1997

Eschatological Paradigm and Moral Theory in Contemporary Christian Ethics: Stephen Charles Mott and Thomas W. Ogletree

Larry Lee Lichtenwalter
Andrews University

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ESCHATOLOGICAL PARADIGM AND MORAL THEORY IN CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN ETHICS: STEPHEN CHARLES MOTT AND THOMAS W. OGLETREE

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Larry L. Lichtenwalter
February 1997
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ABSTRACT

ESCHATOLOGICAL PARADIGM AND MORAL THEORY
IN CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN ETHICS:
STEPHEN CHARLES MOTT AND
THOMAS W. OGLETREE

by

Larry L. Lichtenwalter

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH
Dissertation

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: ESCHATOLOGICAL PARADIGM AND MORAL THEORY IN CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN ETHICS: STEPHEN CHARLES MOTT AND THOMAS W. OGLETREE

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Date completed: February 1997

Twentieth-century re-interpreted eschatology introduces a paradigm for Christian ethics that engenders significant divergence among Christian ethicists in the way its application influences moral theory. These divergences indicate the need to clarify the issues revolving around its methodological application in order to bring credible structure for applying the eschatological paradigm in Christian ethics.

A set of analytical distinctions and procedural suggestions in this study provide an extensive framework for comparatively observing where ethicists begin, move, and end...
in terms of using eschatology as paradigm in their moral theory: (1) role and function of paradigms, (2) levels of paradigm operation (macro, meso, micro), (3) levels in ethical structure (philosophical/theological bases, principles, area rules), (4) three principles of verification (role of Scripture, community, and the nature of social involvement), and (5) three conceptually interwoven and complementary components of the paradigm (already/not yet, reign of God, horizon of future). A correspondence is proposed between the levels of paradigm operation and the ingredients in ethical structure. A complex interplay is indicated between the paradigm’s components and the principles of verification which highlight the methodological nuances the paradigm elicits.

Mott and Ogletree were selected because they represent the latter phase of twentieth-century re-interpreted eschatology and its application toward moral theory. Their projects elucidate the complex nature and subtle interplay between the various ingredients involved in using eschatology as paradigm and the ever-present presuppositions of those seeking to apply it—illustrating what happens if you take the eschatological paradigm and apply it this way or that way. Their diversity suggests that the question of the use of eschatology in Christian moral theory remains open. Their respective orientation to Scripture shows considerable contrasts with respect to consistency, specificity, and relevancy of eschatological paradigm application. Their projects suggest that the question of the role of Scripture alone gives promise of bringing stability to the use of the eschatological paradigm in Christian ethics. The paradigm functions best when expressing biblical ethics rather than moral philosophy.

Perspectives for using eschatology as paradigm are proposed along with its relation to other paradigms in Christian moral theory and directions for further study.
To Kathie, my beloved wife,
and to our four sons Erich,
Ehren, Ethan, and Evan

and to Him Who has
given me efficiency
to do these things
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<td>Ante-Nicene Fathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCC</td>
<td>Library of Christian Classics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LW</td>
<td>American Edition of Luther’s Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPNF</td>
<td>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</td>
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Re-interpreting Eschatology

Twentieth-century theology has generated a significant "re-interpretation of
eschatology,"¹ and the implications for Christian ethics have been momentous.²

Traditional theology had generally defined eschatology as "the study of last things,"³ but
developing insights from the ongoing debate over the theme of the kingdom of God have
significantly broadened theological understanding of eschatology.

The metamorphose taking place in eschatology since Ritschl persuasively
identified eschatology with ethics in the Kingdom of God and made it central to his

¹See Millard J. Erikson's "Introduction to Eschatology," in Christian Theology
(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 1149-1165; and Somen Das, "A Theology of
63-86.

²Brian V. Johnstone, "Eschatology and Social Ethics: A Critical Survey of the
Development of Social Ethics in the Ecumenical Discussion," Bijdragen 37 (1976): 47-
85; Das, 63-86; Carl E. Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics: Essays on the Theology and
Ethics of the Kingdom of God (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974), 7-25.

Journal of Theology 22 (Spring 1980): 75. Traditional views included a sterile
dogmaticism, a focus on apocalyptic calculations, narrow hopes of salvation for one's
own soul, and a marked contrast between this world and the age to come, between time
and eternity.
systematic theology has resulted in the forging of an eschatological approach to theology\(^1\) and the spawning of a number of eschatological schools.\(^2\) In the process, the theological trend of this century in both systematics and biblical studies has de-historicized eschatology (where eschatology has a timeless ahistorical character and becomes in effect \textit{"eschatology sans eschaton"})\(^3\) and de-eschatologicalized history (where the meaning of history lies always in the present and the eschaton is viewed as a post-temporal reality).\(^4\) Thus, for some, history and time came to have no real meaning for eschatology and ultimately for ethics. This de-historicized approach to eschatology has turned full circle, however. A radically eschatologicalized understanding of history and a radically historicized understanding of eschatology have emerged where the future is seen as ontologically prior to the present and the past, and where the horizon of universal history


\(^{2}\)These include Schweitzer’s “thorough-going (consistent) eschatology,” C. H. Dodd’s “realized eschatology,” John A. T. Robinson’s “fully inaugurated eschatology,” William Manson’s “spiritualized apocalyptic eschatology,” Rudolph Bultmann’s “existential eschatology,” and Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jürgen Moltmann’s “proleptic eschatology.”

\(^{3}\)Braaten, \textit{Eschatology and Ethics}, 8-12.

is fused by a historical reality that is prior to its present. Some are finding a new
temporal view of reality.\textsuperscript{1} History and time again have profound significance for
eschatology and ethics.

Within these broad developments, eschatology has been restricted to existential
categories. Eschatology has been politicized and secularized. It has been articulated as
encompassing the whole history of Jesus Christ. And it has been restricted exclusively to
the person of Jesus Himself.\textsuperscript{2} For some, eschatology has become the whole of theology.
Or, more correctly, the whole of theology has become eschatology.\textsuperscript{3}

This re-interpretation of eschatology has been propelled by the historio-
philosophical and socially pragmatic strength of Marxism and dialectical materialism,
which has literally forced Christian theologians to focus upon the future.\textsuperscript{4} In particular,
Ernst Bloch’s \textit{Das Prinzip Hoffnung (The Principle of Hope)}, which represents Marxism
and dialectical materialism as the world’s hope for a better future, has had an evocative

\textsuperscript{1}Childs, 259-295. Moltmann and Pannenberg are foremost in articulating this
eschatological vision of reality (ibid., 288, 282). For both, reality is perceived as
historical thus bringing profound potential for the ethical relevance of eschatology.

\textsuperscript{2}Erickson, 1149-1165; Adrio Konig, \textit{The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology:}
\textit{Toward a Christ-Centered Approach} (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing
Company, 1989), 32-47; and Das, 63-86.

\textsuperscript{3}Karl Barth says, “If Christianity be not altogether thoroughgoing eschatology,
there remains in it no relationship whatever with Christ” (\textit{Epistle to the Romans} [London:
Oxford University Press, 1950], 314). And Jürgen Moltmann writes, “From first to last,
and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology” (\textit{Theology of Hope: On the
Grounds and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology} [New York:
HarperSanFrancisco, 1991], 16). For Moltmann, theology begins with eschatology, so
that everything is thought out from that future.

\textsuperscript{4}Erickson, 1151.
impact on twentieth-century Christian theologians who have felt challenged to set forth an alternative, superior basis for hope.¹ The geopolitical upheavals through two world wars, together with the rise of the Third World, the apparent lack of solutions for escalating social exigencies, exacerbating environmental problems, unparalleled technological advances, and the rapid increase in human knowledge have influenced the focused attention on eschatology and the quest for its meaning.² Likewise, issues of revelation together with higher-critical methods in biblical studies have provided a theological context for both the rediscovery and re-shaping of eschatology in this century.³

**Eschatology as Paradigm for Ethics**

Through it all, eschatology has become a very morally "pregnant word"—relating to the cross event, pointing to the future, and shaping the present.⁴ As a result, the pendulum has swung from eschatology as being disjunctive, and even opposed to

¹Unfortunately, though, not without being significantly influenced by Marxism and dialectical materialism's view of history and social philosophies. See Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1959).

²Erickson, 1150-1152. It was the sense of hopelessness and helplessness in post-war Europe that propelled Moltmann's passionate views in his *Theology of Hope*. See Braaten's discussion of "The Phenomenon of Hope-Man" in *The Future of God*, 33-57.


Christian ethics, to the place where eschatology is now seen by some as even providing the "key" to Christian ethics. Where once most Christian theologians and ethicists generally ignored the connection between eschatology and ethics, some are now intentionally seeking to place the roots of Christian ethics into the ground of biblical eschatology where they supposedly belong.

