current issue because of its far-reaching consequences still actively present not only in the styles of government and moral standards of the wider society but also within the Christian church. For example, it took 60 years for the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church in Germany, Austria, Czech, and Slovakia to release an official statement, in which they apologize for misbehaving during WWII. See: Declaration of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany and Austria Concerning the Sixtieth Anniversary of the End of the Second World War, May 8, 1945, in the SDA Church in Germany, http://www.adventisten.de/fileadmin/downloads/8may1945.pdf (accessed October 23, 2013); "Church Leaders Say 'We're Sorry': German and Austrian Churches Apologize for Holocaust Actions," *Adventist Review,* ed. Mark A. Kellner, http://www.adventistreview.org/article/92/archives/issue-2005-1540/adventist-news. For the official statement released in the Czecho-Slovakian Union of the SDA Church, see "Bolestne Vzpominky (Painful Memories)," *Advent*, no. 6 (2001): 6-9.

[8]NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei – National Socialist German Worker's Party), the leading political party during the Third Reich.

[9]*Schutzstaffel*; Protection squadrons.

[10]Partial analysis of these positions will be part of chapter 4 of this thesis.

Among those churches that were trying to survive the Nazi regime by strictly following governmental rules, supporting the regime, and compromising its own beliefs was the Seventh-day Adventist church in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia.[11] Excommunication (removal) of the Jews from church membership and leaving them without any help in order to save the church, placing signs on the churches which read "Jude verboten," publishing anti-Jewish and pro-Hitler articles in church journals, subservient communication with the government – those are not just historical events, but also painful evidences of the church's weaknesses and failures.

Shortly after World War II, on October 1, 1952, the State Bureau for Church Affairs in Czechoslovakia withdrew the state's permission from the headquarters of the SDA church in Prague. Part of this "Decree" was confiscation of all the church properties and funds. Many of the SDA pastors were condemned to jail, including the president of the Union. This was a distressing time for the whole church. Even though other churches suffered under the Communist government as well, no other church, except the SDA church, was proscribed at that time and no other church suffered confiscation of all properties and funds.[12]

On January 1, 1993, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic split into the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, two separate countries. In 1993, the Slovak Parliament voted in the "Restitution Act," by which some of the properties of the church were returned, but in very bad condition. Other buildings (at least half of them) were

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[11]From 1939 to 1945, Czechoslovakia was divided into two parts known as Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and Slovak Republic.

[12] Jiří Piškula, *Dějiny Církve Adventistů Sedmého Dne v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku* (The History of Seventh-day Adventists in Czech, Moravia and Silesia) (Praha: Advent-Orion, 2010), 116-117.

never returned. The situation was even more complicated in the Czech Republic, where the negotiation process between churches and government regarding restitution took almost twenty years. According to the law signed in early 2013, the SDA church in the Czech Republic will receive as restitution the equivalent of the confiscated properties in the form of yearly payments of the pastors' salaries during the coming decades.[13]

During the negotiation process, the discussion in the SDA church emphasized that the confiscation of the funds and properties by the communist government was an exemplary act of injustice. And it truly was. Prime Minister Petr Nečas also had a similar view when he remarked during the ceremony of signing the agreements between the Czech government and seventeen religious organizations on February 22, 2013: "The church had been excluded, but today we have completed this *act of justice*."[14] But in the SDA church, almost nobody mentioned the unjust or at least questionable behavior of the SDA church during World War II and the possible relationship to the injustice done during the Communist regime. Such argumentation was refused as inappropriate. The common argument against the concept of collective responsibility, or even the concept of collective punishment, was: "Why should lay members of the church, faithfully paying their tithes be punished for the questionable acts of the church leaders during World War II, especially when they were done in an effort to save the church? The whole church cannot be responsible for the misbehavior of some of the members. There is nothing like

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[13]Mark A. Kellner, "Adventist Church Signs Pact for U.S. $45 Million in Communism Reparations," Adventist News Network, http://news.adventist.org/en/archive/articles/2013/02/26/in-czech-republic-adventist-church-to-receive-us45-million-in-communism-reparations.

[14]Ibid.

collective responsibility or collective punishment in the New Testament anymore. Everybody is responsible for her/his own deeds."[15]

The concept of collective responsibility is not just a problem of the SDA church during the time of World War II, but its rejection can be seen on a much bigger scale as a cultural phenomenon of the postmodern society. While modernity came with the concept of subjectivism and radical individualism (both in the realm of individual liberty and individual creativity) in opposition to the Middle Ages, the concept of the postmodern society is based on further fragmentation. Postmodernism promotes the autonomy of individuals, which results in a lack of metanarrative and nurtures the creation of the individual's own environment and narrative (or truth) built from fragments. Collective responsibility is not common in the vocabulary of postmodern thinking.[16]

Nevertheless, the Church (and Christianity) has both an individual and a collective aspect. The biblical model stresses that Christians are individually convicted about their sins, they individually respond to Christ's offering of salvation, and they are saved as individuals. As individuals, believers are responsible for their own deeds and thoughts. At the same time, according to the Bible, Christians cannot exist without the

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[15]These arguments were not published, but they were part of the discussion during the Biblical Conference in Sázava, Czech Republic, in December 10, 2011, where similar questions were raised in the presented paper. See M. Danihel, "The Decree of Cyrus and Financial Support of the Religion of the Israelites as an Inspiration for Contemporary Discussion About Church-State Relationship," *Koinonia* (2012), 76-91.

[16]"The essence of modernity can be seen in humanity's freeing itself from the bonds of Middle Ages. . . . Certainly the modern age has, as a consequence of the liberation of humanity, introduced subjectivism and individualism. . . . For up to Descartes . . . the claim [of a self-supported, unshakable foundation of truth, in the sense of certainty] originates in that emancipation of man in which he frees himself from obligation to Christian revelational truth and Church doctrine to a legislating for himself that takes its stand upon itself." M. Heidegger, J. Young, and K. U. Haynes, *Heidegger: Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 2002), 66.

collective dimension. They are part of the body of Christ called the church.[17] This dual

aspect of the church, individualistic and collective, is constantly in tension and raises

many questions. For example: How does the postmodern individualistic approach impact

the collective aspect of Christianity especially in the SDA church? Is the SDA church

part of the body of Christ, the unique collective of people, which Christ approaches as

"one body," with shared responsibility? Should Christians consider collective

responsibility an integral part of their faith, or can they remain untouched by the actions

and decisions of the rest of the body of Christ? How does the teaching of collective

responsibility impact ecclesiology of the SDA church in the twenty-first century?

Statement of the Problem

Collective responsibility is a current issue that affects the SDA church in the

twenty-first century. While people confess the corporate aspect of the church, at the same

time the view of collective responsibility is not sufficiently recognized and its

consequences are not adequately taken into consideration. Studies of collective

responsibility in the field of historical theology have been done[18] but an in-depth study

concerning a biblical view of the collective responsibility is missing, as well as the

ecclesiological and perhaps eschatological implications arising out of such a study for the

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[17]In this context, we understand church as a local congregation and as a worldwide organization.

[18]Situation in Germany: Christine E. King, *The Nazi State and the New Religions: Five Case Studies in Non-Conformity*, Studies in Religion and Society, vol. 4 (Toronto & New York, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1982). Situation in Austria: Daniel Heinz, "Church, Sect, and Government Control: A History of Seventh-day Adventists in Austria, 1890-1975" (Andrews University, 1991). Situation in Czechoslovakia: Piškula, *Dějiny Církve Adventistů Sedmého Dne v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku* (The History of Seventh-day Adventists in Czech, Moravia and Silesia), Dějiny Církve adventistů sedmého dne v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku.

SDA church. Therefore, a synthetic systematic-theological study that deals with the question of collective responsibility in ecclesiological context and its implications in the SDA church in the postmodern society is needed.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this synthetic systematic theological study is to examine, analyze, and apply the biblical concept of collective responsibility to the SDA church in the twenty-first century. The study is based on biblical theology and current academic research.

Methodology

To accomplish the purpose of this synthetic systematic theological study, three different tools were used. A review of the leading philosophical and ethical discussions on the topic of collective responsibility is presented in chapter 2. A systematic biblical study of the concept of collective responsibility in the Old Testament and the New Testament is presented in chapter 3. I synthetized ethical and biblical studies and applied them to the ecclesiological context, shown in chapter 4.

Terminology

The focus of this study covers the philosophical, biblical, and ethical approaches to collective personality. However, the meaning of the word "corporate" is broader and includes corporation as an organizational and/or legal unit in the area of business, government, and law. These areas are not the subject of this study and therefore the use of the term "corporate" with a business or law understanding will be explicitly stated.

In this study, the expression "corporate" will be used interchangeably with the term "collective." Although the term *corporate* is used in theological literature, most of the literature in the area of ethical studies uses the term *collective*.

It is a problem of terminology when the term *responsibility* is used in the negative form; for example: "Who is responsible for the Holocaust?" "Who is responsible for the car accident?" This is generally understood as "Who will take blame for the action or consequences?" The positive form is rarely used and instead of saying, "Who is responsible for the victory of the sports team?" one will ask "Who should take credit for the victory of the sports team?" For its use in this paper, the term *responsibility* will be understood for the most part neutrally. This is the approach that is compatible with the responsibility of the church, which is both positive (responsibility for making disciples, helping the needy) and negative (not to hurt, not to misuse power).

Limitation

This study has two main limitations. The first one is the presuppositions of the researcher. The point of departure for this study is biblical teaching. My basic philosophical presuppositions are imbedded in the belief in the metanarrative of the great controversy between God (the Creator and Savior of humanity) and Satan (the originator of sin). This study of the Bible and reality is based on the belief that God has spoken and continues to speak through His Word.

The second limitation is the chosen method of the study: synthetic systematic theology. Its goal is to move "beyond inductive itemization to the synthesis of theory

construction."[19] The study does not bring an in-depth inductive comprehensive

examination of all the biblical texts related to the topic of collective responsibility, but

focuses just on the core texts that form the basis of the theory construction.

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[19]Kevin G. Smith, *Academic Writing and Theological Research: A Guide for Students* (Johannesburg: South African Theological Seminary, 2008), 185.

CHAPTER 2

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY: PHILOSOPHICAL

AND ETHICAL REVIEW

Introduction

In an effort to describe and reflect upon the dynamics between moral responsibility of individuals and the group they are part of, different terminology and concepts are used, depending on the area of study and approach to the problem. This chapter attempts to bring an overview of the basic terminology and concepts connected with collective and individual responsibility, considering the theological, philosophical, and ethical views of the problem.

Collective Personality and Moral Agency

Collective personality and moral agency are basic terms one encounters when considering the issue of a collective, a group, and its responsibility as an entity, as well as the responsibility of the individual members. Collective personality is an extension of individual personality: Collective personality encompasses individual personality in the whole.

The concept of collective personality leads to the question of the moral agency of the collective. Joel Green summarizes that, according to Scripture, "humans are moral

agents because they are formed for relationship with God and with their neighbors."[1] To characterize a person as a moral agent means that the individual has the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, he or she has free will to choose between right and wrong, and is accountable for this choice. R. Niebuhr defines responsibility as "the idea of an agent's action as a response to an action upon him in accordance with his interpretation of the later action and with his expectation of a response to his response; and all in a continuing community of agents."[2] Niebuhr further insists that life can be characterized as moral just when it is a responsible life. Another definition says that "to be a moral agent is to be responsible *for* oneself in and through responsibility *to* others and being accountable *for* bringing something into being through the exercise of power."[3]

If every individual person is a moral agent,[4] and if the group of people is characterized as a corporate person, then the question is how this corporate person becomes a moral agent.

Not every group of people can automatically be taken as a moral agent and therefore be morally accountable. An example of such a group could be an aggregative

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[1]Jacqueline E. Lapsley, "Moral Agency," *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

[2]H. R. Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1963), 65.

[3]W. Schweiker, "Radical Interpretation and Moral Responsibility: A Proposal for Theological Ethics," *The Journal of Religion* 73, no. 4 (1993): 618.

[4]With the exception of persons who are not able to make moral choices (for example, cognitively impaired, infants, etc.). See also Lapsley, "Moral Agency," 525-527; Anna Robbins, "Something in Common? The Human Person as Moral Agent in Individual and Corporate Expression," *Evangelical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (2006): 313-339.

group of people, like a mob or "random collection of individuals."[5] "Neither of these kinds of groups has a decision-making procedure in place. Nor do their members show much solidarity. Hence, they are usually rejected as candidates for collective responsibility."[6] For a group of people to bear collective responsibility, at least one of three following characteristics connected to the structure of the group is required.

The first possible characteristic that distinguishes a group as a moral agent is that the collective has to have some kind of leading or representative body. This means that the group, as a moral agent, needs to have

> a set of group actions that have an identifiable moral agent, e.g., a governing board or a representative body, behind them capable of carrying out a group action . . . and . . . a set of decisions that are made self-consciously on a rational basis . . . by the group that take the form of group intentions or group choices.[7]

The second optional characteristic that specifies the group as collectively responsible requires the group to "have members who share interests or needs in common."[8] In this characteristic, groups "are capable of acting and intending in the sense relevant to collective responsibility, since while they are made up of individuals, they pursue projects together."[9]

The third possible characteristic of the group that can be categorized as collectively responsible is that the members hold shared attitudes "that both produce

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[5]Virginia Held, "Can a Random Collection of Individuals Be Responsible," *Journal of Philosophy*, no. 67 (1970): 479.

[6]Marion Smiley, "Collective Responsibility," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2011), http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/collective-responsibility/.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

serious harm in society and that require acceptance by many individuals in a community together in order to be effective, e.g., attitudes such as racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism."[10] This third characteristic is usually defined negatively in expectation of a destructive influence on the other group of people or the whole society. For the purpose of this paper, the third characteristic can also be defined positively. For example, the group can be held collectively responsible when it takes responsibility for persecuted Christians, which means that this group will actually help the persecuted or those in need.