1After all, it has been implied, eschatology deals with "last things" of history and an other-worldly future, whereas ethics deals with moral problems of life in a this-worldly present. They do not seem to fit together nicely. This has been especially true in the arena of Christian social ethics, for social ethics is glaringly this-worldly present, dealing with structures and patterns of the here and now, whereas eschatology has traditionally been concerned with the final things of history and an apparently other-worldly future. The fact that the future kingdom appears more unlike than like the present order has tended to create a regression from the social and political opportunities to create a better future for all mankind now and a withdrawal into the personal space of religious other-worldliness and emotionalism. See Ray C. Petry, "Christian Eschatology and Social Thought," Theology Today 5 (July 1948): 184; Das, 69; Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 8, 106.


3Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 106. This theological disconnection between eschatology and ethics has been true for both liberal and conservative theologians/ethicists.

In effect, eschatology has emerged as a "new paradigm" in contemporary Christian moral thought. As a paradigm, it is influencing both foundational and applied ethics.\(^1\) And, not surprisingly, it is indicating new directions for social ethics as well.\(^2\)

The word "paradigm" is used here as an organizing idea or thought structure around which an approach to ethics is shaped and articulated. Christian moral thought has always been forcefully shaped by paradigms. H. Richard Niebuhr used "the responsible self" paradigm as an integrating and persistent theme in his ethical thought and teaching.\(^3\)

The "rationality of divine command" paradigmatically integrates C. F. H. Henry's Christian personal ethics.\(^4\) Barth's paradigm for theological ethics (also divine command) is "the immediacy of the Word of God."\(^5\) And "Αγάπη" provides the

---

1See my selected bibliography for works on eschatology and ethics.

2It appears that the "re-interpretation of eschatology" has taken place against the backdrop of the debate over Christian social action, with the latter being the greatest beneficiary (or victim) of particular explications of the eschatological paradigm (see Johnstone, 47-85; Dahl, 375; Das, 63-86). While the eschatological paradigm has been developed primarily with social ethics in view, it should, in principle, provide a single point of departure for both personal and social ethics (see Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 120). The implications of the twentieth-century reinterpretation of eschatology has included political, social, personalistic, and universal characteristics (see Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, vol. 3 [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963], 358-359.


integrating thematic for Ramsey's biblical deontology.1

Paradigms are "a way of looking at something."2 They serve as "interpretive models," "explanatory models," "models for understanding."3 But they are more than mere "conceptual systems." Paradigms also act as "molds" or "clamps" which shape and direct thinking in clearly defined directions.4 They inform methods and the principles of solution. They are an important part of the "theory-praxis discussion."5 When new scientific, theological, or moral hypotheses and theories emerge, they often do so as new paradigms.6

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4Ibid., 8.

5Ibid., 9.
models of interpretation or "paradigms" which replace previously accepted ones.\textsuperscript{1} They arise from a 'paradigm change' (rather than a sudden 'paradigm switch'), as part of an extended process that is often more revolutionary than evolutionary, and which does not always appear the most rational.\textsuperscript{2}

For Christian ethics, paradigms provide a moral "frame of reference" from which moral thinking is organized or articulated. The emergence, then, of eschatology as a new paradigm in Christian ethics represents a significant shift in conceptualizing and articulating Christian moral responsibility. This conceptual shift comes because, theologically, the characteristic of re-interpreted eschatology (as expressed in gospel proclamation) is that of dialectic between present and future.\textsuperscript{3} There is an "eschatological in-the-meantime" and "eschatological endtime."\textsuperscript{4} This dialectic generates an "eschatological ethics."\textsuperscript{5} Eschatological ethics simply means that the God of the end-time

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{3}Schrage, 19.
\textsuperscript{5}As opposed to an "interim ethics," "emergency ethics," "apocalyptic ethics," "ethics of parousia-delay," or a "counter-parousiacal ethics." See Amos N. Wilder, \textit{Kerygma, Eschatology and Social Ethics} (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 20; Schrage, 30-37; and Graydon F. Snyder, "Apocalyptic and Didactic Elements in 1 Thessalonians," \textit{The Society of Biblical Literature: Book of Seminar Papers} 1 (1972): 233-234. One's ethic rides on how the reality of the kingdom of God is interpreted (Braaten, \textit{Eschatology and Ethics}, 116), and the kind of eschatology chosen as a model (Robin Scroggs, "The New Testament and Ethics: How Do We Get from There to Here?" \textit{Perspectives in Religious Studies} 11 [Winter 1984]: 85). The basic outline of the overlapping of the two ages and the proleptic presence of the future in Jesus' person and
is at work in the present where people hear, believe, and live—accomplishing His end-time will and word of promise.\textsuperscript{1} The eschatology articulated has roots in "present reality."\textsuperscript{2} It brings present requirement in view of the future. This is the genius of eschatological ethics. As a present reality, it has profound moral implications and contemporary force for ethics. The new paradigm claims to allow for the dynamic merging of the other-worldly and future with the this-worldly and present in a way that permits real connection between requirement and action.

Numerous Christian ethicists have been inspired by three highly suggestive models within this eschatological paradigm: (1) the \textit{reign of God},\textsuperscript{3} (2) the \textit{already/not yet} dialectic,\textsuperscript{4} and (3) the \textit{horizon of the future}.\textsuperscript{5} The eschatological perspective of these three models has given rise to creative ethical reflection. Each of these models is in fact a component part of the eschatological paradigm. Each is highly paradigmatic in itself. Each has been used by theologians or ethicists as "the" paradigm for expressing work is key. See also, Braaten, \textit{Eschatology and Ethics}, 122; Ronald Russell, "Eschatology and Ethics in 1 Peter," \textit{The Evangelical Quarterly} 47 (April-June 1975): 84. Braaten asserts that the eschatological kingdom of God determines the "goal," the "norm," the "motive," and the "context" of ethical decision. These are determined by the reality of the kingdom of God being proleptically present in a definitive way in the person and activity of Jesus (Braaten, \textit{Eschatology and Ethics}, 110).

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Alsup, 50.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Scroggs, 91.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Ladd, 57-69; Mott, 82-106.
\item \textsuperscript{4} Ladd, 50-69; Schrage, 19, 20.
\item \textsuperscript{5} Braaten, \textit{Eschatology and Ethics}, 14-25; Pannenberg, \textit{Theology and the Kingdom of God}, 51-71, 103-143; Ogletree, 177-180.
\end{itemize}
twentieth-century re-interpreted eschatology. For purposes of clarification, this study will be referring to these three models (the reign of God, already/not yet, and horizon of the future) as "components" of the eschatological paradigm which help express and interpret the "eschatological paradigm" itself. Together, like a three-stranded cord, they form a comprehensive eschatological paradigm for contemporary Christian ethics. In addition, the "eschatological paradigm" is understood here as being the overall integrating theme generated by the New Testament eschatological Kingdom of God.

Of these three paradigm components, the already/not yet dialectic appears to be the primary point of reference around which both the reality and religious/moral impact of the eschatological Kingdom of God find expression. The reign of God and horizon of the future components are closely nuanced dimensions (or issues) integrated within this already/not yet dialectic. This dialectic gives rise to the question of the moral implications evident from the horizon of the coming future, as well as to those moral implications highlighted by the reality of the reign of God, which has already broken into the present. Viewed oppositely, the reign of God and horizon of the future components explicate the crucial realms where the moral implications of the already/not yet dialectic are both indicated and need to be worked out for everyday life. Together, these three

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2Schrage, 19.
components form primary points of reference for Christian ethicists working within an overarching eschatological paradigm for moral reflection and application.

The Problem of Eschatological Paradigm in Christian Moral Theory

While there is general agreement among Christian ethicists as to the broad implications that the eschatological paradigm brings to Christian moral thought, an investigation of contemporary Christian ethics reveals significant divergence in the way application of the new paradigm appears to influence moral theory and to nuance ethical method.¹ For example, while a number of Christian ethicists heartedly assume that eschatology provides a foundation for Christian ethics, some will suggest that it in no way provides any actual or specific content for Christian ethics, while others will hold that specific content is in fact furnished.² For some ethicists, eschatology evokes only broad ultimate Christian norms of love and justice.³ Others find in eschatology “middle axioms” that are neither too general nor too particular.⁴ Then there is the proleptic nature of the eschatological vision, which is seen as affirming an ethic of change over that of

¹For a survey of the divergences of impact the eschatological paradigm appears to have on moral theory and ethical method, see Johnstone, 47-85; Dahl, 374-379; Das, 63-86; E. Clinton Gardner, “Eschatological Ethics,” The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics (1986), 201-205; Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 7-25; and Ogletree, 175-206.

²Johnstone, 56.

³Das, 86.

⁴Ibid.
order—thus placing strong emphasis on social and political action.¹ The ties between eschatology and social action are viewed either as indirect and subtle, manifold and complex, making it necessary to draw analogies and to make inferences, or articulating very concrete direct application to specific contemporary social issues.² There is divergence, too, over whom the moral implications of the eschatological vision speak to. Are they meant exclusively for the Christian community? Is there any application for the world at large? Or is relevance for the world found only as inferences/extensions from the paradigm's consequences within the Christian community?³

These divergences in the way the eschatological paradigm appears to impact

¹Johnstone, 48, 56.
²Dahl, 375-376.
³Further divergences include models of eschatology reflecting revelation "from above" or "from below," as well as those that link an immanent understanding of the Kingdom with a progressive, evolutionary view of history and those that stress the transcendent quality of the Kingdom as above all history. For some, the reign of God is the primary paradigm for eschatological ethics (e.g., Mott, 82-106; idem, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought [New York: Oxford University Press, 1993], 109-112.). For others it is the dialectical dynamic of the horizon of the future, or ontological priority of the future (e.g., Ogletree, 175-205; Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God; idem, Ethics; Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics; idem, The Future of God; Moltmann, Theology of Hope; idem, The Way of Jesus Christ; idem, The Crucified God; and Yoder, The Politics of Jesus; idem, The Priestly Kingdom; idem, "Ethics and Eschatology," Ex Auditu 6 [1990]:119-128). The distinction needs to be noted here between futurists who see the kingdom of God as a purely future phenomenon, not yet manifested in the world of ongoing history, and dialectic eschatology, while still partly futurist, is represented by those thinkers who claim that the future is emerging into the present (see discussion by Ogletree, 177 passim). Those named here fall into the latter category and appear to press the ontological priority of the future, the horizon of the future, or an open future, with its moral implications for the present over the other nuances of the eschatological kingdom. Finally, others work from the more generalized dialectical already/not yet perspective (e.g., Schrage, 18-40; Ladd, 57-134).
moral theory imply that the issue of its methodological application still needs exploring. The question remains open as to precisely how the eschatological paradigm impacts (or is adjusted by) the process of moral reflection in the task of doing Christian ethics.

Stephen Charles Mott and Thomas W. Ogletree are two contemporary Christian ethicists who illustrate this critical question of divergence implicit in the impact that the eschatological paradigm is eliciting on moral theory. Sharing a common Wesleyan tradition, both Mott and Ogletree are concerned about the gap between the disciplines of biblical studies and Christian ethics. They both undertake the task of bridge building. They both articulate the importance of community in moral reflection. And they both consciously work within the new eschatological paradigm in order to accomplish their

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1Johnstone, 55. The issue of the impact of eschatology on ethical method has been an important one throughout the "re-interpretation of eschatology" process. This is expressed in the works of major theologians/ethicists and doctoral dissertations, i.e., Amos N. Wilder, "Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1933); Theron M. Chastain, "The Relations of Eschatology and Ethics in Christianity" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1939); Max Lynn Stackhouse, "Eschatology and Ethical Method: A Structural Analysis of Contemporary Christian Social Ethics in America with Primary Reference to Walter Rauschenbush and Reinhold Niebuhr" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1965); and Norman Paul Jacob Metzler, "The Ethics of the Kingdom" (Ph.D. diss., University of Munich [Germany], 1971).

2Mott has been Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, is currently pastor of the Cochesett United Methodist Church in West Bridgewater, Massachusetts, and a member of the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church.

3Ogletree is Dean and Professor of Theological Ethics at the Divinity School at Yale University.

bridge-building task.¹

The problem is that, even as Mott and Ogletree are building from a common theological heritage, a common concern for bridging the disciplines of biblical studies and Christian ethics, a common sense of the importance of community in moral reflection, and a common eschatological paradigm, they produce different interpretations with respect to moral theory.² This can be observed particularly in the way that methodological issues like the role of Scripture, the role of Christian community, and the nature of social involvement factor in their eschatological ethics. Mott’s methodology exhibits an evident topical approach to moral theory where Scripture is asked contemporary ethical questions, and where he creates direct and specific application from Scripture to contemporary social exigencies.³ Ogletree’s methodology, however, articulates evocative deontological themes and brings into focus the reflective imaginative Christian community as pragmatically authoritative in ethical methodology and through which social issues become addressed.⁴

The eschatological paradigm has clearly impacted differently their moral theory.

¹Ogletree is recognized as “standing in a developing tradition of reflection on the importance of eschatology for ethics” (Peter Sedgwick, “Recent Christian Ethics,” Scottish Journal of Theology 41 [August 1988]: 398), and actively uses eschatological themes in his Yale class lectures in “Basic Christian Ethics” as well as his published works. Mott, too, has actively used eschatological themes in his Gordon-Conwell graduate class lectures in “Christian Ethics and Social Change,” as well as in much of his published works.

²Verhey, 24-27.

³Ibid., 25.

⁴Ogletree, 175-205.
So we are pressed with questions. Do they approach the question of eschatology and ethics differently? Is the eschatological paradigm sufficient in itself, or does it require or assume something broader as an ultimate statement of an ethical system? Do Mott and Ogletree perceive differently the ways in which issues significantly related to moral theory (the role of Scripture and community, and the nature of social involvement) find expression within, are formed by, or influence the eschatological paradigm? Is the eschatological paradigm generating mutually incompatible or rather complementary attitudes towards these important issues in moral theory? Additionally, there is the question of foundations and presuppositions: Is the eschatological paradigm (or their orientation to it) rooted in philosophy, philosophical ethics, moral agenda, biblical theology, or the community (tradition)?

**Purpose of the Study**

This dissertation seeks to address the problem of the role eschatology plays as paradigm in approaching Christian ethics (i.e., the impact that the eschatological paradigm has on shaping moral theory). Specific within this context, the purpose of this dissertation is to explore and evaluate the methodological application of eschatology as paradigm for developing and/or articulating Christian moral theory. It focuses on the interplay of eschatology as a methodological tool and the ethical system that results from it. It analyzes the eschatological paradigm’s presuppositional structure on the basis of which some contemporary Christian ethicists have developed their moral theory. It assesses the reasons for the variety of applications and conclusions the eschatological
paradigm seems to bring as a proposed foundation for Christian moral theory.

The ultimate purpose is to determine whether the eschatological paradigm, in spite of the various ways in which it has been understood and applied, still holds promise as the starting point for a comprehensive approach to moral theory. This study explores whether the eschatological paradigm can produce a methodological integration. Is it focused and coherent enough to produce an ethical system? Is it broad enough to include the significant contemporary issues in Christian moral life? Since every paradigm has limits, what does it leave out, or what does it not facilitate in moral theory?

1 Several dissertations have examined the links between eschatology and ethics in the projects of key theologians. Especially important are: Philip LeMasters, “The Import of Eschatology in John Howard Yoder's Critique of Constantinianism” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1990); Lynn Evans Mitchell, Jr., “Two Ages and Two Communities: The Implications of an Eschatological Duality for Development of a Social Ethic” (Ph.D. diss., Rice University, 1979); Ramesh Paul Richard, “Hermeneutical Prolegomena to Premillennial Social Ethics” (Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1982); Douglas J. Schuurman, “Creation, Eschaton, and Ethics: The Ethical Significance of the Creation-Eschaton Relation in the Thought of Emil Brunner and Jürgen Moltmann” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1988); Stackhouse, “Eschatology and Ethical Method: A Structural Analysis of Contemporary Christian Social Ethics in America with Primary Reference to Walter Rauschenbusch and Reinhold Niebuhr”; and Robert Gary Watts, “Realistic Hope: The Influence of Eschatology on the Social Ethics of Reinhold Niebuhr and Jürgen Moltmann” (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, Montreal, 1981). Even though there have been dissertations on various aspects of the impact of eschatology for Christian ethics, only Max Lynn Stackhouse’s “Eschatology and Ethical Method: A Structural Analysis of Contemporary Christian Social Ethics in America with Primary Reference to Walter Rauschenbusch and Reinhold Niebuhr” is focused primarily on the impact of the methodological application of eschatology on moral theory per se as envisioned in this dissertation. This work was done nearly thirty years ago while the re-interpretation of eschatology was still in process (though nearing completion). While laying an important base for this project, it does not relate to what has been taking place since the 1970s, or how an eschatologically influenced moral theory and ethical methodology have more fully developed or plateaued.
Research Methodology and Limitations

To accomplish this objective, this dissertation approaches the problem of the methodological application of eschatology as paradigm in Christian moral theory through a case study of Stephen Charles Mott and Thomas W. Ogletree. It describes and analyzes their contrasting moral theories, and evaluates them by the results of their application of the eschatological paradigm. That they come to the application of the paradigm with different presuppositions, methodology, and concerns in moral theory is assumed. The purpose of this study is to see how eschatology as paradigm either adjusts or mediates these differences in resulting moral theory.