If a group can be described by one of these three characteristics it can be considered as a moral agent and, as a moral agent, it can bear collective responsibility. According to these characteristics, the church is a moral agent and can be held collectively responsible from an ethical/sociological point of view.

Some argue, focusing on the nature of collective actions, that "collectives do not have moral faults, since they don't make moral choices, and hence they cannot properly be ascribed moral responsibility. . . . For there to be moral responsibility there must be blameworthiness involving a morally faulty decision, and this can only occur at the individual level."[11] Jan Narveson claims "that the bearers of moral blameworthiness have to be individuals because only individuals can have moral agency."[12] Narveson concludes, "Nothing else can literally be the bearer of full responsibility."[13]

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[10]Ibid.

[11]R. S. Downie, "Collective Responsibility," *Philosophy: The Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy* 44, no. 167 (1969): 67.

[12]Smiley, "Collective Responsibility."

[13]Jan Narveson, "Collective Responsibility," *Journal of Ethics*, no. 6 (2002): 179.

Even though the view of Narveson and other scholars[14] follows in the lines of postmodernism and stresses the supreme role of the individual as opposed to the collective, there are still a number of scholars who support the view of the collective person as a moral agent.[15]

Collective Responsibility: Philosophical Discussion

In the field of philosophy, the concept of collective responsibility is extensively discussed. Two main approaches oppose each other on the basis of whether or not the concept of collective responsibility is viewed as corresponding to traditional moral theories.[16]

The philosopher and theologian, Hywel D. Lewis, is the leading figure among those who consider collective responsibility as an incorrect concept. He argues that if we "drift from the idea of personal or individual responsibility to the notion of shared or collective responsibility," we come "eventually to no responsibility at all."[17] The reason

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[14]H. D. Lewis, "The Non-Moral Notion of Collective Responsibility," *Individual and Collective Responsibility*, ed. Peter A. French (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1972); H. D. Lewis, "Collective Responsibility," *Philosophy* 23, no. 84 (1948).

[15]H. Arendt, "Collective Responsibility," *Amor Mundi*, ed. J. Bernhauer (Dordrecht: M. Nijhoff, 1987), 67-91; J. Angelo Corlett, "Collective Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 32, no. 4 (2001): 573-584; Peter A. French and Howard K. Wettstein, *Shared Intentions and Collective Responsibility*, Midwest Studies in Philosophy (Boston, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2006); Pekka Mäkälä, "Collective Agents and Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38, no. 3 (2007): 456-468; Schweiker, "Radical Interpretation and Moral Responsibility: A Proposal for Theological Ethics," 613-637; Cassie Striblen, "Guilt, Shame, and Shared Responsibility," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38, no. 3 (2007): 465-485; Jere Surber and Peter A. French, "Individual and Corporate Responsibility: Two Alternative Approaches [with Commentary]," *Business & Professional Ethics Journal* 2, no. 4 (1983): 67-91.

[16]The main source of this review is the MA thesis of Philip M. Antin, "There's a Place for 'Us': The Need for the Notion of Collective Responsibility" (University of Arkansas, 2008).

[17]H. D. Lewis, "The Non-Moral Notion of Collective Responsibility," 121.

for this position is that the concept of collective responsibility focuses on group behavior and overlooks the decisions, effort, and behavior of individuals. Lewis's view on collective responsibility seems to be in accord with Navarson's view of collective personality as a moral agent.

Larry May,[18] in his book *Sharing Responsibility*, argues for a different position. He claims that individuals share responsibility for the actions of the group in which they are members, even when they are not direct participants in the action. May, building on the position of existential philosophers (H. Arendt, K. Jaspers, and J. P. Sartre), supports the theory that the moral responsibility of individuals may be imputed *through* group membership. Thus, members of the group may be responsible for the wrongdoing of the church by merely being participants in the group. According to this theory, a twenty-year-old man, a member of the neo-Nazi organization in the twenty-first century, shares the guilt for acts that happened during World War II, because he accepted the attitudes and identity of the group that caused that harm in the past. So, by mere identification with the group, without producing any harm in the twenty-first century, he is still guilty (or he shares guilt) for the harm caused by the Nazi regime in the twentieth century. May, in his concept, establishes a form of individual moral responsibility that is highly responsive toward social and interpersonal relationships.

Peter A. French, who extensively publishes in the field of applied ethics and whose focus is on collective responsibility of corporations (in business and

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[18]L. U. May, *Sharing Responsibility* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1996).

governments),[19] supports the idea of collective moral responsibility. His approach differs

from May's in stressing that moral responsibility is "attributed to groups."[20] He argues

that collectives (corporations) are moral persons and therefore moral agents, which

results in the fact that they can be held morally accountable.

Both May and French are proponents of collective moral responsibility as an

important philosophical and ethical concept. They point to the practical implication of

this concept on applied ethics and they call for further examination of this phenomenon.

In sociology, the alternative term for corporate personality is *collective*

conscience,[21] introduced by Émile Durkheim (1858-1917).[22] This term refers to the

processes of how an autonomous individual identifies with a larger group. It indicates the

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[19]Peter A. French, *Individual and Collective Responsibility: Massacre at My Lai*, Issues in Contemporary Ethics (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Pub. Co., 1972); Peter A. French, *Collective and Corporate Responsibility* (New York: Columbia University, 1984); Peter A. French, *Individual and Collective Responsibility*, 2nd ed. (Rochester, VT: Schenkman Books, 1998); French and Wettstein, *Shared Intentions and Collective Responsibility*. And especially his classical article: Peter A. French, "The Corporation as a Moral Person," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (1979): 207-215.

[20]Antin, "There's a Place for 'US': The Need for the Notion of Collective Responsibility," 23.

[21]Richard Rice uses the term "communal consciousness" with a similar meaning, applying it to the church as the new community of shared thoughts, feelings, and relations, in his book *Believing, Behaving, Belonging: Finding New Love for the Church* (Roseville, CA: The Association of Adventist Forums, 2002), 35-50.

[22]"The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society forms a determinate system with a life of its own. It can be termed the collective or common consciousness." K. Allan, *Explorations in Classical Sociological Theory: Seeing the Social World* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge, 2005), 108.

"shared beliefs, ideas and moral attitudes which operate as an unifying force within society,"[23] where society is not limited and involves any group of people.

Internal and External Collective Responsibility

When speaking about collective responsibility in the context of moral agency, two basic types of collective responsibility can be defined. First, there is a notion directed inside the collective person. In this model, individual members of the group share responsibility (or better, solidarity) for acts of one or more individual members of the same group. (See figure 1.) Even though it is hard to totally isolate the group of people from external interactions, in this model the assumption is made that the behavior of one (or more) member affects (negatively or positively) the whole group. Nonmembers of the group are not explicitly affected by the behavior of members of the group. A good example of this type of collective responsibility (collective solidarity) can be family, church, or a collective of employees.
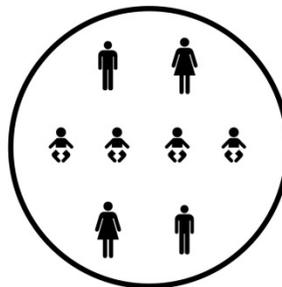
Figure 1. Internal responsibility.

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[23]D. Jary and J. Jary, "Collective Consciousness," *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Sociology* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2005), 53.

In the second, external model of collective responsibility, the behavior of one group or its member(s) affects (does harm to) another group. (See figure 2.) The whole group stands as a moral agent and, even though not all its members are involved in the action of the group, all of them share the responsibility for the action of the group. An example of this type of collective responsibility can be interaction between two families, two religious groups, two nations, etc.
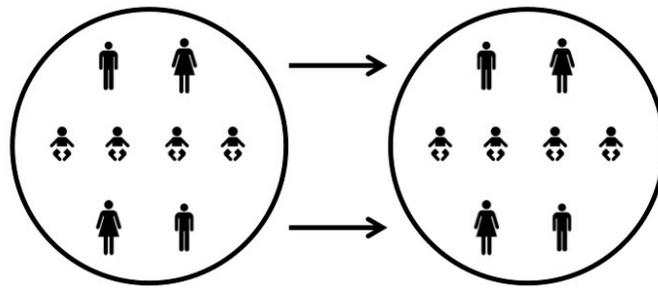
Figure 2. External responsibility.

Individualist and Collectivist Approach to Collective Responsibility

By assigning moral agency to a group, the group receives collective moral responsibility. Group responsibility is responsibility of the group for certain negative (or positive) outcomes. There is a difference between collective responsibility and shared responsibility. Whereas collective (non-distributive) responsibility applies "only to the group considered as a single unit," shared responsibility (distributive) applies "to each member of the group."[24]

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[24]Striblen, "Guilt, Shame, and Shared Responsibility," 471.

Two opposing views of the concept of collective responsibility, the individualistic

and the collectivistic view, differ also in their approach to the question "How is the group

collectively responsible?"

Collectivistic Approach

The collectivistic account of collective responsibility is based on the notion that

the "collective itself is the bearer of the moral responsibility."[25] The most important idea

for this view is that "collectives are capable of bearing moral responsibility for action

and/or outcomes, even if none of their members are in any degree *individually* morally

responsible for those actions and/or outcomes."[26] This approach is refuted by those who

disagree with the concept of collective responsibility, arguing that "it misplaces moral

value."[27] According to the opponents, it is the individual person who is the bearer of

moral value. But the collectivistic approach distributes the responsibility for actions with

negative outcomes evenly on all members of the group. Such a notion is discriminatory,

according to the proponents of the individualistic approach to collective responsibility,

because it prevents one from differentiating between responsible and innocent members

of the group. Striblen concludes that "shared responsibility leads to the absurd result that

all persons are equally responsible, or innocent, regardless of their own actions and

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[25]Mäkäla, "Collective Agents and Moral Responsibility," 456.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Striblen, "Guilt, Shame, and Shared Responsibility," 473.

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motives."[28] Miller and Mäkala conclude that "there is no currently viable defence of the collectivist approach."[29]

Individualistic Approach

The individualistic account of collective responsibility is characterized by responsibility ascribed to individuals. "Each member of the group is individually morally responsible for the outcome of the joint action, but each is individually responsible jointly with others."[30] The individualistic approach attempts to come up with some explanations that can possibly justify the concept of collective responsibility.

Hannah Arendt characterizes collective responsibility by the following definition: "I must be held responsible for something I have not done, and the reason for my responsibility must be my membership in a group (collective) which no voluntary act of mine can dissolve."[31] Two requirements in this definition – to be held responsible for something the person did not do and membership in a *non-voluntary* group – take us to the concept of political responsibility. Political responsibility can be characterized as "the 'price we pay' for living in human community."[32] The nation, family, and race are examples of non-voluntary groups.

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[28]Ibid.

[29]Seumas Miller and Pekka Mäkäla, "The Collectivist Approach to Collective Moral Responsibility," *Metaphilosophy* 36, no. 5 (2005): 649.

[30]Ibid., 634.

[31]Arendt, "Collective Responsibility," 45.

[32]Striblen, "Guilt, Shame, and Shared Responsibility," 474.

The reason why one shares the responsibility of the group is that group members often benefit from actions done by other members in the name of the group.[33] Thus, even when a member of the group does not participate in the harm that the group causes, he/she is a member of the group and possibly receives some benefit. Therefore, he/she takes political responsibility for the actions of the group. Political responsibility does not replace individual moral responsibility.[34] Thus, one's political responsibility can be that he/she pays taxes that support war in Iraq, but at the same time he/she exercises his/her individual moral responsibility by not participating in the war or even by protesting against the war.

Political responsibility can also be characterized as a *vicarious* shared responsibility, where mere "membership in the group is sufficient to ground responsibility."[35] In the concept of *non-vicarious* shared responsibility, it is not enough to be a part of the group, but "some amount of participation in harm doing"[36] is required in order to bear collective responsibility.

In reaction to the harmful results of the group, and during the process of re-evaluation, an emotional reaction is stimulated. "Shame and guilt are the moral emotions most often considered in discussion of group responsibility."[37] C. Striblen in her article

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[33]Ibid., 475.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid., 471. H Arendt holds a *vicarious* sense of shared (collective) responsibility.

[36]Ibid., 475. L. May holds a *non-vicarious* sense of shared (collective) responsibility.

[37]Ibid., 478. See also Nancy Eisenberg, "Emotion, Regulation, and Moral Development," *Annual Review of Psychology* 51 (2000): 665-697; Jonathan Haidt, "The Moral Emotions," in *Handbook of Affective Science* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003).

shows that while in the concept of *vicarious* shared responsibility *shame* is the proper

emotional reaction; in *non-vicarious* shared responsibility it is appropriate for the

members of the group to feel *guilt*.[38]

Collective Responsibility in Selected Ethical Systems

"An ethical system ought to provide a framework by which to guide us to

ethically acceptable actions."[39] When discussing the topic of collective responsibility,

which is closely tied to ethical issues, it is necessary to define at least the basic ethical

systems that determine the actions of the individuals and collectives in ethical situations.

For the purpose of this study, four ethical systems will be discussed: deontological,

teleological, relativism, and virtue.

Deontological Ethical Systems

The deontological ethical systems assert that the action is considered right if it is

in agreement with absolute principles of an individual or a group. In the case of Christian

deontological ethics, absolute principles are determined by God. "Thus, neither the

intention to bring about good results nor the actual results of an act are relevant to

assessing ethical worth. . . . Its basic premise is, 'Act as if the maxim of your action were

to become a universal law of nature.'"[40]

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[38]Striblen, "Guilt, Shame, and Shared Responsibility," 482, 483.

[39]Derek Truscott and Keneth H. Crook, *Ethics for the Practice of Psychology in Canada* (Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta Press, 2004), 3.

[40]Ibid., 4.