These two representative ethicists have been chosen because they explicitly develop their moral theory in the context of the eschatological paradigm, and because they are recognized as creative and original in their application of the paradigm in ethical method. Their projects are shaping the use of eschatology as paradigm in contemporary Christian ethics.¹ In addition, Mott and Ogletree are in open dialogue with other scholars

¹Writing in the early 1970s, Carl Braaten noted the fact that “the eschatological approach in theology today is represented by a small, but hopefully not insignificant, minority of professional theologians. That viewpoint broke into the headlines in the middle sixties under the title of ‘theology of hope.’ And like every fad it took its brief turn at being advertised as the wave of the future. Now a decade later we know that the magic spell of catchwords like ‘hope’ and ‘future’ has been broken. The cultural wave on which the theology of hope was allegedly riding has already crashed on the reefs of ‘future shock’ and ‘law and order’” (Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 7). What Braaten said about the eschatological approach in theology in the seventies could be said about the eschatological approach in ethics as well, although with different periods of time in view. The ethical implications of eschatology have naturally followed the theological. The heightened interest (a fad?) in eschatology and ethics of earlier years has likewise plateaued or become more measured or assumed, but a minority of professional ethicists, including Mott and Ogletree, have consciously continued to develop the eschatological
in their field, and show an interest in ethical issues beyond the borders of their particular tradition.¹

Since Mott and Ogletree clearly belong to the eschatological movement in Christian ethics, it will be assumed that theirs is a paradigmatic approach to moral theory. This assumption implies that the eschatological paradigm (as with any paradigm which identifies, structures, and determines methodology) has become for Mott and Ogletree their ethical method.²

With reference to methodological procedure in this dissertation, several angles have been adopted from which to approach this study. First, there is a description of Mott’s and Ogletree’s concept of eschatology as paradigm for developing and/or thematic in/for Christian ethics. Braaten himself is an example of someone (in the seventies) doing serious ethical reflection with the implications of eschatology (basically Americanizing the Pannenbergian view and being foundational or theoretical in perspective). A decade later, Mott and Ogletree both demonstrate their interest in the eschatological paradigm for Christian ethics, and in the process begin to reveal more precisely the impact that the application of eschatology as paradigm has on moral theory and ethical method. That they have included the eschatological paradigm in their projects, suggests they are consciously extending a discussion some may have assumed was adequately cared for in another period of time. This is significant for this investigation of the methodological application of eschatology as paradigm for developing and/or articulating moral theory. The ability for the new paradigm to prevail in Christian ethics is proportional to the adequacy of its practical explication in terms of moral theory.

¹Numerous books, articles, and reviews by (on) Mott and Ogletree are available as primary resources for this dissertation. See selected bibliography for Mott and Ogletree. At this point, no in-depth treatment of the methodological application of eschatology as paradigm for the development and/or articulation of moral theory exists for either Mott or Ogletree.

²See above, p. 7, for discussion of how paradigms, according to Küng and Tracy, work methodologically (e.g., how they inform methods and the principles of solution).
articulating Christian moral theory, as well as how they go on to apply the paradigm methodologically in their projects. This description also includes how Mott and Ogletree interplay the ethical nuances of the three components of the paradigm (reign of God, already-not yet, horizon of the future), and which component becomes for them the basic expression for the paradigm itself.

Second, there is analysis of the implications of Mott’s and Ogletree’s application of the paradigm by considering their use of Scripture and Christian community, as well as the nature that social involvement assumes in their moral theory. This is done for three reasons:

1. Scripture and the Christian community are used most widely as sources in Christian ethics (i.e., they focus the question of authority in ethical method),¹ while the nature of social involvement has become a defining consequence or application of ethical method/systems (i.e., a contemporary indicator of the validity and relevance of an ethical system).²


²The nature of social involvement has been selected as a defining consequence of ethical method because it has been an integral part of the twentieth Century “re-
2. There has been a “crisis of authority” in Christian ethics with regard to the role that Scripture and community play in developing and/or articulating moral theory.\(^1\) Running parallel to this “crisis of authority” has been a “crisis of relevance” with respect to the nature of Christian social involvement. Marxism has consistently pressed the validity of Christian moral theory on this one issue.\(^2\) Eschatology as paradigm in Christian moral theory appears to answer both these crises in Christian ethics. Thus the issues of Scripture, community, and social involvement are significant in determining the soundness of eschatology as paradigm for Christian moral reflection.\(^3\)

3. Various approaches exist for establishing the relationship of Scripture\(^4\) or the interpretation of eschatology\(^5\) process/dialogue, and remains a significant contemporary issue of “eschatopraxis” in Christian ethics (see Johnstone, 47-85; Dahl, 375; Das, 63-86).

\(^1\)Brown, 171-185; and Brunt and Winslow, 3-21.


\(^3\)Issues of Scripture, Christian community, and the nature of social involvement are significant components of Christian ethical method. They should also play significant roles as components of a Christian eschatological paradigm’s influence on ethical method.

\(^4\)Typologies for Scripture’s role in Christian ethics include: providing revealed morality (where Scripture is absolute authority and biblical ethics equals Christian ethics); a witness about God or His will (where Scripture becomes the Word of God via personal encounter through witness); a source of moral images (where one is confronted with relative impressions of moral facts and values); a shaper of moral identity (where the character of the moral actor is shaped, and the Christian mind is formed for moral decision making); a resource for normative reflection (where the Bible as the Word of

\textsuperscript{1}The role that the Christian community plays in moral formation has been seriously explored ever since the Reformers subordinated both the individual’s conscience and ecclesial authority to Scripture. The emergence of approaches to Scripture that divest it of its authority has elicited increasing emphasis on the importance of the Christian community as the proper context for ethical decision. Various perspectives have been articulated including: (1) Christian ethics is community ethics (where Scripture shapes the perspectives, dispositions, and intentions of the faith community as the moral reference point and the ongoing socializing agent for the moral life; here ethics is always in process in the context of community, and while the Bible is not ruled out in the decision making process, it is not the sole source of norms); and (2) the reflective imaginative Christian community as pragmatically authoritative in ethical methodology (where deontological themes from Scripture have provisional and qualified status while the community articulates them anew with full sensitivity to the concrete understandings and meanings at play within the community). See Birch and Rasmussen, 17-34; and Ogletree, 182-205.

\textsuperscript{2}The nature of Christian social involvement in Christian ethics runs the gamut from total non-involvement to that of revolution. For some, Christian ethics is purely personal ethics, and Christian involvement in the world is primarily evangelistic. For others, Christian ethics assumes social activism. Some find direct application from the moral themes of Scripture to contemporary social exigencies in the world at large, while others find Christian ethics speaking to the world only by analogy to developments within the early Christian communities themselves. For a discussion of the issues see Carl F. H. Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947).
a rich context for exploring the impact that eschatology as paradigm has on the
development of Christian moral theory. They enable one to determine more specifically
how the eschatological paradigm influences (or is influenced by) presuppositions
regarding Scripture, community, and social involvement.

For these reasons, these three significant issues evident within contemporary
Christian moral dialogue are excellent tools for this inquiry and, accordingly, become for
this study's analysis "principles of verification." While they are not the only principles
current in the developments within Christian ethical method, they are basic, significant,
and recurring concerns. Because of their significance within contemporary Christian
moral dialogue, they provide the necessary limitations this study must delineate.

The third angle in this methodological procedure is evaluation. Since evaluation
needs criteria in order to assess strengths and weaknesses, the evaluation of Mott's and
Ogletree's application of eschatology as paradigm includes the following points of
reference:

1. There is the "level" of moral reflection and application on which eschatology
as paradigm operates (or is perceived to operate) in their projects (i.e., the macro, meso,

1Other methodological principles in contemporary Christian ethics include the
nature of man, christology, the integration of or correspondence with traditional
philosophical ethical categories (deontology, teleology, perfectionist [the implications of
self in action]), the role of the sciences (psychology, sociology, anthropology), etc. This
study will be limited to the principles of the role of Scripture, the role of Christian
community, and the nature of social involvement because they are basic to both Christian
ethics in general, and to Mott and Ogletree's projects in particular.
or micro level). The question of "level" enables one to clarify how concretely the paradigm (or its components) is able to:

a. speak to contemporary ethical exigencies

b. nuance Mott's and Ogletree's use of Scripture and community, and the nature that social involvement assumes in their projects, and

c. influence the interplay of the ethical nuances of the paradigm's components (or predilection of one component as the basic expression for the paradigm itself).