The problem with deontological ethics arises mainly in situations when individual ethical principles conflict with each other. The classic example is telling the truth and revealing that Jews are hidden in the house or lying and saving their lives.[41] However, the collective responsibility is usually a strong focus of deontological ethics, especially once the group has reached agreement on the principles which they consider universal and absolute.

Teleological Ethical Systems

The teleological ethical system, known also as consequentialist ethics, bases the decision making on the consequences, on the end to be achieved. There is not one absolute code of ethics, "no action is inherently right or wrong."[42] Each situation is evaluated on the basis of the anticipated outcomes that are derived from the goals of an individual or a group. The most common form of consequentialist ethics extolled in the democratic countries is utilitarianism, which tries to achieve "the greatest good for the greatest number of people" or to make a decision when the action "produces more good consequences than harmful ones."[43]

In the teleological ethical system, collective responsibility is difficult. Different people in the group can aim at different goals since there are not commonly accepted

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[41]A typical example is the case of the Christian community in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, France, which hid Jews, made them counterfeit documents, and helped them escape to neutral Switzerland during World War II. See more in David Clyde Jones, *Biblical Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 125-151.

[42]Scott B. Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 17.

[43]Ibid., 72-73.

universal ethical principles. The leaders of the groups often consider protection of the group to be the most desirable goal. This can be multiplied in strong authoritative leadership, which can consider what is in his/her self-interest (ethical egoism) as the right thing to do. The focus on the final result allows giving up not only principles but also individuals. In the Christian context, the groups/churches adhering to the principles of teleological ethics would sacrifice God's law and God's children to gain personal profit and/or to protect the group.

Relativism

Relativism is an ethical system "in which right and wrong are not absolute and unchanging but relative to one's culture (cultural relativism) or one's own personal preferences (moral subjectivism)."[44] Relativism does not follow any particular fixed principles; instead, relativism "argues that whatever a cultural group approves of becomes right; whatever the group disapproves of is wrong."[45] In today's society (especially in the Western world) there is significant movement toward cultural relativism based on multiculturalism.

Another form of relativism is "situation ethics," which says that "all morality is relative to the situation in which one finds oneself, and one's moral obligation is to do the loving thing in that situation."[46] The problem is that love is defined in the utilitarian sense with no absolute principles.

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[44]Ibid., 18.

[45]James P. Eckman, *Biblical Ethics: Choosing Right in a World Gone Wrong*, Biblical Essentials Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 12-13.

[46]Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*, 85-86.

In relativism a group of people (ethnic group, political party, etc.) follows their

own rules and ethical values, which can come to the conflict with the values and even the

human rights of another groups. This behavior brings dangerous situations. A cautionary

example can be the Nazi "cultural relativism."

> If culture decides the validity of moral behavior, we really cannot condemn any
> acceptable action within its own culture. For example, the Nazis were acting quite
> consistently within their cultural worldview. They believed Jews were a threat to their
> perfect Aryan race. Therefore, to rid European civilization of Jews was logically
> consistent within their cultural norms. Following cultural relativism, can Nazism be
> condemned?[47]

Collective responsibility in this ethical system can be relativized, especially when

it conflicts with another group.[48] As in the case of utilitarianism, the problem could be

multiplied by authoritative leadership. Individual relativism of an authoritative leader can

cause harm to the whole group by promoting his/her individual preferences.

Consequently, in case that group with such a leader, following his/her agenda, causes

harm to another group of people, the acting group is collectively responsible for such

harm.

Virtue Ethical System

The virtue ethical system is character oriented. "Virtue ethics cannot be reduced

to a particular rule for right action. This is the basic distinction between an act-based

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[47]Eckman, *Biblical Ethics: Choosing Right in a World Gone Wrong*, 13.

[48]James Eckman gives this illustration: "Professor Robert Simon, who has been teaching philosophy for twenty years at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, indicates that his students acknowledge the Holocaust occurred but cannot bring themselves to say that killing millions of people was wrong. Between 10 percent and 20 percent deplore what the Nazis did, but their disapproval is expressed as a matter of taste or personal preference, not of moral judgment. One student told Simon, 'Of course I dislike the Nazis, but who is to say they are wrong?'" Ibid., 14.

system and a character-based system."[49] Therefore, its goals are not actions that would develop human character and improve the human. Its decisions are not based on absolute principles. Absolute principles are "obvious to those with a virtuous character."[50]

The biggest difference between virtue ethics and the teleological and deontological ethical systems is that right or wrong is not seen as a set of principles or decided on the basis of the results. The lack of categorical imperative does not exclude the fact that virtue ethics has some goals and ideals for human beings. Because the goals have to be discerned by the individuals, the stress is put on the disposition of the human agent. "The agent must be held accountable, not only for what he does, but also for how he feels about it."[51]

<div align="center">Summary</div>

A brief review of the four ethical systems shows that, for the purpose of collective responsibility, the deontological ethical system brings the most consistent decision-making process and, when based on God's moral law, they can eliminate the harm to other groups. Individual responsibility of members fully devoted to strong (absolute, coming from outside of the group) moral principles, in combination with collective structure based on accountability of individual members to each other, can lead to suitable collective responsibility.

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[49]James Delaney, *Rousseau and the Ethics of Virtue* (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 152.

[50]Ibid., 153.

[51]Ibid., 154.

The teleological ethical system and relativism, with all its variability, bring problems in collective responsibility with different interests (goals, situations, and preferences) of individual members of the group. In these ethical systems, the role of a leader is significant. His/her goals can vary from the goals of other members of the group and yet he/she can make decisions and take responsibility for the actions of the whole group. In this case, the principle of collective responsibility does not diminish the responsibility (shame or guilt) of the members of the group. This is the reason why teleological and "relativistic ethical systems are inadequate moral guides."[52]

Collective Punishment

One of the most controversial topics in philosophy and ethics is the institute of collective punishment (collective retribution), which is almost always considered as unacceptable in today's society. The concept of collective punishment is often connected to a time of war or social tensions, ethnic hatred, or economic sanctions and presupposes collective guilt. Tragic experiences with the execution of collective punishment through history lead to avoidance of this concept. Punishment of the whole group of people because of wrong actions of part of the group or individuals can result in injustice. While collective responsibility can lead to understandable feelings of shame or guilt, the idea of collective punishment is disproportional. That is the reason why collective punishment is recognized as a war crime. Article 33 in Part III (Status and Treatment of Protected Persons) of the 4th Geneva Convention from August 12, 1949, says:

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[52]Eckman, *Biblical Ethics: Choosing Right in a World Gone Wrong*, 13.

No persons may be punished for an offense he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited.

Pillage is prohibited.

Reprisals against persons and their property are prohibited.[53]

The official commentary on this article says: "Responsibility is personal and it will no longer be possible to inflict penalties on persons who have themselves not committed the acts complained of."[54] The reasons for avoiding collective responsibility were acts of injustice against big groups of people during and after World War II.

From the ethical point of view, punishment should be individualistic rather than collectivistic. Collective punishment "is a source of a good deal of the injustice in our society. It is very closely related to discrimination by race, religion, sex, age, and mental or physical handicap."[55]

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[53]ICRC, *The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 2012), 162.

[54]ICRC, "Convention (IV) Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949," International Committee of the Red Cross, http://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/1a13044f3bbb5b8ec12563fb0066f226/36bd41f14e2b3809c12563cd0042bca9 (accessed May 30, 2013). Commentary also says: "This does not refer to punishments inflicted under penal law, i.e. sentences pronounced by a court after due process of law, but penalties of any kind inflicted on persons or entire groups of persons, in defiance of the most elementary principles of humanity, for acts that these persons have not committed." This is progress from Article 50 of the Hauge Regulations from October 18, 1907, which did not avoid passive responsibility of the community. See ICRC, "Convention (IV) Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and Its Annex: Regulations Concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land. The Hague, 18 October 1907," International Committee of the Red Cross, http://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/4e473c7bc8854f2ec12563f60039c738/b2d5c9bd27f0dc51c12563cd005168fb (accessed May 30, 2013).

[55]Jacques P. Thiroux, *Ethics: Theory and Practice* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995), 137.

Tragic Examples of Collective Punishment

Examples from the history of collective punishment are sad and painful and show human corruption, cruelty, and inability to exercise just acts.

At the beginning of World War II, there were around 3.1 million people of German ethnicity living in Czechoslovakia. During World War II, many of them died or fled to Germany and Austria before the end of the war. According to the so-called "Beneš decrees" issued between 1945 and 1947, 2.6 million inhabitants of German ethnicity were expelled from Czechoslovakia and transferred to Germany and Austria. This act, which was approved by the Allied powers at the Potsdam Conference in 1945, is today described as an "ethnic cleansing" or as a crime against humanity.[56]

Another example from recent history is the removal of almost 120,000 U.S. citizens of Japanese descent to federal internment camps during World War II. The freedom of these people was taken without formal charges or trials. The reason behind these acts was that, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese-Americans were a possible security threat to the U.S., since they claimed it was impossible to tell those who were loyal from the disloyal. The presuppositions generalized to all ethnic groups were that Japanese-Americans felt more loyalty to their country of descent based on "racial solidarity" than to the U.S.[57]

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[56]For more details, see "German-Czech Declaration on Mutual Relations and Their Future Development," in *The Czech Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Jan Bažant, Nina Bažantová, and Frances Starn (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 489-492.

[57]Carol W. Lewis and Stuart C. Gilman, *The Ethics Challenge in Public Service: A Problem-Solving Guide* (San Francisco, CA: Wiley, 2012), 185.

Both of these examples show that, even though corporate responsibility is not an officially proclaimed set of beliefs and moral standards, people tend to approach and judge people groups as one moral body, especially in times of crisis.

Toward the Justification of Collective Punishment

Even though collective punishment is mostly denied, there are those who claim individual cases where collective punishment is applicable.

An example of a modern type of collective punishment can be the lustration[58] scheme in the Czech Republic after the Velvet Revolution in 1989. Even though there are critics[59] of this notion, it is considered as a possibly fair collective punishment. Kirsten Fisher argues that lustration "is attractive as justifiable collective punishment. Lustration schemes address the tension between striking at the collective structure that made atrocity possible and respecting the principle of individual accountability, as far as possible."[60] Fisher continues, that "[a] benefit of lustration is that it punishes those with political agency, not children or the mentally impaired."[61]

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[58]Lustration is the process that regulates the involvement of former informants of the Communists' secret police in some political and civil service positions (government, justice, etc.)

[59]Former Charter 77 representative, Petr Uhl, argues that lustration laws are unacceptable: "Even though the official justification for the lustration act consisted of concerns that unsuitable people would infiltrate the state administration and cause harm, nobody believed this. Everyone understood the lustration act as a form of extra-judicial punishment for former StB collaborators. It actually affected them more than those who had been regular employees, who could continue to work under certain conditions or on the basis of special exceptions if they stayed at the Interior Ministry." Petr Blažek, "Transitions to Democracy and the 'Lustration' Screening Process," *Transformation: The Czech Experience* (Praha: People in Need, 2006), 178.

[60]Kirsten Fisher, "Collective Responsibility and Vollective Punishment," *Moral Accountability and International Criminal Law: Holding Agents of Atrocity Accountable to the World* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 184.

[61]Ibid., 185.

The problem with collective punishment for nations or big groups of people is that, obviously, innocent people are impacted by such a punishment. George Fletcher, in his book *Romantics at War* (in connection to German guilt for the Holocaust), argues that it is good to reject the idea that "guilt passes from generation to generation."[62] To make, for example, the nation responsible for certain harm leads "to the problem of 'too much guilt'"[63] because "the passing of guilt from the one generation to the next leads to the conclusion that some children are born guilty and others, of other nations, are not."[64] The other extreme that focuses on individual responsibility, leads according Fletcher, to "too little guilt." According Jeff McMahan, "Fletcher . . . suggests that there could be a justification for collective responsibility for a culture that sanctions terrorism and nurtures terrorists, despite our uncomfortable sense, possibly fallible, that it would be unjust to punish people for acts committed by others."[65] Fletcher does not reject collective punishment that "implies the arbitrary punishment of some people not for what they have done but simply because they are members of the same group."[66] According to Fletcher, it seems that justifiable collective punishment is that type of punishment that is "directed against the collective itself rather than against all the individuals who together

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[62]George P. Fletcher, *Romantics at War: Glory and Guilt in the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 147.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid., 140.

[65]Jeff McMahan, "Collective Crime and Collective Punishment," *Criminal Justice Ethics* 27, no. 1 (2008): 8.

[66]Fletcher, *Romantics at War: Glory and Guilt in the Age of Terrorism*, 156.

constitute the collective."[67] In this case, the guilt will pass to the next generation, but "not necessarily to individuals but to the nation as a whole."[68]

There is a huge gap between recognizing collective responsibility or collective guilt and the practice of collective punishment for such an act. It is even more difficult when a situation of war or terrorism is in question. McMahan concludes, with a sad paradox, that

> when unjust wars are fought and vast numbers of innocent people are slaughtered, it usually turns out, by some sort of legal alchemy, that no one is responsible, no one is guilty, no one is liable, and no one is punished—a happy outcome for all those whose guilt is reciprocally diminished by the guilt of others until there is none left for anyone at all.[69]

Conclusion

From the previous review, the following conclusions regarding collective personality and collective responsibility can be formulated:

1. A moral agent is a person with the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, with the freedom to make moral judgments, and with the ability to be accountable for these actions.

2. A group of people (collective person) can be considered as a moral agent under one of the following conditions: (a) The group has a leading or representative body; (b) Members of the group have shared interests or needs in common; and (c) Members of the group hold shared attitudes that produce harm and require acceptance by others. Most

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[67]McMahan, "Collective Crime and Collective Punishment," 9.

[68]Fletcher, *Romantics at War: Glory and Guilt in the Age of Terrorism*, 143.

[69]McMahan, "Collective Crime and Collective Punishment," 11.

scholars agree that the collective person is a moral agent and therefore holds (collective) responsibility for its actions.

3. Although the highly criticized collectivistic approach to collective responsibility brings problems because it misplaces moral values by excluding individual moral responsibility for the action of the group, the individualistic approach justifies collective responsibility by distinguishing between political and moral responsibility.

4. Whereas vicarious shared responsibility considers membership in the group as sufficient to ground responsibility, non-vicarious shared responsibility requires participation of the members in the action of the group in order to hold them responsible for the action of the group.

5. If the group promoted a harmful action toward another group or individual, emotions are involved in the process of re-evaluation. Although shame is the proper emotion in the model of *vicarious* shared responsibility, in the model of non-vicarious shared responsibility guilt is the proper emotion.

6. The deontological ethical system, with an emphasis on God's law, seems to be the most appropriate ethical system, not just for individual decision making, but because it can lead to consistent collective responsibility.

In connection with the topic of this study, it is too early to tie all these concepts to the church. Thus far, it can be concluded that the church is a moral agent because it demonstrates at least two conditions required for the group of people to be a moral agent: The church has a leading body and its members have shared interests/goals. The members of the church often receive benefits from their membership, in the form of moral, spiritual, or even financial support, so they share political responsibility for the action of

the church. However, mere membership in the church results in collective responsibility and can lead to shame for the wrongdoings of the church. Guilt as a moral emotion is appropriate for the members of the church if they actively participate in the wrongdoing of the church. Because of the church's focus on God's law, the deontological ethical system, when properly collectively applied, can protect the church from wrong moral decisions. Chapter 3 will focus on the biblical teaching about the topic of collective responsibility and its application to the church.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL STUDY OF COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the concept of collective responsibility

from the biblical perspective. This will be done in three steps: (1) a brief review of the

basic theological approaches to collective personality and responsibility, (2) a study of

two key biblical texts that are discussed in the context of collective responsibility, and (3)

a biblical study of the key theological terms connected to collective responsibility and

collective punishment.

Corporate Personality: Basic Theological Approaches

The concept of corporate personality as a part of Christian theology was first

articulated and later popularized by Henry Wheeler Robinson in his book *Corporate*

Personality in Ancient Israel. Robinson used the term *corporate personality* in order to

interpret those texts in the Hebrew Bible where certain corporate types of Israelite

religion and culture (such as punishing apparently innocent people, for example, family

members) are presented. The following famous statement characterizes Robinson's view

of corporate personality:

> The larger or smaller group was accepted without question as a unity; legal
> prescription was replaced by the fact or fiction of the blood-tie, usually traced back to
> a common ancestor. The whole group, including its past, present, and future

members, might function as a single individual through any one of those members conceived as representative of it. Because it was not confined to the living, but included the dead and the unborn, the group could be conceived as living forever.[1]

Robinson's concept of *corporate personality* was originally based on the developmental theories of the society. Henry Sumner Maine (1822-1888) pointed to primitive Indo-European societies as the aggregation of families (or groups) where "the individual's rights and duties were not defined vis-à-vis society; only those of his family were so defined."[2] Robinson proposed the same primitive condition in the Old Testament, which later became a common theological concept.[3] This view was represented by an evolutionary model,[4] which assumed that primitive, regressive religion based on corporate ideas was later changed into progressive religion based on individualistic

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[1]Henry W. Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1980), 25.

[2]Henry Orenstein, "The Ethnological Theories of Henry Sumner Maine," *American Anthropologist*, no. 70 (1968): 264-276.

[3]"In early Israelite thought the clan or the family was the fundamental unit, not the individual. The life (nepeš) of the individuals made up the life of the group; the life of the group was extended through all the individuals. This psychological conception has been termed corporate personality (Wheeler Robinson) or group consciousness (Radcliffe Brown), and helps to explain how one person could symbolize a group of people (2 Sa. 18:3) or the presence of God (Ex. 7:1)." A. A. Jones, *New Bible Dictionary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), s.v. "Symbol."

[4]There are also others who built their theories about corporate personality upon the evolutionary anthropological model: K. Koch, "Gibt Es Ein Vergeltungsdogma Im Alten Testament," *Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*, no. 52 (1955): 1-42. This article was translated and reprinted as "Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament," *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, ed. J. L. Crenshaw (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983). A. R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1949); K. Fahlgren, *Sedaka, Nahestehende Und Entgegengesetzte Begriffe Im Alten Testament* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiskell, 1932).

ideas.[5] Kaminski, in his research, concludes: "Sometimes this has even been described as a chronological development that demonstrates a growth from a less developed to a more developed theology."[6]

Even though the concept of collective personality is still considered the best explanation of corporate notions in the Old Testament, the evolutionary approach, based on anthropological theories, was rejected not just by theologians,[7] but also by anthropologists.[8] Davidson points out that "building upon then-current historical and anthropological theories that are now discarded, Robinson has been rightly criticized by recent scholars."[9] Contemporary scholarship rejects "an evolutionary model that suggests a steady progression from earlier corporate ideas toward later individualistic ones."[10]

Today, the research focuses on acknowledgment that both corporate and individualistic ideas can be found not only in older biblical books, but also in those written toward the end of the Old Testament period, and that this concept can be found

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[5]Joel S. Kaminski, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 22.

[6]Ibid., 188.

[7]Among those who rejected an evolutionary model that promotes continual progress from collective notions toward individualistic ideas are: P. Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel* (Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 1989); G. U. Matties, *Ezekiel 18 and the Rhetoric of Moral Discourse* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990). Regarding critics of Robinson's view, see J. W. Rogerson, "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality," *Journal of Theological Studies*, no. 21 (1970): 1-16.

[8]For more see Joel S. Kaminski, "Joshua 7 and Corporate Punishment," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* (1995): 323.

[9]Richard M. Davidson, "Corporate Solidarity in the Old Testament" (2004), http://www.gospelstudygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/corporate-solidarity-in-OT.pdf.

[10]Kaminski, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*, 28.

even in the New Testament. In the exegetical studies, the main focus is on texts from

Ezek 18 and 20, where individualistic and collective concepts of responsibility overlap.[11]

In the research, stress is given to the individualistic approach to moral

responsibility and thus the corporate approach is weakened. As Kaminski concludes,

"Many scholars downplayed the importance of texts that contain corporate ideas of

retribution and highlighted those passages that advocate a more individualized form of

divine retribution."[12]

Collective Responsibility in the Old Testament: Joshua 7 and Ezekiel 18

In postmodern society, fair distribution of reward and punishment is expected. It

is expected that for wrongdoing, punishment will come according to the amount of harm

or damage that was done. The same is true about reward and its distribution. With these

presuppositions, it could be hard for one to read in Scriptures about collective

responsibility and thus about "unfair" distribution of reward and punishment, when one

views God as the personification of justice. The very first conversation about God's

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[11]G. N. U. Alaribe, *Ezekiel 18 and the Ethics of Responsibility: A Study in Biblical Interpretations and Christian Ethics*, Arbeiten Zu Text Und Sprache Im Alten Testament, vol. 77 (St. Ottilien: Eos Verlag Erzabtei, 2006); Barnabas Lindars, "Ezekiel and Individual Responsibility," *Vetus Testamentum* 15, no. 4 (1965): 452-467; Jurrien Mol, *Collective and Individual Responsibility: A Description of Corporate Personality in Ezekiel 18 and 20* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); K. L. Wong, *The Idea of Retribution in the Book of Ezekiel*, Supplement to Vetus Testamentum, vol. 87 (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

[12]Kaminski, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*, 188.

justice is presented in the story where Abraham intercedes for Sodom (Gen 18:22-33).[13]

He is pleading for the righteous one to be treated justly.

In this section, two key texts, which are discussed in connection with collective responsibility, are reviewed. Joshua 7 is usually considered as a text with a strong focus on collective responsibility and collective punishment, whereas Ezek 18 is usually understood as the one that opposes the concept of collective responsibility.

Joshua 7

(1) But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel. . . . (4) So about three thousand men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai, (5) and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water. . . . (11) Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. (12) That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction. . . . (24) And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. (25) And Joshua said, Why did you bring trouble on us? The Lord brings trouble on you today. And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. (Josh 7:1, 4, 5, 24, 25 ESV)

The verses in Josh 7 are some of the most discussed texts in connection with corporate punishment, and thus in connection to collective (shared) responsibility.[14] After

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[13]"Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (Gen 18:25 ESV).

[14]For contemporary research about this text, see Kaminski, "Joshua 7 and Corporate Punishment."

the successful conquest of Jericho, Achan disobeyed God's command (Josh 6:18) and took what was forbidden.

The text suggests three areas that were impacted by Achan's sin: (1) Thirty-six men were killed in the battle against Ai (vv. 4-5); (2) the Lord refused to stay with the Israelites (vv. 11-12);[15] and (3) innocent family members and animals were executed (vv. 24-25).

According to the developmental theory, based on evolutionary anthropology represented by Robinson, Achan's family was executed "due to an inability on the part of ancient Israelites to distinguish between the individual and the group."[16] As was stated earlier in this chapter, the developmental theory was recently rejected by scholars. At the same time, scholars did not reject the concept of collective responsibility. "The principle of community solidarity may be involved here, so that the social focus is on the group rather than the individual, the sins of the individual being seen as involving the group."[17]

In further research of the text, the aspect of holiness can be seen as an appropriate explanation of why all Israel was involved in the sin of Achan.[18] God commanded the Israelites to be holy. The reason was God's holiness (Lev 11:44, 45) and God's intention to live among them (Exod 25:8; Lev 29:45, 46). God's presence required from the

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[15]Richard M. Davidson, *In the Footsteps of Joshua* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 75.

[16]Kaminski, "Joshua 7 and Corporate Punishment," 322-323.

[17]Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, Word Biblical Commentaty, vol. 7 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1998), 86. See also *SDABC,* "We see an example of such corporate responsibility in the intercourse of nations." "Committed a trespass" [Josh 7:1], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (*SDABC*) (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976), 2:205.

Israelites a high standard of life. The Israelites' wars were considered not their own, but God's (Josh 5:14; 6:16; 10:42; 11:19, 20). "God's initial plan did not include the physical involvement of Israel in warfare. However, on account of her unbelief, participation in war became both the test of faithfulness and the means of fostering her trust in God."[19] This was the reason that all the plunder of the Israelites belonged to God (6:17). He was their sovereign and could decide what to do with the spoils. In this case, חֵרֶם (devoted things, ban, what was banned)[20] was appointed both for destruction ("the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction" 6:17, 18) and to be קֹדֶשׁ (holy) to the Lord ("all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD" 6:19). Achan violated both of God's commands by taking a "beautiful cloak" and "silver, and a bar of gold" (7:21). Achan's sin was an attack on the Israelites' holiness, which was "the essential characteristic of the Israelite nation.[21]

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[18]See J. R. Porter, "The Legal Aspects of the Concept of 'Corporate Personality' in the Old Testament," *Vetus Testamentum*, no. 15 (1965): 361-380.

[19]Barna Magyarosi, *Holy War and Cosmic Conflict in the Old Testament: From Exodus to the Exile* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2010), 152.

[20]The word חרם describes everything that is devoted to God because of His command. Things that were חרם belonged to the Lord (Lev 27:21, 28-29) and therefore they were "considered most holy by God. . . . They are to be given to the priests." "Usually חרם means a ban for utter destruction, the compulsory dedication of something which impedes or resists God's work, which is considered to be accursed before God." Leon J. Wood, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), s.v. "חֵרֶם." It seems that חרם "sometimes appears to be a voluntary practice undertaken by the Israelites (Lev. 27.28; Num. 21.2) and other times it seems to be commanded by God (Deut. 20.17; Josh. 6.17-18)." Kaminski, "Joshua 7 and Corporate Punishment," 329.

[21]Porter, "The Legal Aspects of the Concept of 'Corporate Personality' in the Old Testament," 371.

Violation of the covenantal relationship was directly punishable by the Lord.[22] By violating God's command regarding חֵרֶם, the whole of Israel became "unclean." Baruch A. Levine, in his study of ancient Israel, points out that "one becoming impure as the result of an offense against the deity introduced a kind of demonic contagion into the community. . . . This person required purification if the community was to be restored to its ritual state, which, in turn, was a precondition set down by the resident deity for his continued presence among the people."[23] Kaminski points out that it was required of the whole community to do everything in order "to avoid polluting themselves or their land. . . . If a breach of the purity rules occurred, the community as a whole must first determine what offence was committed and then identify the sinner."[24] The way to earn back purity for the community included one or a combination of the following acts: bringing a sacrifice, paying a fine, making a confession, and sometimes even eliminating the transgressor from the community "by either excommunication or execution."[25]

In this case, no purification was possible because the direct command regarding destruction was given by God: "Keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it" (Josh 6:18 ESV). This was the

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[22]A. Phillips, *Ancient Israel's Criminal Law: A New Approach to the Decalogue* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 32.

[23]Baruch A. Levin, *In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 75.

[24]Kaminski, "Joshua 7 and Corporate Punishment," 341. A similar argument is used by Porter: "The punishment is hardly a matter of strict legal retribution at all; rather, it is a question of expunging the entire source of infection from the nation." Porter, "The Legal Aspects of the Concept of 'Corporate Personality' in the Old Testament," 369.

reason the death of Achan was required. The nature of the death of Achan and his

household by burning (Josh 7:16) confirms the significance of the nature of his sin. The

Israelites "had to be withdrawn from the ordinary world of men in the same way that the

city of Jericho itself had been."[26] The reason for this was that "the contact with the holy

and devoted object . . . physically transmitted to them the same quality."[27] By the

punishment of Achan, "the distinction between holy and common"[28] was restored.

Summary

Achan's sin was a transgression of God's direct command with explicitly

specified consequences. His death is therefore not objected to. The destructive impact on

his family was most probably the result of a combination of two factors: (1) consideration

of a man's family members as his extended property (and zone of his direct power and

responsibility)[29] and (2) the influence of חֵרֶם on objects around it.

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[25]Kaminski, "Joshua 7 and Corporate Punishment," 341.