2. There are the implications of the data from this analysis of the role Scripture, community, and social involvement play in the application of eschatology as paradigm in their projects. The "principles of verification" allow evaluation of:

a. how effectively eschatology as paradigm answers the crisis of "authority" and "relevance" in Christian ethics, and

b. whether the paradigm influences, or is influenced by, presuppositions regarding Scripture, community, and social involvement. They enable one to ask

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1Küng and Tracy suggests that paradigms (models) can serve on a macro, meso, or micro level, bringing solutions to broad global theological or philosophical issues, problems in intermediate areas, as well as detailed specific situations (Küng and Tracy, 9, 10). Ethicists distinguish between four ingredients when structuring an ethic, i.e., theological or philosophical bases, underlying principles that can be applied to various areas of activity, directive moral rules that apply to various areas of life, and particular concrete cases (see, Arthur F. Holmes, Ethics: Approaching Moral Decisions [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984], 50-51). This study is suggesting here that, in the order given, there can be correspondence between an eschatological paradigm operating on the macro, meso, or micro levels, and the bases, underlying principles, and area rules it informs respectively, in structuring an eschatological ethic.
the question of foundations and presuppositions: Is the eschatological paradigm (or one’s orientation to it) rooted in philosophy, philosophical ethics, moral agenda, biblical theology, or the community (tradition)?

3. There is the consistency with which the “principles of verification,” the paradigm’s “level” of operation, and the ethical nuances of the paradigm’s components are used, interrelated, and nuanced in methodological application and in its resulting contemporary moral theory.

The above outlined methodology for accomplishing the objectives of this study thus proposes the presence of a complex set of interacting variables in the application of the eschatological paradigm toward Christian moral theory. A diagrammatic overview of these interacting variables is provided in figure 1. Here is shown the subtle interplay that this study suggests exists between the eschatological paradigm and each of the areas impacting the question of its application to moral theory, i.e., principles of verification, levels of reflection, components in relation to the primary model of the Kingdom of God, etc. It also shows the important role that the biblical materials should play in the equation in terms of (1) bringing shape to the reality of the Kingdom of God as the primary model for the eschatological paradigm, (2) providing the key theological images (components) that give rise to the moral implications of the Kingdom of God, and thus the eschatological paradigm, (3) shaping one’s presuppositions regarding the principles of verification, and (4) how the biblical materials operate at all three levels of ethical and paradigm reflection.

This study is concerned primarily with the methodological application of
Figure 1. Diagrammatic overview of interacting variables in the application of eschatology to moral theory.
eschatology as paradigm for the development and/or expression of Christian moral theory, and not with ethical methodology per se. Mott's and Ogletree's projects are analyzed and evaluated only as they provide clear cases that illustrate the issues concerning eschatology as paradigm which this study explores. While this study discusses the role and practical function of Scripture and the Christian community as well as the nature of social involvement within the eschatological paradigm, it does not deal with issues of inspiration and revelation, nor the question of the authority of Scripture per se. Nor is this study concerned with ecclesiology or specific ethical issues of social involvement.

**Definitions**

The proposed interacting variables in the application of eschatology to moral theory require an understanding of their respective meaning in the equation. For this reason, the following terms are defined as used in this study. They are listed alphabetically.

**Area Rules:** Moral rules that apply to various areas of life; one of the ingredients in the structure of ethical theory.

**Bases:** The most fundamental level of philosophical or theological presuppositions which outline the basis for structure in ethical theory; one of the ingredients in the structure of ethical theory.

**Components:** The three theological images which the Kingdom of God (primary model), together with its other supporting models, project within the eschatological
paradigm, i.e., *already/not yet, reign of God, horizon of the future*. They are conceptually interwoven and complementary. They provide a framework that, at least in theory, can embrace the range of possible conceptions of the Kingdom of God. Like a three-stranded cord, they form a comprehensive eschatological paradigm for contemporary Christian ethics.

**Eschatological-Oriented Ethics:** An ethics that takes shape under the themes and presuppositions of eschatology, where eschatology has priority and determines the contours and nature of ethics.

**Eschatological Paradigm:** The overall integrating theme generated by the New Testament eschatological Kingdom of God and its three components, *already/not yet, reign of God, and horizon of the future*.

**Eschatology sans Ethics:** An eschatology that no longer has sufficient form or content to evoke sustained, meaningful ethical reflection or does not transparently explicate implications for moral life.

**Ethical-Oriented Eschatology:** An eschatology that takes shape because of the presuppositions, agendas, and needs of ethics, where ethics has priority over eschatology and uses eschatology for its purposes.

**Ethical Structure:** Structuring ethical theory includes four ingredients or levels of moral reasoning, i.e., cases, area rules, principles, and bases.

**Ethics sans Eschatology:** Christian ethical systems that either surrender the vital connection between ethics and biblical eschatology, or whose foundations eclipse eschatology as a substantial resource.
Kingdom of God: The primary biblical model linking eschatology as paradigm and the array of biblical models that elucidate it.

Levels of Paradigm Operation: The conceptual levels on which paradigms can operate, i.e., macro, meso, micro.

Macro Level: The conceptual level of paradigm operation which brings solutions to broad, global, theological and philosophical issues.

Meso Level: The conceptual level of paradigm operation which brings solutions to problems in intermediate areas of theological and philosophical concerns.

Micro Level: The conceptual level of paradigm operation which brings solutions to detailed specific situations or areas.

Model: A sustained and systematic metaphor or organizing image which gives a particular emphasis and which enables one to notice and interpret certain aspects of some reality not fully understood. Well-constructed models are simple and clear enough to be grasped more or less intuitively; yet they have a logical or, better, an analogical relation to some larger reality. The emphasis here is towards “disclosure” rather than “picturing,” toward “mental models” of systems rather than “scale models” or “working models.”

Paradigm: A way of looking at something, an interpretive model that informs methods and principles of solution. Paradigms provide an interpretive framework, a basic metaphorical strategy in which a given discipline does its work. While models and paradigms together share the essential quality of being “ways of looking at things,” a paradigm encompasses and interprets a larger, more comprehensive conceptual picture and uses models to explicate aspects of that larger picture or envision that larger picture.
as a whole. Paradigms set limits on the range of acceptable models. Paradigms are more comprehensive than models. While all paradigms are models, not all models are paradigms.

**Paradigm Role and Function:** Paradigms can be viewed from two broad perspectives: (1) as facilitating specific moral principles which then need to be translated and applied towards new situations, or (2) as facilitating inner moral formation which shapes people ethically. The first is primarily conceptual while the second is motivational.

**Primary Model:** Models that are clearly primary in terms of structural relationships within a given range of images and which have the ability to both engender and organize a network of models, assemble subordinate images together, and scatter concepts on a higher level. Paradigms can rise or fall or shift according to primary models and the subordinate models which support and enrich them. For New Testament eschatology, the Kingdom of God is the primary model linking eschatology as a paradigm and the array of models that would elucidate it.

**Principles:** The most inclusive and ultimate ethical concepts which are universal and exceptionless, and which can never give way to something more inclusive or expedient; one of the ingredients in the structure of ethical theory.

**Principles of Verification:** This study’s tools for evaluating how effectively the eschatological paradigm answers the crisis of authority and relevance in Christian ethics during this century, and the presuppositions on which the eschatological paradigm is framed by given ethicists. These principles of verification include the role of Scripture,
the role of community, and the nature of social involvement.

Outline of the Study

In the context of the methodological and procedural steps delineated above, it is important for this study to present, first, an understanding of the main theological perspectives and broad ethical implications of the twentieth-century re-interpreted eschatology. Thus, chapter 2 explores the historical-philosophical background to the current eschatological paradigm in Christian ethics. It also identifies and explicates the broad ethical nuances of the paradigm's components. Its purpose is the discovery of basic perspectives and trends in the interpretation and application of eschatology as paradigm for developing and/or expressing moral theory in Christian ethics that have crystallized through the 1970s. From this vantage point one is able to understand what Mott and Ogletree are doing as participants in the developing tradition of the eschatological movement in Christian ethics. The chapter looks to the 1970s for the basic crystallized eschatological paradigm, and to the 1980s and 1990s for clearer methodological application of the paradigm in moral theory.

Chapters 3 and 4, then, describe and analyze the impact that the eschatological paradigm has had (is having) on the projects of Mott and Ogletree. These chapters focus particularly on how the paradigm is working in terms of their use of Scripture, community, and social involvement. They examine how Mott and Ogletree nuance the three ethically evocative components of the eschatological paradigm. They thus analyze the theoretical interpretation of the role and function of eschatology in their respective
approaches to moral theory.¹

Chapter 5 consists of a comparison, evaluation, and critique of Mott's and Ogletree's projects. It explores the basic structures and components of their interpretation in order to explicate the paradigmatic role that eschatology plays when applied to Christian moral theory. It also evaluates the methodological implications which demonstrate that "this is what happens if you take the eschatological paradigm and apply it this way or that way." Finally, chapter 5 concludes with implications and brief suggestions arising from this study for the application of the eschatological paradigm in Christian moral theory.