[26]Porter, "The Legal Aspects of the Concept of 'Corporate Personality' in the Old Testament," 370.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Magyarosi, *Holy War and Cosmic Conflict in the Old Testament: From Exodus to the Exile*, 159.

[29]For further discussion, see the following three quotes written by Ellen G. White. The first quote considers the perishing of Achan's family as an effect of the disobedience of the whole family, as if everybody in the family was involved in the transgression. The second speaks about the character of sin and how it opposes God's holiness. The third one is about shared accountability.
"Have you considered why it was that all who were connected with Achan were also subjects of the punishment of God? It was because they had not been trained and educated according to the directions given them in the great standard of the law of God. Achan's parents had educated their son in such a way that he felt free to disobey the word of the Lord. The principles inculcated in his life led him to deal with his children in such a way that they also were corrupted. Mind acts and reacts upon mind, and the punishment, which included the relations of

The death of thirty-six soldiers was a result of God's "excommunication" of Israel. God required destruction of חֵרֶם and consecration of all the people, otherwise He assured the Israelites: "I will be with you no more" (Josh 7:12 ESV). "Achan robbed the whole nation of the purity and holiness which it ought to possess before God. This sense of corporate solidarity is also found in the designation of sin as a 'folly in Israel' (v. 15)."[30]

In this story, one man committed a serious crime, but the whole community was affected. One has to be careful because of the consequences of his/her action (individual responsibility) and the community should be aware of the possibly terrible impact of the sin of individuals on the whole group (corporate guilt), especially when things that are God's special consideration (holiness) are in the task. Our actions influence people. If the consequences cannot be seen immediately, that does not mean that they will not come. If someone's action leads to hardship or even death of a person in ten years, a consequence that we might not connect with the action, it is not less serious than the immediate death, as it is in Achan's story.

Achan with himself, reveals the fact that all were involved in the transgression." Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954), 234.

"God Demands Clean Lives—There are many in this day that would designate Achan's sin as of little consequence, and would excuse his guilt; but it is because they have no realization of the character of sin and its consequences, no sense of the holiness of God and of His requirements. The statement is often heard that God is not particular whether or not we give diligent heed to His Word, whether or not we obey all the commandments of His holy law; but the record of His dealing with Achan should be a warning to us. He will in no wise clear the guilty." Ellen G. White, "The Conditions of Strength," *Review and Herald,* March 20, 1888, 1-2.

"God's command had been disregarded by one of those appointed to execute His judgments. And the nation was held accountable for the guilt of the transgressor." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1890), 494.

[30]Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 120.

Ezekiel 18

The word of the Lord came to me: What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, declares the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. (Ezek 18:1-3 ESV)

Yet you say, Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father? When the son has done what is just and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live. The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. (Ezek 18:19-21 ESV)

Yet you say, The way of the Lord is not just. Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. (Ezek 18:25-26 ESV)

While the text in Josh 7 represents one of the strongest examples of corporate

personality and collective (or shared) responsibility in the Bible, the text in Ezek 18 is

often represented as the one that contradicts this concept by focusing on individual

responsibility. That is why this chapter is seen as radical and innovative.[31] Still others see

Ezek 18 as a corrective to the corporate thinking presented in the older biblical books.[32]

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[31]"Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, at the start of the sixth century, accept a doctrine limiting even divine retribution to the individual." Baruch Halpern, "Jerualem and the Lineages in the Seventh Century BCE: Kinship and the Rise of Individual Moral Liability," *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel*, ed. Baruch Halpern and Deborah W. Hobson (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 14-15. "[The] individualistic trend is particularly evident in Ezekiel and can best be studied in his sayings about individual repentance." Johannes Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 387. See also Kaminski, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*, 139-140. See also Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1962), 392-393.

[32]"He [Ezekiel] does not give us a new doctrine of individual responsibility. But we shall see that he adds a new dimension to thought about both individuals and nation alike." Lindars, "Ezekiel and Individual Responsibility," 461.

The developmental theory, based on evolutionary anthropology, explains this shift with a time aspect. The argument says that Joshua is an old book and, therefore, it contains a strong emphasis on corporate personality and collective responsibility, and thus verifies the developmental theory. On the other hand, the chapter from the younger book, Ezekiel, emphasizes individual responsibility.[33] Contemporary studies of this phenomenon disprove the developmental theory and show that both principles, collective and individual, are integrally present in the book of Ezekiel.[34]

Ezekiel 18 starts with God's question regarding the proverb (18:2) commonly used in Israel "as a sarcastic and cynical mockery of the system of divine 'righteousness' that would punish children for the guilt of their parents."[35] The principle behind this complaint is called "transgenerational accountability" and can be seen as an expansion to the concept of shared responsibility. Transgenerational accountability means that "the present generation is paying the penalty for the errors or sins of previous generations."[36] This concept was common in the ancient Near East[37] and is also a fundamental element of Scriptures.

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[33]See "Ezekiel 18:2" in A. Berlin, M. Z. Brettler, and M. A. Fishbane, *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[34]"Ezek 18 combines corporate and individual dimensions of personality in a way that is not contradictory." Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, New American Commentary, vol. 17 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 189.

[35]Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24*, New International Commentary to the Old Testament (NICOT) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 558.

[36]Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, 1998), 270.

[37]"In the face of a severe plague that was sweeping his land, the fourteenth-century Hittite king Muršiliš II complained to the Hattian storm god: 'My father sinned and transgressed against the word of the Hattian Storm-god, my lord. But I have not sinned in any respect. It is only too

Even though a similar saying (proverb) can be found in Jer 31:29 and Lam 5:7, the concept itself is frequently used throughout Scriptures[38] and is part of the Decalogue: "I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me"[39] (Exod 20:5 ESV). At the same time, the concept of individual responsibility for one's deeds instead of transgenerational accountability is not new to the Pentateuch. As early as Deuteronomy, this principle can be found: "Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut 24:16 ESV). Therefore, the developmental theory cannot be proved, as both transgenerational accountability and individual responsibility concepts are used throughout the Old Testament (Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings).

Part of the understanding of this principle is based on consequences. The *SDABC* explains this principle of transgenerational accountability in the following words:

> No one can escape completely the consequences of dissipation, disease, profligacy, evil doing, ignorance, and bad habits handed down by preceding generations. The descendants of degraded idolaters and the offspring of evil and vicious men generally begin life under the handicap of physical and moral sin, and harvest the fruit of seed sown by their parents.[40]

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true, however, that the father's sin falls upon the son. So, my father's sin has fallen upon me.'" James B. U. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Universty Press, 1950), 395.

[38]Exod 34:7; Num 14:18; Ps 109:14; Isa 65:6, 7; Jer 32:18.

[39]"Those who hate me" refers to the children.

[40]"Visiting the iniquity" [Exod 20:5], *SDABC*, 1:603. "It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrongdoing, but they are not punished for the parents' guilt, except as they participate in their sins. It is usually the case, however, that children walk in the steps of their parents. By inheritance and example the sons become partakers of the father's sin. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son, to the third and fourth generation. This

In this understanding, the meaning of Exod 20:5 (and Deut 5:9) could be best explained in these words: "I bring the consequences of the sin of those who hate me upon their sons, grandsons and great-grandsons."[41]

What is really in question is God's justice. The exiles say that God does not act justly. They say that the Decalogue's principle (Exod 20:5) is not fair, when God punishes them because of the sins of their fathers. This is a twisting of the second commandment. "The Decalogue statement had originally been intended as a proleptic warning to adults to guard their conduct because of the implications of their actions for their children."[42]

Individual Responsibility in Ezekiel 18

The importance of this chapter is in God's answer to the desperate situation of the exiles in Babylon.[43] The exiles were distressed by their situation, knowing that it would go from bad to worse (Ezek 5:12; 6:9). The national catastrophe had yet to culminate in the destruction of the temple in 586/587 BC (Jer 52:6-7). Not knowing this in the time of Ezek 18, their arguments about God's injustice would imply their self-righteousness. They simply would not feel sinful enough to be punished by exile. God's stress on the significance of personal responsibility would be an attempt to lead them to repentance.

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fearful truth should have a solemn power to restrain men from following a course of sin." White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 306.

[41]Noel D. Osborn and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus*, UBS Handbook Series (New York, NY: United Bible Society, 1999), 474.

[42]Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24*, 559.

[43]Ezekiel was taken to captivity in 597 BC (second wave of exiles; 2 Kgs 24:12-16) and he was called to the prophetic office in 592 BC (Ezek 1:1-2).

Into this situation God sends a significant and powerful message reinforced by strong words: "As I live, declares the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel" (Ezek 18:3 ESV). What continues is an explanation of these words by mentioning three generations: (1) A righteous man (first generation; 18:5-9), (2) his violent son (second generation; 18:10-13), and (3) the righteous son of the violent father (third generation; 18:14-18). Focusing on five characteristics of the righteous person,[44] God distinguishes the results of three judgments upon three people who succeeded one another. A righteous man will surely live (v. 9), his wicked son will surely die (v. 13), and the righteous son of the wicked father will surely live (v. 17). Everyone is individually responsible for his own destiny by acting (or not acting) according to God's requirements.

From what was just said, it seems that the text (18:1-20) disproves the notion that there is any transfer of sin and punishment from generation to generation. Kaminski concludes regarding individual responsibility in the following words: "Verses 21-32 appear to go even further, advocating that even within a single generation, neither previous merits nor debits carry any power. A person is judged as an autonomous individual exclusively by his or her current state of behavior."[45]

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[44]Five ethical characteristics for God's judgment mentioned in Ezek 18: (1) Righteous and just person; (2) The worship of Yahweh only; (3) Marital and moral purity; (4) Good neighbor; (5) Respect for human and divine law. Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 190.

[45]Kaminski, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*, 162.

Collective Responsibility in Ezekiel 18

To explain Ezek 18 by mere individual responsibility brings some major

objections:

1. Other passages in Ezekiel support the idea of corporate solidarity, when

innocent people suffer with the guilty ones (9:5-6; 20:23-26; 21:8-9; 24:21).

2. Ezekiel addresses his message to the community (House of Israel, see 18:25,

29, 30, and 31), not to the individuals.

One cannot exclude this chapter from the rest of the book and from the rest of the

metanarrative. Cooper focuses the reader on this broader picture: "Ezekiel's goal was to

reconstruct Israel as the holy people of God. Such a community would have to be created

on the basis of individual choice. So it is through the commitment of the individual that

the social and religious orders are to be saved."[46] Through Ezekiel, God tries to convince

the Israelites in exile to take responsibility for their current status.[47] Two times God

compares His justice with their injustice (Ezek 18:25b and 29b). Repentance is the only

way for restoration of the nation. In the future, the element of restoration will be always

connected with the collective aspect of responsibility expressed in confession. Therefore,

the focus on repentance and assurance that there is forgiveness should motivate people to

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[46]Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 189.

[47]"We have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. 6 We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land" (Dan 9:5-6 ESV). "Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly. Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept your law or paid attention to your commandments and your warnings that you gave them" (Neh 9:33-34 ESV). "Both we and our fathers have sinned; we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedness" (Psa 106:6 ESV).

think about their sins and confess them. That is the only way for restoration of the nation, which is, as was said, God's goal.[48]

Ezekiel is not a systematic theologian. He speaks to the situation of the people who struggle in exile. As a prophet, Ezekiel "is *responsible* to God for the lives of his fellow citizens, because everyone needs to hear the last appeal before impending judgment strikes."[49] (See Ezek 3:16-5:4.) He urges them to repent and live a righteous life as the only way to restore the nation. "It was the corporate group (the 'house of Israel,' Ezek 18:25, 29-30) on whom judgment had come and who is urged to repent and turn once more to the Lord. This same corporate emphasis is found elsewhere in Ezekiel."[50] Therefore, the corporate aspect of individual repentance is part of Ezekiel's message.

Summary

By focusing on individual responsibility, Ezekiel does not claim that the principle of consequences is eliminated. "We must always be aware that the consequences of sin will affect others who may be innocent of the guilt for that particular sin. This is true even when the sin is forgiven. God promised to remove the guilt of sin, but most often

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[48]"For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you" (Jer 29:10-12 ESV).

[49][Ezek 3:17-21], *Andrews University Study Bible*, ed. Jon L. Dybdahl (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2011), 1046.

[50]Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 226.

the consequences remain."[51] Even in exile, there was hope for the nation (Ezek 20:32-44). Because of His great mercy, God's plan was to restore the nation.

"The theology of divine retribution found in Ezekiel 18 is not a systematic doctrinal statement about how God always operates, one should not read it as an utter rejection of the older, more corporate model of divine retribution."[52] The only requirement for reconciliation was that the nation repent and come back to God. This is possible only on an individual level. Everybody should make his/her own decision and should be aware of the consequences of his/her choice. At the same time, God longs for the nation's corporate repentance.[53] Yes, God wants to save every man and woman individually; at the same time He desires to save His people as a group, as a collective, because it is a collective (either the nation or the church), not an individual, that can reflect God's character in its fullness.

Collective Responsibility in the New Testament

In chapter 2 it was shown that, from a philosophical and ethical point of view, the church can be recognized as a moral agent and that principles of collective responsibility could be applied to it. In this section, the focus will be on the question of whether or not the church can be held collectively responsible, from a New Testament perspective, and in what cases. Although the concept of "corporate personality" and "collective

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[51]Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 190.

[52]Kaminski, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*, 178.

[53]See Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24*, 590.

responsibility" is quite clear in the Old Testament, there is a question whether similar concepts can be applied to the New Testament church.

Individual Responsibility

In the New Testament, there is a clear focus on individual salvation and individual responsibility of the Christian. Jesus says that the salvation of the individual person is based on his/her own acceptance of salvation (John 3:18-21). "The way condemnation, or reprobation, comes upon a person is clearly explained in vs 18–21, where the determining factor is said to be the individual response to 'the light,' that is, to Jesus Christ as 'the light of men' (ch 1:4–9)."[54]

Also, some of Paul's statements are clear regarding the individual responsibility of all believers, when he says: "Each of us will give an account of himself to God" (Rom 14:12 ESV; of himself – gr. ἑαυτοῦ) in opposition to judging others. Individual responsibility is also connected to one's personal life and deeds (Luke 12:36-48).[55] It seems that there are no signs of corporate solidarity, as if somebody else could influence another person's salvation in the New Testament. This is in agreement with already discussed texts from the Old Testament that speak about personal (individual) responsibility, such as Deut 24:16.

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[54]Siegfried H. Horn, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1979), s.v. "Predestination."

[55]See also Matt 18:35; 1 Thess 4:11-12; Heb 3:12.

The Church as a Collective Person

What is the character of the church? There are many classical characteristics of the church. The marks of the church found in the Apostles' Creed underline the church as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.[56] The church is characterized by different images: a body (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:23, 5:23, 30), the bride of Christ (2 Cor 11:2; Rev 19:7; 21:2, 9), spiritual house/temple (Eph 2:20-21; 1 Pet 2:4-9), family (Rom 8:14-16; Eph 1:4-6; 3:15), and temple of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 6:16). The church becomes a unique community because of her divine origin. The church is based upon Christ and it is revived by the Spirit. The church is not just an ordinary collective of people.

When the apostle Paul speaks about the church, he often uses the image of the body. In 1 Cor 12, he discusses the unity of the church and meaning of spiritual gifts when he says, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:12-13 ESV). Paul points out that a Christian becomes a member of the body through baptism. Paul's concept seems to be clear: Together, all the believers create the church, which functions as a body with Christ as the head.[57] If the way to the church leads through baptism, as a response to the invitation to salvation, then the church is clearly connected to the One who is the Source and Founder of salvation, Christ.[58]

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[56]The Nicene Creed, in 325, expanded in 381 during the Council of Constantinople, says: "[I believe] in one holy catholic and apostolic church." Reinder Bruinsma, *The Body of Christ: A Biblical Understanding of the Church* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2009), 59.

[57]See Eph 4:15.

[58]See Heb 2:9; 5:9; and 12:2.

In connection with the body of Christ, Bonhoeffer speaks about a "collective person."

> The community of saints as the community of penitent sinners is held together by the unity of the body of Christ. In the church, as in any other community, people repent both for their own sin and for that of the collective person of the community. Now, is this collective person perhaps 'Christ existing as church-community', the body of Christ? Only insofar as God's own self is at work in the act of repentance.[59]

The idea behind Bonhoeffer's "collective person" is that Christ reveals Himself in this world through the church, which is His body. Bonhoeffer speaks not only about the imperfection of the church, but also about her divine origin through the revelation in Jesus Christ. Reflecting about this understanding, Craig L. Nessan says: "What would it mean for the church to take seriously the theological conviction that Jesus Christ is present in the world today as a collective person in the form of the church, the very body of Christ?"[60] Even though this is just one piece in the understanding of the church, for the analysis of the concept of collective responsibility this interpretation is important because of the stress that it puts on the divine character of the church, her weaknesses, and responsibility.

The Church and Collective Responsibility

Even though there is clear emphasis on individual responsibility regarding salvation in the New Testament, one cannot overlook the corporate characteristics of the church and the collective dimension of salvation.

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[59]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, ed. Clifford J. Green (Mineapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), 214.

[60]Craig L. Nessan, "What If the Church Really Is the Body of Christ," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 51, no. 1 (2012): 44.

When Paul speaks about the church as the body of Christ, he adds a strong corporate aspect to this image: "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor 12:26-27 ESV).[61] So, even though Christians are members of the church individually, the church creates a collective with a significant corporate aspect. The church is characterized by shared sufferings and happiness. This sharing of inner emotions creates community with close relationships that convert into family relationships. Nobody stays alone, everybody should be involved.[62] This is why all New Testament writers unanimously refer to fellow believers, or better, fellow disciples, as ἀδελφοί.[63]

The New Testament goes beyond the emotional image of family. Paul addresses an appeal to the Galatians: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2 ESV). The imperative βαστάζετε (bear, carry on) shows that to look after fellow believers is a duty (obligation, responsibility) of Christians rather than a matter of personal choice.[64] Simon J. Kistemaker applies this principle in the following way: "In

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[61]See also, "For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Rom 12:4-5 ESV).

[62]The concept of belonging is elaborated by Richard Rice in his book *Believing, Behaving, Belonging: Finding New Love for the Church*.

[63]The plural of the Greek word ἀδελφοί (brothers) refers to siblings in the family. That is the reason why some modern translations use "brothers and sisters" or "fellow believers" instead of "brothers" where it is appropriate. See Walter Bauer, "Ἀδελφός," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1957), 15. Bauer cited nonbiblical evidences for the plural ἀδελφοί meaning "brothers and sisters."

[64]This concept of collective (shared) responsibility does not contradict the special ministration of those who were entrusted with a special responsibility for the flock, as Peter points out in his letter. "Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not

the church community . . . members have the corporate responsibility to help fellow

members when they need counsel and advice."[65]

Burdens (βάρη, heavy load, weight) are more than physical cargo or emotional

troubles. Here Paul speaks primarily about spiritual burdens, which can be sin or

temptation. "Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit

should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted"

(Gal 6:1 NIV). This text refers not just to personal responsibility for one's pure life

("watch yourself"), but also to corporate responsibility for the restoration of brothers or

sisters "in the spirit of humility" (ἐν πνεύματι πραΰτητος). "The community should take it

upon itself to restore such a person because this is one way a family expresses its love."[66]

A similar principle can be found in Hebrews: "See to it that no one fails to obtain the

grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many

become defiled" (Heb 12:15 ESV). Kistemaker states: "The writer reasserts the corporate

responsibility of the believers. . . . As members of the body of Christ we are responsible

for each other. We have the task of overseeing one another in spiritual matters, so that we

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under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet 5:2-4 ESV). The truth is that leaders were entrusted with greater responsibility (Luke 12:48; Jas 3:1). "In ministering to others, men and women may be educated to bear burdens, to wear the yoke of Christ, and thus exercise their intrusted talents in his service, until they shall be developed to fill positions of greater trust and heavier responsibility." Ellen G. White, "Faithful Stewardship Required," *Review and Herald,* March 7, 1893, 147-151.

[65]Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary, vol. 18 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993), 222.

[66]Scot McKnight, *Galatians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 284.

may grow and flourish in the grace of God and not come short of it."[67] This supervision

over fellow believers inspires practical spirituality of the individual members and

prevents "the indifference to one another manifested by Cain, who asked, 'Am I my

brother's keeper?' (Gen. 4:9)"[68]

The significance of corporate responsibility is emphasized through the institute of

"church discipline." Texts that deal with "disciplining" sinners, helping them to repent

and return to Christ, emphasize the duty of Christians.[69] In Jas 5:19-20, the author

"stresses the corporate responsibility Christians have toward one another."[70] Walter

Elwell and Barry Beitzel indicate the significant change that came with the

institutionalization of the church.

> In the apostolic period, discipline was a corporate responsibility that centered on the
> daily life of each member. Principles such as confrontation, confession, repentance,

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[67]Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, New Testament Commentary, vol. 15 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996), 385.

[68]Ibid.

[69]"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matt 18:15-18 NIV).
"My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins" (Jas 5:19-20 NIV).
"In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example" (2 Thess 3:6-7a NIV).
See also Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman, 2002), 345.

[70]Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996), 182-183.

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and forgiveness were individualized and practiced in the fellowship of the church's life. At the end of the apostolic age, especially with the absence of apostolic leadership, such individual spiritual experiences were "institutionalized," that is, they were made the function of church officers in the context of the organization. The *Didache* shows that confession and repentance were incorporated into the church service. Also, responsibility for maintaining the purity and unity of the church was increasingly delegated to bishops rather than to individual church members.[71]

The shift from corporate responsibility to "institutionalized" responsibility was surprisingly fast. The result can be seen in the individualization of Christianity and can be seen as the reason for the rebuke that Jesus has against the church in Ephesus: "You have forsaken the love you had at first" (Rev 2:4 NIV). This rebuke is followed by the appeal: "Repent and do the things you did at first" (Rev 2:5 NIV). If corporate responsibility is not properly exercised in the church's everyday life, then love and pure life decreases and disaffection and sin increases.

The church as a collective (or community) has her responsibility assigned by God. In his book, James Howard[72] summarizes the community aspect of the church in Paul's writings. For Paul, it is "community responsibility" to (1) reach society for Christ (Rom 13:1-10), (2) protect the integrity of the gospel and the mission of the church (Rom 16:17-18), (3) display the glory and wisdom of God (Eph 3:14-21; Phil 1:1-14), and (4) confront deeds of darkness and bear fruit (Eph 5:1-14). Howard concludes that "the concept of solidarity as it was originally conceived of in Israel reflects development in

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[71]Grant R. Osborne, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), s.v. "Apostolic Age."

[72]James M. Howard, *Paul, the Community, and Progressive Sanctification: An Exploration into Community-Based Transformation within Pauline Theology*, Studies in Biblical Literature, vol. 90 (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2007), 156-162.

the New Testament."[73] Howard continues: "By creating the new spiritual temple, he [Christ] has redefined the individual's identity . . . such that they now participate in a community life of holiness and find significance through building of the temple."[74] Therefore, Christian life has not just an individual aspect, but it also has strong community dynamics that involve collective responsibility for individual fellow believers and thus for the whole body of Christ, God's temple (1 Cor 3:16.17).

Summary

The Christian church, as a combination of divine and human elements, bears her mission and responsibility. The church is the fullness of Christ (Eph 1:23). Christians cannot exercise their faith and life in the Spirit in fullness without community. They are part of Christ's body and they individually share their responsibility for other believers and for the mission of the church. The church acts not as a group of individuals, but truly as a complex organism and a sophisticated structure. The purpose of the church is to bring others to Christ (Matt 28:18-20), develop their characters (Eph 4:11-14), and reflect God's glory (Eph 3:20-21). In all these aspects every member of the church is involved and is responsible. Shared responsibility involves responsibility for each other, accompanied by shared joy from victory over sin or suffering and the struggle with temptation.

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[73]Ibid., 170.

[74]Ibid.

Biblical Concept of Collective Retribution

The biblical concept of *great controversy* creates an essential framework for questions regarding God's character, the problem of sin, its impact on the human race, and God's solution for this conflict in Jesus Christ. The concept of *great controversy* helps to answer questions regarding *theodicy*. It shows that God is the Creator of the universe, He is the only one worthy to receive our worship, and He is the only righteous Judge (Rev 4:11; 5:9-10; 14:7). In the Bible, not only is God the Judge, but the righteous look forward to His Judgment as a positive event, as an act of justification (Ps 72:2; Isa 11:4), salvation (Isa 33:22), deliverance (Ps 76:9), and vindication (1 Sam 24:15; Ps 7:6-10). God is the righteous Judge full of grace and mercy for every individual in the universe. On the other hand God's judgment contains condemnation (Rev 19:2), revenge (Deut 32:41), and punishment (Hab 1:12) for those who do not accept His love and grace. The concept of great controversy helps to put together both positive and negative aspects of judgment.

When talking about judgment it is necessary to recognize God's final judgment that will return complete justice into the universe and God's ongoing judgment that has a mostly restorative character. Everyone will have to stand for himself/herself in front of God's throne on the day of His final judgment. However, the ongoing judgment of God can include individuals as well as collectives of people.

The restorative character of the ongoing judgment of God can be clearly seen in the Old Testament, where in noncapital offenses, the character of judgment "falls on

restitution rather than retribution (Lev. 17-27; Num. 5-8)."[75] As John Hayes clarifies,

"The concern of Israelite law was for restoration of the victim to the status prior to the

wrong rather than punishment of the offender."[76] The same can be said also for the

judgment of collectives of people (nations). God's primary goal is to save humanity, not

to act in revenge. Collective punishment is part of God's way to deal with sin that affects

a group of people.

In the Bible, two types of collective punishment can be recognized. Permitted

collective punishment was connected to the offenses against cultic law (Exod 20:5; Josh

7; Judg 21; 1 Sam 22; 2 Sam 21; 2 Kgs 9). Not being permitted collective punishment

was connected to interpersonal offense (Deut 24:16; 2 Kgs 14:6; Ezek 18).[77] In this case

"the biblical law . . . restricted the talion to the offender alone."[78] The above texts point to

an important idea: God uses collective punishment as the last resort or in circumstances

when breaking of the law can distort the understanding and ability of the group of people

(nation) to receive salvation. As Dale Patric points:

> Why does God impose collective sanctions when He explicitly forbids Israelite
> judges to do so? It cannot be, as some argue, that He has privileged knowledge,
> because collective punishment is not based upon the idea that the "sons" of the
> culpable are themselves guilty. Indeed there appears to be no legal justification for
> collective divine punishment. The idea is more a matter of observation than legal
> theory. When breaches in the order of justice are not remedied, they fester. Law seeks
> to distribute justice precisely to avoid the indiscriminate justice of clan feuds, class

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[75]Christopher D. Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 125.

[76]John Hayes, "Atonement in the Book of Leviticus," *Interpretation* 52, no. 1 (1998): 11.

[77]Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment*, 80.

[78]Ibid.

vengeance, and the like. When legal remedies fail, collective justice comes into play.[79]

Collective punishment is God's way[80] of dealing with certain kinds of sin because of His love toward every individual and the collective of people as a whole. God's punishment, individual or collective, is always tied to the concept of great controversy, the fight between good and evil. Punishment is primarily an expression of God's love toward the sinner.