¹To accomplish this, this study needs to deal with the salient aspects of Mott and Ogletree's eschatology; the relationship of the eschatological paradigm to their ethical method as a whole; their presuppositional approach to and use of Scripture and how this integrates into or is adjusted by the eschatological paradigm; the relationship they perceive between eschatology and ecclesiology; and the practical/theoretical shape their project brings to personal and social ethics, e.g., how implications from their methodology come into play in representative contemporary ethical situations—thus validating, calling into question, or elucidating where the eschatological paradigm concretely leads.
CHAPTER 2

TWENTIETH-CENTURY RE-INTERPRETATION OF ESCHATOLOGY AS PARADIGM FOR CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Understanding the application of eschatology as paradigm for Christian ethics begins first with the question of "what" — What eschatology is in view? Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to set forth the principal theological and philosophical characteristics—insofar as they illumine the ethical perspectives—of twentieth-century re-interpreted eschatology. This outline of the principal characteristics of re-interpreted eschatology includes a summary and critical survey of the development of eschatology as a new paradigm for Christian ethics in twentieth-century theology. It also includes an evaluative description of the paradigm's implications for Christian moral theory as it crystallized through the 1970s. Special attention is paid as well to: (1) the perceived moral nuances of the paradigm's components; (2) the theoretical level on which the paradigm appears to operate; and (3) the general preliminary implications with respect to the "principles of verification." This chapter's review of the principal characteristics and ethical perspectives of twentieth-century re-interpreted eschatology enables one to analyze and evaluate Mott's and Ogletree's application of the paradigm as participants in the eschatological movement in Christian ethics.
It should be noted that the historical survey in this chapter is purposely brief and somewhat generalizing in scope. Nevertheless, it provides an accurate picture of the broad issues and trends apparent in the eschatology/ethics relation throughout Christian history leading up to the 1970s. Since the scope of this study does not lend itself to detailed analysis through each period, or for each theologian named, the reader is encouraged to refer to the bibliographic material cited for the fuller picture.

**Eschatology and Ethics Before the Twentieth Century**

Eschatology has experienced varying degrees of theological interest and relevance during the history of Christianity. Unlike other Christian doctrines that became defined and refined through theological controversy because they were assumed as being conspicuously central to Christian faith and experience, major debates over eschatology were few in number.¹ There has never been a period of Church history in which

¹Erickson, 1149-50. McKim, however, writes that “eschatological controversies have been numerous and protracted in the history of Christianity” and that “some church groups have come into existence solely because of their own eschatological understanding and their time table of specific future events” (Donald K. McKim, *Theological Turning Points: Major Issues in Christian Thought* [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988], 152). What is being suggested here is not the frequency or protraction of eschatological controversies, but the overall theological weight and relevance they have carried in comparison to the other major issues which the Church has debated through the centuries (e.g., the Trinity, Christology, Ecclesiology, the nature of man, Soteriology, sources of authority [Scripture & Tradition], and the sacraments & the nature of the Lord’s supper). Pelikan suggests that, during the post-apostolic era, differing eschatological views, such as millenarianism, were seen as neither orthodox nor heretical, but permissible opinions among others within the range of permissible opinions (Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition [100-600]*, vol. 1 *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971], 125, 129).
eschatology was "the center" of Christian thought.\textsuperscript{1} The broad periods that can be distinguished in the history of eschatological thought yield modest, generalized developments at best.\textsuperscript{2} Only since the nineteenth century has eschatology received the kind of attention that denotes its relevance as a principal, formative thematic in Christian theology and ethics.

It is understandable then, that one looks in vain for a solid, sustained discussion of the relationship between eschatology and ethics before the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{3} The


\textsuperscript{2}This statement should not depreciate, however, the importance of what is referred to here as "modest generalized developments" in eschatological thought. Developments in eschatological thought dovetailed significantly with other spiritual and moral issues within Christian history. McKim outlines developments in eschatological thought in four broad periods: eschatology in the New Testament, early eschatology, Reformation eschatology, and later or modern developments. For McKim, Augustine becomes the focal point around which pre- and post-developments in early eschatological thought are measured. Luther and Calvin become key for measuring developments within Reformation eschatology (McKim, 151-165).

\textsuperscript{3}An exception, however, may be found in Augustine's \textit{City of God} (\textit{NPNF} 2:1-511), and in a lesser degree Calvin's \textit{Institutes} (\textit{LCC} 20:3.6-7). Holwerda suggests that Calvin's eschatological vision is articulated more clearly and forcefully in the appropriate Biblical commentaries than it is in his \textit{Institutes}, and that the positions developed in the \textit{Institutes} need the light of the commentaries to be fully appreciated. Together, they articulate a complementary "pull view" of history to that of his "push view" (i.e., the theological taproot of the sovereignty of God and His predetermining will). See David E. Holwerda, "Eschatology and History: A Look at Calvin's Eschatological Vision," in \textit{Readings in Calvin's Theology}, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 340. Likewise, Luther's recurring thematic of "two kingdoms" articulates a consistent eschatological vision with clearly defined moral implications. See Luther's introductory argument to his \textit{Lectures on Galatians}, \textit{LW} 26:4-12; idem, \textit{Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed}, \textit{LW} 45:81-129; idem, \textit{The Sermon on the Mount}, 21:3-294; idem, \textit{LW} 13:194-195; idem, \textit{LW} 42:38; idem, \textit{LW} 45:91-93; idem, \textit{LW} 46:69-99; and Paul Althaus, \textit{The Ethics of Martin Luther} (Philadelphia:
traditional pattern has been to view eschatology as dealing with the "last things" of
history and an other-worldly future, and to view ethics as dealing with moral problems of
life in a this-worldly present. Their organic tie has been either overlooked or ignored.
This has produced, in effect, an "eschatology sans ethics" and an "ethics sans
eschatology." The term "eschatology sans ethics" is used here to designate an
eschatology that no longer has sufficient form or content to evoke sustained, meaningful
ethical reflection, or does not transparently explicate implications for moral life.¹ The
term "ethics sans eschatology" is used to refer to Christian ethical systems that either
surrender the vital connection between ethics and biblical eschatology, or whose
foundations eclipse eschatology as a substantial resource.² Both concepts are broad
paradigms used here to display trends in the eschatology and ethics dialogue throughout

Fortress Press, 1972), 43-82. See also, Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 106.

¹Eschatology is never really free of ethics, however. Eschatology as a "world-
view" always generates an ethic to go along with it (see Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 20; Steven Charles Mott, "The Use of the Bible in Social Ethics II: The Use of the New Testament: Part II, Objections to the Enterprise," Transformation [July/September 1984]: 20-21; and Alan Geyer, "Toward an Ecumenical Political Ethics: A Marginal American View," in Perspectives on Political Ethics, ed. Koson Srisang [Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1983], 135). A survey of the transformations that have taken place within eschatological thought through the history of the Christian church shows ample evidence that Christian ethics has always been influenced or changed accordingly, and that, more by default than by intent.

²It should be noted here that many ethicists have a functional eschatological vision
even if they do not call it by that name—even if it is not a biblical eschatological vision.
To the degree that they attempt to construct a model of "the good" based on the
fragmentary ethical possibilities in history or attempt to find a trans-historical point of
reference from which judgments of good and evil in history can be made, they are being
influenced by a larger ethical view of reality that can be loosely termed eschatological
(Stackhouse, 282).
Christian history. Eschatology is never really free of ethics. Nor is ethics really ever free of an eschatology.

The biblical witness concerning Christian eschatology exhibits an essential bi-polarity. The End has come! The End has not come!1 In other words, eschatology is fulfilled and yet it is not fulfilled. This bi-polarity is articulated primarily through the biblical imagery of the “kingdom of God” which is both present and future in the person and work of Jesus Christ,2 and whose dimensions of present and future create a tension between the “already” and the “not yet.” Thus, the New Testament Christian community felt that it lived in a crucial “meanwhile,” or “interim period.” This vivid eschatology inevitably influenced Christian ethical thought and conduct.3

The early Christian Church continued to express this eschatology in its literature4


2 Mark 1:15; Matt 6:10; 12:28; Luke 19:11; etc.


4 Apocalyptic imagery and eschatological motivation are expressed in the popular literature of the early Christian centuries: Hermas, The Shepherd “Commandments” 2 (ANF, 2:20); idem. “Similitudes” 7-10 (ANF, 2:38-55); Epistle of Barnabas 15 (ANF, 1:146); Irenaeus Against Heresies 2.22.2, 5.25-36 (ANF, 1:390, 553-567); Clement Epistle to the Corinthians 23-30 (ANF, 1:11-13); Polycarp Epistle to the Philippians 2 (ANF, 1:33); Justin Martyr Dialogue With Trypho 52, 110 (ANF, 1:221, 253, 254); Tertullian Against Marcion 4.39 (ANF, 3:414-417).
and creeds. Early Christian thought and conduct continued to be carried on in this awareness of the power which had changed, was changing, and would change the world-order.

While this eschatological fervor and corresponding moral seriousness were not

1 The "Apostles' Creed," "Nicene Creed," and "Creed of Chalcedon" each affirm the reality of Christ's second advent, moral reckoning, and the life of the world to come. "And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead: whose kingdom shall have no end... and we look for the resurrection of the dead; and the life of the world to come" (Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1919], 28). The "rule of faith" (the oldest term used by the ante-Nicene fathers, Irenaeus, Tertullian, etc.) was a vibrant dynamic in early Christian moral thought and action. See Irenaeus Against Heresies 1.10.1-3 (ANF, 1:330-332); Tertullian Against Heretics 13, 14, 20-22 (ANF, 3:249-250, 252-253); Ignatius To the Magnesians 11 (ANF, 1:63-64). The creeds continued to speak of the coming of Christ in both the past and future tense and served to counterbalance any oversimplified resolution of the already/not yet in either direction (Pelikan, 127). The Christian ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper likewise affirmed eschatological perspectives (Pelikan, 126-127; W. H. Lampe, "Early Patristic Eschatology," in Eschatology, Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers No. 2 [London: Oliver and Boyd, 1957], 21-23).

2 The other-worldly "world view" of early Christian eschatology produced a high indifference to present-worldly values and external structures and forged the Church's ethical spirit of a self-conscious community and fellowship of believers, over against the world. Orientation to a positive goal of divine consummation, as expressed in the return of Jesus and the promised future of the re-created earth, dispelled the pessimistic fatalism and excessive hedonism that affected much of the pagan world. A higher estimation of the bodily life and its significance, as expressed in the hope of the resurrection, ran counter to both excessive asceticism and bodily abuse. Resurrection hope gave dignity and moral worth to temporal behavior—deeds done in time and history and body. Awareness of the approaching judgment curbed to some degree both materialistic indulgence on the one hand and irresponsible cruelty on the other. The promise of eternal life prevented shortsighted concentration on the achievements, pleasures, and rewards of this life. It cast a new light on death—which included a readiness for martyrdom rather than moral or spiritual compromise. See, Beach and Niebuhr, 47, 50; Bromiley, 69-71.
sustained throughout the history of the Christian Church, their broad themes and implications for ethics were nevertheless picked up and nuanced by several of the Church’s prominent thinkers and movements. For example, Augustine’s ethical theory was set within the eschatological worldview and philosophy of history that he spells out in his influential City of God. Luther’s intense eschatological consciousness was a rediscovery of the tension that had been lost between our present state and our hope for the future along with the implications that that tension had for personal and social ethics. Puritan eschatological emphasis, which was rooted in a historicist hermeneutic of Daniel and Revelation, taught that hope was an essential element in Christian faith which, in

1Pelikan puts it succinctly when he writes, “What the texts do suggest is a shift within the polarity of already/not yet and a great variety of solutions to the exegetical and theological difficulties caused by such a shift. These included the reinterpretation of biblical passages that had carried an eschatological connotation, the reorientation of ethical imperatives toward a more complex description of the life of faith and love within the forms of the present world, and the reconsideration and eventual rejection of certain types of apocalyptic expectation that could claim ancient sanction but were no longer suited to the new stage in the development of Christian eschatology. Here too, it is important to see the elements of continuity as well as the elements of change” (Pelikan, 124, emphasis supplied; see also, Beach and Niebuhr, 50-51).

2Augustine City of God, 4.1-34; 12.5-8; 14.1-4, 13, 28; 19.12-17; 20.7-9. See Beach and Niebuhr, 110.

3”The world runs and hastens so diligently to its end that it often occurs to me forcibly that the last day will break before we can completely turn the Holy Scriptures into German” (Martin Luther to Melanchton, on June 2, 1530, Briefe, 5.35, as cited in T. F. Torrance, “The Eschatology of Faith: Martin Luther,” in Kingdom and Church: A Study in the Theology of the Reformation [Fair Lawn, NJ: Essential Books, 1956], 20). See Luther’s introduction to his Lectures on Galatians, LW 28:4-12; idem, LW 49:216; idem, LW 50:220, 245; V. Norskov Olsen, “The Christian Hope in the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century,” in The Advent Hope in Scripture and History, ed. V. Norskov Olsen (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1987), 115-118; Schwarz, 505; and Torrance, 7-72.
turn, encouraged the believer along the path of sanctification.\textsuperscript{1} And the hermeneutic of nineteenth-century Millerite premillennialism (historicist) and Dispensational premillennialism (futurist) again resisted the dismissal of biblical eschatology and its import for ethics by reviving the New Testament tension of living between the now/not yet.\textsuperscript{2}

**Eschatology Sans Ethics**

A reversal of eschatology and ethics began with the deep epochal shift in the relation between the church and the world for which Constantine has become symbol.\textsuperscript{3} The vivid eschatology and corresponding moral seriousness of the early Church had already become blurred as the influence from Hellenistic philosophies and thought categories began structuring the focus and language of Christian theology.\textsuperscript{4} With Constantine, not only is there a new meaning for the word “Christian,” but a radically new


\textsuperscript{2}The precision of Millerite hermeneutics, while producing a significant and specific moral response, effectively made it difficult for people to live normal lives. And while Dispensational hermeneutics tended to fortify slipping behavioral standards, its theoretical possibilities produced an ambiguity that did not initially produce a new clearly articulated Christian lifestyle. See Timothy P. Weber, Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism 1875-1982 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 43, 46, 51, 48; Henry, Christian Personal Ethics, 550.

\textsuperscript{3}Yoder, The Priestly Kingdom, 135-137.

\textsuperscript{4}Schwarz, 503; Bromiley, 77.
eschatology, and a new ethics as well.1 The distinction between the Church and the Kingdom of God now blurs, because the "millennium" runs its course with secular events, and cultural change involves eschatological change.2 Distortions and reconstructions of eschatology inevitably followed,3 until by the sixteenth century only some pietistic and Radical Reformation circles continued to maintain the vivid eschatological hope of Scripture.4 The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brought a general spiritualizing of

1 Yoder, The Priestly Kingdom, 135-137.

2 A virtual post-millennial understanding of Christ's reign elicited a Christian culturalization of every sphere of life and society. The assumed gradual progress of the Kingdom/Church on earth pushed thought of the final consummation and visible return of Jesus into a hazy background (Bromiley, 77-78; Schwarz, 504; Yoder, The Priestly Kingdom, 137-139).

3 Apocalyptic imagery became useful as threats of judgment to prod Christians to repent and lead lives devoted to good. Through the sacrament of penance, and an increasingly elaborated system of purgatory, the cosmic dimension of eschatology receded and an existential component gained. Salvation as the end of history was replaced by salvation at the end of individual history. Sharing this attitude, mysticism urged union with the divine through immediate communion. This eschatological individualism met a forceful challenge in Reformation realism which brought focus again to the hope of the "last day" when Jesus would come. A century later, however, this revived intense hope was again diminished or abandoned with emphasis returning to the personal certitude of salvation. See, Bromiley, 77-79; Richard K. Emmerson, "The Advent Hope in the Middle Ages," in The Advent Hope in Scripture and History, ed. V. Norskov Olsen (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1987), 106-110; Schwarz, 504-506; Olsen, 115-131.

4 Friedmann writes that, "There was simply no room left for a meaningful eschatology within the late Lutheran and post-Lutheran theology. The only place such ideas were kept alive and had a legitimate function was the left way of the Reformation, or, as we all now call it, the Radical Reformation; Anabaptism and related movements" (Robert Friedmann, The Theology of Anabaptism (Scottdale, PA: 1973), 102; see also, Schwarz, 506.)
eschatology which either eliminated it as a relic of a past world view\(^1\) or made it to provide a frame for sociopolitical transformation of the world.\(^2\)

Left stripped of its metaphysical aspect, liberal and speculative eschatology no longer engendered a meaningful ethic. Eschatology was seen as non-essential to the biblical structure of theology and ethics.\(^3\) This neutralization of eschatology through the


\(^2\)Humanistic beliefs in progress (the theory of evolution, and Hegelian and Marxist concepts of dialectical and linear progress) further engendered a secularized eschatology and an eschatologized secularism (Bromiley, 80, 82; Thielicke, 3:380, 381). As noted above, the Ritschlian school saw in the kingdom of God an immanent goal of history, a religious and moral end which would mean the spiritual government of the world (Schwarz, 506).