Adam as Absolute Example of Corporate Responsibility and Corporate Punishment

The absolute example of corporate punishment, corporate responsibility (or as Davidson[81] puts it "corporate solidarity"), and at the same time the highest expression of love toward the sinner, is Jesus' death on the cross. In Hebrew, the word אָדָם in Gen 3:17 is the name that God gave to the first man. In Gen 1:26-27 the same word with the article means humankind, both man and women, and in Gen 2:18 the word means an individual person.[82] Through the first

> Adam, as the first man, was the natural head of the race, and represented all mankind as the human party to the covenant of works into which God entered with him. As the natural head, he stood in a federal (foedus, Latin "covenant") relationship to all

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[79]Dale Patrick, "Studying Biblical Law as a Humanities," *Semeia* 45 (1989): 41.

[80]"Israelite law forbids collective punishment, at least collective capital punishment. Deuteronomy expressly forbids putting parents to death for the acts of their children, or vice versa (Deut 24:17). It is this principle that explains the presence of the statement in the provisions for the goring ox: 'If it gores a man's son or daughter, (the negligent owner) shall be dealt with according to the same rule' (Exod 21:31). The law-giver is excluding an overliteral application of the lex talionis, to the effect that 'I lost my child, you must lose yours.'" Ibid.

[81]Davidson, "Corporate Solidarity in the Old Testament."

[82]Ibid.

posterity. His obedience, had it been maintained, would have transmitted an entail of blessedness to them; his disobedience involved them with him in the curse which God pronounced upon the transgressors of his law. [83]

Thus Adam, the first man, is a corporate representative of all humanity and "humanity as a whole truly is included in what Adam their representative head does."[84]

The good news is that Jesus, the seed of woman, or the second Adam (Rom 5:1; 1 Cor 15:22, 45), the head of the church (Col 1:18), is also the corporate representative of humanity and humanity is included in His death. Because of corporate responsibility (solidarity), Jesus' sacrifice is the act of justice for the sins of the first Adam (corporately for the sins of all humanity) and therefore can justify the sinner. Even though Jesus' ultimate act of corporate responsibility involves all humankind (all Adam), it is not automatically imputed to all humankind. Jesus' death needs to be accepted at the individual level since salvation is a gift of God to free human beings. This is a process that in the New Testament is described as a new creation, spiritual rebirth, being "in Christ," sharing the life of Christ. Being in Christ not only enables us to receive God's gift of salvation, but also to receive God's gift of corporately united community, the church,[85] with Christ as the head and the eschatological gift of the new life in Christ's future kingdom.

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[83]George N. M. Collins, "Federal Theology," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1960), 217.

[84]Davidson, "Corporate Solidarity in the Old Testament."

[85]F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary to the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 69.

Conclusion

The concept of corporate responsibility as well as corporate punishment can be seen in the Old Testament in the concept of communities of people, or nations that were approached by God as one corporate body as well as in the New Testament in the concept of the church, the body of Christ. The concept of corporate responsibility does not exclude individual responsibility for one's actions. On the contrary, corporate responsibility as introduced in the Bible does not equate corporate with institutional. The Bible sees the collective as a unity of individuals in which each carries his/her own responsibility, as could be clearly seen in Ezek 18. On the other hand, Josh 7, as well as the New Testament image of the church as one body, underlines the importance of the corporate. Its importance is expressed the best in the example of Adam, the father of the whole humankind, and Jesus, the second Adam, who is the Savior of us all.

Closely tied to the issue of corporate responsibility is the issue of corporate punishment. Corporate punishment is executed because the group of people is held corporately responsible for its actions. Corporate punishment in human hands often turns to a reaction of fear or revenge. God uses corporate punishment in certain specific circumstances, never out of rage or revenge, but always in love. God's goal is to save the sinner. The natural consequence of sin is the punishment of the transgressor. God always tries to appeal to His people in many different ways before He turns to corporate punishment as a wake-up call, an act of restoration. The question is, What are the consequences of collective responsibility for the SDA church in the twenty-first century, or even more exactly, what are the consequences of this idea for me, as a member, a pastor, and a child of God?

CHAPTER 4

ECCLESIOLOGY AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

The previous chapters examined, defined, and analyzed the concept of corporate

responsibility. However, this study would be unfinished without some practical

application to the church in the twenty-first century. Because the responsibility for the

actions of the church is in the hands of her leaders as well as in the hands of the

individual members, the concept of the collective responsibility will be applied to both

groups.

Survival Plan for the Time of Crisis

Theology and beliefs of the SDA church are eschatologically oriented. The

second coming of Jesus Christ and final events are the central theme of SDA teaching.[1]

The SDA church articulates the conflict between good and evil, and calls for a constant

state of watchfulness and total dependence upon Christ.[2] The authors of the book

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[1]At least 12 out of 28 SDA fundamental beliefs (Nos. 4, 8, 9, 12, 13, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28) point to the great controversy, the second coming of Jesus Christ, resurrection, and the New Earth. See "Fundamental Beliefs," General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/ (2013).

[2]*Seventh-day Adventists Believe ... A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988), 104-105.

Seventh-day Adventists Believe urge believers to accept "Christ's survival strategy,"[3] pointing out to Paul's understanding of the need to combat evil, supernatural spiritual forces.

> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. (Eph 6:13-18 ESV)

Paul asks his readers to fight with the spiritual armor of God: the truth, righteousness (v. 14), gospel (v. 15), faith (v. 16), salvation, and the Word of God (v. 17).

The "survival plan" created by the leaders of the SDA church in time of crisis was at times in contradiction with *Christ's survival strategy* presented by Paul. An example of such a contradictory survival plan is the position and actions of the SDA church in Germany during World War II. King, writing about the SDA church in Nazi Germany, states, "Overall . . . this sect suffered little persecution. It had a clear strategy for survival, worked out by its German leaders who saw their task as one of guiding the church through delicate political times."[4] Later King adds, "It must be said, given their own criteria, the Seventh Day Adventist's [*sic*] strategies for survival were successful."[5] For

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[3]Ibid., 104.

[4]King, *The Nazi State and the New Religions: Five Case Studies in Non-Conformity*, 108.

[5]Ibid., 109. Later King elaborates on this approach: "The survival strategies of the Seventh Day Adventists were clear and simple; a combination of genuine and loudly professed nationalism, support for Hitler and the willingness to sacrifice certain principles in a time of 'national emergency' Adventists survived the Nazi regime as a result relatively untouched." Ibid., 114.

leadership, to protect the organization was more important than willingness to suffer, to stand on the side of truth, and to show love to every human being. Adventists hoped that collaboration with the Nazi government would allow them to carry on their unique health message and evangelistic mission. "While this collaboration seemed to clash with the traditional Adventist principle of separation of church and state, German Adventist leaders evidently believed that special circumstances warranted collaboration."[6] Adolf Hitler was represented as the one who is instituted to His position by God and disobeying him is nothing less than disobeying God. Hitler was portrayed as a fellow vegetarian, non-smoker, and antialcoholic.[7] Collaboration with the Nazi regime in the area of health reform led to "the inclusion of the agenda of race hygiene and racism in the German Adventist health message and its justification on biblical grounds. Evidently German Adventist leaders did not see the inherent contradiction with the church's traditional anti-Darwinism."[8]

The Jews who were SDA members were disfellowshipped and had to look for protection in other places.[9] Not only were members discouraged from helping the Jews but they were sanctioned if they expressed solidarity with them.[10] For example, Adventist pastor Hermann Kobs was fired from his job based on the fact that he allowed a Jewish

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[6]Roland Blaich, "Health Reform and Race Hygiene: Adventists and the Biomedical Vision of the Third Reich," *Church History* 65, no. 3 (1996): 439.

[7]Ibid., 259, 260.

[8]Ibid., 439.

[9]Piškula, *Dějiny Církve Adventistů Sedmého Dne v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku* (The History of Seventh-day Adventists in Czech, Moravia and Silesia), 81.

[10]King, *The Nazi State and the New Religions: Five Case Studies in Non-Conformity*, 92.

Adventist to participate in the worship service.[11] "Once the Adventists ventured unto the slippery slope of collaboration it was difficult to turn back. Thus the church was almost naturally silent on the final solution."[12] Blaich concludes his article about the Adventist church in the Third Reich with a pertinent comment: "The Nazi episode raises question about the church's ability to escape the powerful normative forces of society."[13]

The example of the survival plan of the SDA church in Germany, which included rejection of some of the distinctive SDA beliefs as well as the basic Christian ethical position on the issues of humanity, sacrifice, and love, shows that the church, leaders as well as members, is prone to react in self-defense as opposed to following God's leadership and standards. This is said with the feeling of guilt, not with prideful notions of condemnation. It is critical to see how weak the church can be and how essential it is to be ready for the time of crisis. Knowing that "success is possible only through dependence on Jesus," [14] it is important not just to articulate, but also to nurture and practice, what it means to live according to *Christ's survival strategy* in time of crisis, before that time will come.

In peaceful times, social status, possessions, prospering institutions and magnificent church buildings can be great testimony about God's grace toward His

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[11]Daniel Heinz, "Adventisté a Židé v Třetí Říši–Bolestné Vzpomínky," *Advent*, no. 6 (2001): 7.

[12]Blaich, "Health Reform and Race Hygiene: Adventists and the Biomedical Vision of the Third Reich," 440.

[13]Ibid.

[14] *Seventh-day Adventists Believe ... A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, 104.

people, but in the time of crisis the same can be a burden that leads to compromises. Exercising humbleness and total dependence on God's power and grace can help every believer to develop important skills for the time of crisis.[15] The weekly Sabbath is the reminder of one's dependence on God. He is the Savior and Provider. And He is about to come. The earth is not the home for Christians.[16] "Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil 3:20 ESV). Therefore, the best survival plan for the time of crisis is to live close to God as individuals and as a community of believers, as God's church. The corporate dimension, especially as exercised through church leadership as well as individual dimension, is an integral part of this process.

Collective Responsibility and Leadership in the Church

The concept of collective responsibility and collective solidarity, as was shown in the previous chapters, calls for responsible leadership and healthy interaction inside the church. To delegate responsibility to the leaders does not mean that members of the church lost their accountability. Accountability cannot be delegated. Leaders are

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[15]"The problem is that the church forgot that its strength comes from God and not from the state; it comes from her bridegroom, Christ. The church forgot that it does not exist in its organizational structure but in its people. It forgot that the mission is to announce the Kingdom of God. . . . The reality is that when the church decides to flirt with the state and seeks the protection in the arms of government rather than under the wings of the Almighty, it trades the position of the exalted bride of Christ for the role of subservient mistress of the state. . . . The church would do well in remembering its history, because only in its past can it find the answers to avoid the same blunders in the future." Harold Alomía, "Fatal Flirting: The Nazi State and the Seventh-day Adventist Church," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 6, no. 1 (2010): 12, 13.

[16]"A man who sincerely fears God would rather toil day and night, suffer privation, and eat the bread of poverty than to indulge a passion for gain which would oppress the widow and the fatherless or turn the stranger from his right. . . . Christians are professedly not dwellers upon the earth; they are in a strange country, stopping, as it were, only for a night. Our home is in the mansions which Jesus has gone to prepare for us. This life is but a vapor, which passes away." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Chruch*, vol. 4 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 490.

responsible for the task that was delegated to them. But all the members of the church, including leaders, are responsible for their own deeds, and as individuals they are accountable to God and to each other. This is what we call shared responsibility, or collective accountability.

Church leadership is responsible for leading and administrating the church. Their responsibility is defined by biblical principles as well as by internal church documents.[17] Leaders are managers responsible for the visions, organization, human resources, and smooth operation of church administration, but they are not responsible for the existence of the church. This creates a certain tension. Leaders cannot be trapped in a mentality that organized structure is the church. As Harold Alomía stresses in his article, the church "does not exist in its organizational structure but in its people."[18] The church can exist without a structure, but it cannot exist without the people. And moreover, the church is the divine body of Christ called by Christ, built on Christ, led by Christ, empowered by Christ, and protected by Christ. The church is more than an organization or institution. And therefore, "the mission and existence of the church does not require the power or the protection of the state; God's mission only needs the power of God. It is pivotal to remember that it is only God that the church owes allegiance."[19]

Leadership for the time of crisis should be built on a high standard of virtues. A great leader should be able to empower the people (as Moses did); a great leader is ready

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[17]General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2010).

[18]Alomía, "Fatal Flirting: The Nazi State and the Seventh-day Adventist Church," 12.

[19]Ibid., 13.

to lift people up, and to put himself down on behalf of the people. A great leader would

not usurp the power but would share it with the people. And even more, a great leader for

the time of crisis should exercise the servant-leader model of leadership.

> Sometimes a man who has been placed in responsibility as a leader, gains the idea
> that he is in a position of supreme authority, and that all his brethren, before making
> advance moves, must first come to him for permission to do that which they feel
> should be done. Such a man is in a dangerous position. He has lost sight of the work
> of a true leader among God's people. Instead of acting as a wise counselor, he
> assumes the prerogatives of an exacting ruler. God is dishonored by every such
> display of authority and self-exaltation. No man standing in his own strength is ever
> to be mind and judgment for another man whom the Lord is using in His work. No
> one is to lay down man-made rules and regulations to govern arbitrarily his fellow
> laborers who have a living experience in the truth.[20]

To become a servant-leader that the Bible is describing means to give up so much

of ourselves that nothing is left. This does not imply losing one's identity but giving up

human egoism and self-centeredness, making place for God to live in us. Jesus made

Himself nothing by becoming a slave.[21] Jesus gives us a radical example of a self-

sacrificing, dying leader who gives everything for the salvation of others. Christians are

called to the same service (Phil 2:5). Christians are not called to serve whenever they

have extra time or they feel like it. Christian service should be a radical, total, and

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[20]Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2003), 491.

[21]Most of the English translations use the word servant. However, most of the commentaries prefer to translate the Greek original word δοῦλος as slave. A slave, as opposed to a servant, does not have any rights or privileges. She/he is to obey her/his master and to serve all. The image of a slave emphasizes the ultimate degree of humility, degradation, and self-sacrifice. It is not enough to change our actions, thoughts, and feelings, to empty ourselves. To be a genuine Christian servant-leader means to be a slave first. See also: Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995); Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians*, Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

permanent state of who Christians are. To become a servant leader does not mean merely to serve, but to become a slave, to give himself/herself up to the hands of the Master.

Corporate Responsibility, Christian Community, and Mission

The Bible calls the believers not to be in love with this world, with the institutions of this world, but to live distinct from the world (1 John 2:15-17). "The baptized Christian has ceased to belong to the world and is no longer its slave. He belongs to Christ alone, and his relationship with the world is mediated through him."[22] Each individual believer but also a collective of believers, the church,[23] should not adjust or bow down to "powerful normative forces of society"[24] but, in the words of Estep: "The church is not to mirror the sociocultural segregation of this world, but present to the world a new kind of community."[25] The only way to secure that the members of the church will be able to exercise love and discernment in the time of crisis, is to here and now "accept one another . . . just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Rom 15:7).

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[22]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1959), 231.

[23]"The plural of Christian is 'church'. What God desires for the individual believer, he likewise expects of the collective experience of believers. We do not go to church; we are the church. We do not serve at the church; we serve as the church." J. Estep, R. White, and K.L. Estep, *Mapping out Curriculum in Your Church: Cartography for Christian Pilgrims* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2012), 20.

[24]Blaich, "Health Reform and Race Hygiene: Adventists and the Biomedical Vision of the Third Reich," 440.

[25]Estep et al., *Mapping out Curriculum in Your Church: Cartography for Christian Pilgrims*, 20.

"Intentional discipleship (individual) and becoming the people of God (corporate) do not happen automatically."[26] Even though "human being is . . . essentially relational and social" and "to be human is to be a person related to others in human communities"[27] the effects of sin perverted these natural human longings. In a sinful state, humans are more likely to fight for their individual well-being as opposed to the well-being of their brothers. They are prone to take more care for the institutions that can give them protection, power, and status than to care for the individual people who create these institutions. "We should think of the Church not as an institution but as a person, though of course a person in a unique sense."[28] The healthy church that operates on God's principles is the ground where "the 'other,' as 'You,' stand over against the self, related to the self as a whole person, yet independent of self. Negatively, this means that the egoism and dominating pretensions of people are checked and halted as they run up against the countering wills of others."[29]

Paul in the second chapter of his letter to the Philippians sees community as an essential part of Christian life. The disciples are called to be in community with Christ (united with Christ) and with the Holy Spirit (in fellowship with the Spirit). The believers (Eph 4:11, 1 Cor 12:28-29) are to be joyful, like-minded, loving, unselfish, and work for the well-being of others (Phil 2:2-4). All of these attributes should be employed for

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[26]Ibid., 17. See also 1 Pet 2:9, 10.

[27]C. J. Green, *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 31.

[28]Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 241.

[29]Green, *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality*, 31.

building up the community of believers. This means that there exists not only a vertical

relationship between a believer and God, but also a horizontal relationship between

individual believers and believers and the world. The Christians not only shape each

other's character and create protective barriers from sin but they are also called to

actively serve each other. To serve our brothers is not a punishment but a grace of God.

Jesus, "as our Brother has himself become our grace, our atonement, our deliverance

from judgment. The humanity of the Son of God grants us the gift of a brother."[30]

The corporate responsibility for one another in the body is not a popular idea in

the postmodern society. Postmodernism promotes community, but this is community

without responsibility because postmodernism rejects absolute laws, which are the basis

of corporate responsibility. This distorted notion of community as an independent group

of friends penetrated also into the church. The church needs to recognize once again the

"gift of a brother" as a desire and sincere concern about the well-being of the brother and

power of the Holy Spirit working in his/her life. Unfortunately, "one of the real scandals

of the church is the way believers so often slander one another with gossip and criticism.

We have divided sins into acceptable and unacceptable. We condemn sexual immorality

while we tolerate slander in the body."[31] This reflects the fact that Christians still do not

fully comprehend the reality of corporate responsibility and of the body of Christ as one

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[30]Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 130. Bonhoeffer continues: "To serve our brother, to please him, to allow him his due and to let him live, is the way of self-denial, the way of the cross. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. That is the love of the Crucified. Only in the cross of Christ do we find the fulfillment of the law." Ibid.

[31]J. Bridges, *True Community: The Biblical Practice of Koinonia* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 52.

unified whole. However, by rejecting or offending a brother, a Christian "erects a barrier

not only between himself and his brother, but also between himself and God. He no

longer has access to him: his sacrifice, worship, and prayer are not acceptable in his

sight."[32] By rejecting a brother, Christians are putting themselves above him and thus

they are becoming idolaters. This is true not only about individuals but also about whole

congregations. Therefore, Bonhoeffer calls us as believers to "examine ourselves, and see

whether we have not often enough wronged our fellow-men. Let us see whether we have

tried to win popularity by falling in with the world's hatred, its contempt and its

contumely."[33]

The corporate responsibility of the church should not be focused only inwards to

individual members but also outwards toward the other people. This missional character

of corporate responsibility can be seen in the symbol of the church as the body of Christ.

Christians should talk not only about the good news of salvation but they should also

represent it in their lives so that people will be able to see Christ represented in a form of

a collective person, the Church, the living body of Christ. Jenson describes: "Where does

the risen Christ turn to find himself? To the sacramental gathering of believers. To the

question, 'Who am I?' he answers, 'I am this community's head. I am the subject whose

objectivity is this community. I am the one who died to gather them."[34]

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[32]Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 128.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology: The Works of God*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 214.

The missional corporate responsibility means not only proclaiming the gospel through different outreach activities and evangelistic campaigns. The missional corporate responsibility means also to live as one body so that the new believers are not left on their own but can be implanted into a living body; they can be nurtured and drawn closer to God through the example and service of the loving community of God's children. This aspect of corporate responsibility, just as all other aspects, is closely tied to the responsibility of each individual. Every individual needs to exercise the character of Christ for the community to reflect Christ's character.

The corporate responsibility that the members of the church have is not only a responsibility to create good relationships with each other and to grow in Christ, but also to react and take responsibility for the actions or inactivity of the church as a whole. Corporate responsibility means that members cannot close their eyes when the church (i.e., the leaders of the church) is making decisions that are unethical or go against the biblical principles of love, acceptance, and justice. Members should not leave the difficult theological, social, or ethical decisions only in the hands of the experts. It should be the practice of all Christians, as those in Berea who were "examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11 ESV). The responsibility for the decisions of the church leaders and, therefore, for the actions of the church as a whole falls also on the shoulders of the individual members. The leaders also need to be corrected in brotherly love and they need to be accountable. The believers need to be willing to exercise these rights and responsibilities that they have toward the leaders. The members should be aware of, react, and take responsibility for theological issues, such as, for example, the currently discussed question of ordination of women or the issue of homosexuality; for

ethical issues, such as, for example, the racial inequality, as well as for the social issues and the relationship of the church to the state, and, lastly, for example, financing of the church by the state or the behavior of the church during the genocide in Rwanda. Activists often call for active citizenship. The same call, a call to active membership, is needed in the church in the twenty-first century.

Summary

The eschatological theology of the SDA church as seen through the lenses of the great controversy calls for the church, the body of Christ, to live in a way that reflects God's character. The only way to be prepared for the eschatological time of crisis and for the God's final judgment is to live here and now in unity with God and with each other. This call for creating a community of believers is a call for Christians to love each other, care for each other, and be responsible for each other as well as to reach out and welcome every person as a child of God. The community of believers is a place where everyone is valued and everyone contributes and is corporately responsible for the well-being and mission of the whole body.

The leaders have their place and a specific God-given responsibility for the church. However, they need to remember that the church is not an institution but a community of people, a living body of Christ that is sustained not by the flesh and blood but by the Spirit of God. A Christian leader is a servant leader, a person willing to give up himself/herself for the well-being of others. To be a Christian leader does not mean just a selfless service, but above all service to God and under God's leadership. The role of the leaders within the community of believers does not supplement the role and the responsibility of the members.

Corporate responsibility is an important concept for postmodern Christians living in the twenty-first century. The strong emphasis on the individual often leads to rejection of community where people are held responsible for each other and create one body that feels and acts in unity. The rejection of community is almost an oxymoron in the age where many of the problems are communal or in fact often global in their nature.[35] One of the strongest messages that the world needs to see is Jesus Christ being present as a church-community on this earth.[36] The call to corporate responsibility is a call to the life in the body of Christ, the call to the life in Christ. Corporate responsibility as well as corporate solidarity makes "the group a real entity actualized in each of its members. The group and the individual make one single total reality."[37] Without accepting and exercising the concept of corporate responsibility, Christians cannot experience the fullness of the presence of God. The question is, How would this world change if Christians "were [as] committed to the reality of the church as the body of Christ"[38] as they are committed to the life in their own individual realities?

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[35]Kaminski, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*, 189.

[36]Nessan, "What If the Church Really Is the Body of Christ," 51.

[37]Davidson, "Corporate Solidarity in the Old Testament."

[38]Nessan, "What If the Church Really Is the Body of Christ," 51.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

After describing the introductory questions in the first chapter, I analyzed

philosophical and ethical views of collective responsibility in the second chapter.

Building upon the definitions and descriptions of collective personality and moral agent, I

focused on analyzing both proponents of collective responsibility represented by Larry

May and Peter A. French, who see collective responsibility as the automatic consequence

of belonging to the group, and those with opposing views represented by Hywel D.

Lewis, who argues that collective responsibility undermines and weakens the individual.

Collective responsibility can be approached from the collectivist theory that ascribes the

responsibility to the group itself and individualistic approach that ascribes the

responsibility for the collective to the individuals who create this collective.

The collective responsibility from the ethical perspective is approached from four

different angles based on four ethical systems that differ mainly in their answer to the

question of what is considered right and wrong for an individual and for a group. The

deontological ethical system turns to absolute principles (i.e., Decalogue). The

teleological ethical system bases its judgments on the consequences of the actions, often

on the principle of the greatest good. Relativism rejects absolute unchanging truths and

focuses on the subjective. Virtue ethics differs from the other three in focusing on the

bearer of the action and her/his development and not so much on the action alone.

Chapter 2 ends with a short overview of collective punishment, which is one of the most controversial issues tied to the topic of collective responsibility.

The church is considered to be a moral agent based on the characteristics of a collective as a moral agent. This means that church leaders as well as members can be held morally accountable for the decisions and actions of the church. Basing the church's ethical decisions on the absolute principles given by God (deontological ethical system) can protect the church and help her to make right choices.

Chapter 3 developed the concept of collective responsibility in the church by looking at this issue from a biblical perspective. Two basic texts were discussed from the Old Testament: Joshua 7 and Ezekiel 18. They bring seemingly opposite views of collective responsibility. Joshua 7 favors collective punishment mainly because of the destructive impact of sin on the nation as the whole but, as can be seen from other texts, corporate responsibility was exercised especially in connection with the sins concerning holiness. Ezekiel 18 favors individual responsibility and claims that each person will be punished for his/her own sins. This message, however, is not in contradiction and does not exclude corporate responsibility or the effects of the consequences of the sins, which can also influence the innocent. Ezekiel 18 is a message of hope for people in a specific situation (Babylonian exile). Therefore, it can be concluded that corporate responsibility of the church and individual responsibility of her members are not exclusive and have their place.

The New Testament is often seen as promoting religion of an individual. However, the church is repeatedly represented by symbols of body, family, or temple, which implies one united whole. The church members are called to love and serve each

other even to the point of carrying each other's burdens and giving one's life for one's brothers and sisters. The individual members of the body of Christ create one church, a corporate body, a collective person. The church as a collective person has a responsibility ordained by God. However, this responsibility can be exercised only if the focus of the church is living Christ and not an institution.

The Bible also brings a concept of collective retribution, which has a restorative character regarding all of God's judgments and never a character of retaliation aimed at a sinner. One of the strongest arguments for the concept of collective responsibility, and subsequently also for the concept of collective retribution, is Jesus Himself. In the first Adam we have all sinned. In Jesus Christ, the second Adam, all humanity corporatively can find salvation and forgiveness of sin.

Chapter 4 synthesizes all the previous ideas and argues for the need of the Christian church in the twenty-first century to live united as one community and to exercise corporate responsibility. This concept is even more pertinent for the SDA church because of its eschatological message about the second coming of Jesus Christ and because of the understanding of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Satan tries to attack the church to dishonor the name of God in front of the whole universe. The church should prepare herself as a pure bride for her bridegroom.

Humanity is entering into the final chapters of Earth's history. The prophecies describe this time as a time of crisis. The history of the SDA church shows us that a time of crisis can come without warning, and the church is not always prepared to stand up for the truth. If the church is not firmly grounded in God and His Scripture, it will not survive during the time of crisis.

The time of crisis can be especially trying for the leaders of the church. The leaders need to understand that the church is the body of Christ and that it is not a human endeavor. God will take care of His church. Another common trap that the leaders often fall into is to mistake the church for an institution. However, the church is not an idea, or buildings. The church is living people. Therefore, the role of the leaders is to lead the body of believers closer to God by obeying His commandments and living the life that reflects God's character.

The members of the church are not exempt from responsibility. More responsible membership is necessary. This means that members will understand and exercise their responsibility for each other, for leaders, as well as for the mission of the church, and for God's children who are outside of the church. Responsible membership in the church means also being responsible for the ethical, theological, and social actions of the church as a whole.

Corporate responsibility is not a popular topic and it can be easily neglected or misunderstood. However, corporate responsibility is an integral part of what it means to be a church, the body of Christ. The philosophical, theological, and ethical questions connected to corporate responsibility might be complicated and not always straightforward. However, the practical application for every member of the church is simple. It is the basic message of Christianity: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:37, 39). The issue of corporate responsibility is just another approach that points out this profound and yet so simple call of Jesus. Active love toward God means that we will be changed to His image and we will be following His leadership.

Active love, at the same time, means that we will take care of each other, of the

individual children, but also the corporate body of Christ.

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