\(^3\)At the same time, while holding to both eschatology and ethics, Dispensational theology initially erected a cleavage between eschatology and ethics by pushing them both into the future. Here Christ's kingdom ethics would become dramatically relevant only in the future eschatological era, thus dampening the need for present social action and changes in fallen social structures (Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics*, 551; Weber, 65-104). Likewise, failed Millerism played into the hands of liberal and secular cynicism regarding a literal historical eschaton and any ethics that it might engender.
history of the Christian church produced an "eschatology sans ethics." Braaten capsules it succinctly, "We can hardly expect ethics to bear fruit where no seeds of the kind have been sown by the systems of theology which they presuppose."1

Ethics Sans Eschatology

The imminence of the *parousia* was an unchallenged article of early Christian belief, but it coexisted in Christian minds with many other convictions and teachings.2 A host of theological themes, normal interests of life, moral apologetics, and Hellenistic influences together vied as focus for Christian moral reflection. As the fervor of eschatological expectation diminished and the Church experienced unprecedented moral exigencies,3 along with these real life moral situations, a tendency towards both moralism4 and asceticism arose.5 The eschatological dualism of the apostolic Church

1Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 106.


3E.g., dealing with apostasy and combating worldliness in its own midst along with the compromises and laxity which were inevitable as the Church made its way into a pagan culture. In addition there was the need to discover the mind of Christ upon unexplored issues (e.g., wealth, slavery, Church and Society, Church and State, military service, capital punishment, etc.). See R. E. O. White, *Christian Ethics: The Historical Development* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 13-80.

4The preoccupation of the first Christian centuries with ethics finds expression in literature addressed to those outside the church as moral apologetic, and to those inside the Church, as moral training for Church membership (Didache, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Michael W. Holmes [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989], 145-158; Clement *Epistle to the Corinthians* [ANF 1:1-21]; *Epistle of Mathetes to Diogenetus* [ANF 1:23-30]; Clement of Alexandria, *Elucidations, Exhortation to the Heathen*, and *The Instructor* [ANF 2:163-298]). The readiest way for the Church to preserve itself from contamination was to try to codify the Christian ethic. See, White, 26-51; Beach and
(living between two ages) gave place to the metaphysical dualism of the ascetics (living between two worlds), which in turn gave place again to the social dualism of monasticism (living between two types of society—religious and secular).\(^1\) In the process, eschatology no longer vitally conditioned the content or form of Christian ethics. Rather, moral philosophy (Augustine),\(^2\) moral theology (Aquinas),\(^3\) theories of atonement (Abelard),\(^4\) Humanist criticism (Erasmus),\(^5\) soteriology (Luther),\(^6\) the sovereign majesty of God

Niebuhr, 50-57.

\(^{1}\)White, 81-92; Beach and Niebuhr, 55.

\(^{2}\)White, 87.


\(^{6}\)Luther, Treatise on Good Works, LW 44:21-114; idem, LW 35:10; Althaus, 3-24.
(Calvin), 1 conscience and reason (Kant), 2 subjectivism (Edwards), 3 practical Christianity and social concern (Wesley), 4 etc., now nuanced Christian ethics.

One looks in vain for a solid sustained discussion of eschatology and ethics in any of the prominent minds in pre-twentieth-century Christian ethics. 5 In fact, by the end of the nineteenth century, Christian ethics for the most part had been secularized by Liberalism. 6 While still accommodating a certain “eschatology,” it tended philosophically to divorce ethics from biblical eschatology. 7


6 Henry, Christian Personal Ethics, 551.

7 Ibid., 549.
Twentieth-Century Re-interpretation
of Eschatology as the New Paradigm
for Christian Ethics

"Biblical eschatology however, has dominated twentieth-century theology more than any other topic."¹ The irony is that some of the very dynamics which brought virtual destruction of eschatology in the nineteenth century became the theological and ethical catalyst for placing the eschatological thematic back into the center of modern theological interest and inquiry.² Ritschl’s pioneering emphasis of understanding theology in an ethical mode found commanding expression through his aggressive Kingdom of God theology.³ His thoroughly ethical-oriented theology necessitated that his Kingdom of God accordingly be an ethical kingdom.⁴ Influenced by Kant and Schleieermacher's dualistic conception of the Kingdom of God as the highest good, Ritschl forged a new conceptual bond between eschatology and ethics.⁵ The kingdom of God is both a divine

¹Schwarz, 513.


³Ritschl, 10-14, 511-513, 609-670. Ritschl insisted that all elements of Christian doctrine be doubly related, both to spiritual redemption and moral teleology (Diane M. Yeager, "Focus on the Social Gospel: An Introduction," Journal of Religious Ethics 18, no. 1 [Spring 1990]: 3). It is a historical fact that Ritschl’s doctrine of the Kingdom of God continues to be influential even in the present. See Das, 66.

⁴Ritschl himself uses the terminology "the ethical Kingdom of God" (Ritschl, 511-512). See Metzler, 2.

⁵Ritschl, 11; Metzler, 2, 13, 14, 41-42, 71-74. Ritschl gave consummately expression to a framework of dualistic understanding of the kingdom of God by combining the two ideas of the Kingdom of God as religious highest good to be established by God himself and as ethical highest good gradually being realized in the self-realizing activity of men. Here eschatology was no longer simply equated with the eschaton as solely the work of God, but was intimately bound up with Christian ethical
gift and ethical task.\textsuperscript{1} It is the goal and motive of human ethical action. Therefore, ethics is led by the eschatological thematic.\textsuperscript{2}

Through this process of ethicizing the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of God in effect became uneschatological. It completely lost its futuristic dimension.\textsuperscript{3} Moreover, Ritschal's dualistic understanding of history and the kingdom of God contained an inherent contradiction which posed definite problems for theology. How could man realize through ethical action the eschatological Kingdom which would be established by God alone? This inherent contradiction seemed to affirm that traditional theology was correct in totally dissociating eschatology and ethics.\textsuperscript{4}

Yet there was positive value to be seen in Ritschl's bond of eschatology and ethics.\textsuperscript{5} There was apparent, fundamental truth involved in his proposed organic bond.\textsuperscript{6} And since Ritschl so forcefully thrust the idea of the Kingdom of God upon the theological world, eschatology could never again be viewed as an illegitimate offspring of primitive Christianity or an appendage to dogmatics. The relationship of eschatology action in present human history as well.

\textsuperscript{1} Ritschl, 13, 14, 669-670; Metzler, 202.
\textsuperscript{2} Metzler, 202.
\textsuperscript{3} Das, 67.
\textsuperscript{4} Metzler, 2, 5.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 5.
and ethics became thereby an inescapable issue for systematic theology. In response, several waves of eschatological thought have ensued throughout this century as serious attempts have been made to further refine and/or articulate the relationship between eschatology and ethics. These waves of thought have been expressed within either of two contrasting approaches to the eschatology/ethics question, i.e., ethical-oriented eschatology and eschatological-oriented ethics.

**Ethical-Oriented Eschatology**

Some of this century’s waves of eschatological thought have been to make ethics the determining factor in eschatology, i.e., ethical-oriented eschatology. Here eschatology takes shape because of the presuppositions, agendas, and needs of ethics. Eschatology is understood in an ethical mode. It is seen as the normative dimension of the ethical task. Rauschenbush, Bultmann, and Reinhold Niebuhr illustrate this approach to the eschatology/ethics question.

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1Ibid., 204.

2Yeager, 5.

3See James M. Gustafson, "Theology in the Service of Ethics: An Interpretation of Reinhold Niebuhr’s Theological Ethics," in Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of Our Times, ed. Richard Harries (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1986), 24-45. Chastain rightly suggests that we cannot always determine nicely whether ethics determines eschatology or vice versa. Ethics and eschatology often develop along side of one another in a way that they take their character from the basic philosophy of life which underlies their given discipline. Their interrelation however, can be explored in order to understand more fully the implications of their respective presuppositions and the apparent priority they might receive in moral theory (Theron M. Chastain, "Eschatology and Ethics," Review and Expositor 41, no. 3 [April 1944]: 237).

4Stackhouse, 2.
While Ritschl engendered the ethics-oriented approach to eschatology, it was Rauschenbusch who brought it into blatant, vivid focus. "We have a social gospel," he declared. "We need a systematic theology large enough to match it and vital enough to back it."\(^1\) "The social gospel needs theology to make it effective; but theology needs the social gospel to vitalize it."\(^2\) Theology needs periodical rejuvenation.\(^3\) Eschatology in particular needs a thorough rejuvenation.\(^4\) The social gospel has the moral earnestness and faith which exerts constructive influence on the doctrine of eschatology.\(^5\)

The priority of ethics over eschatology for Rauschenbusch is obvious. Eschatology becomes, in effect, a hermeneutical device.\(^6\) The Kingdom of God functions as an interpretive device in that it represents first and foremost an *ethical ideal* which is essentially a *social ideal* where sin becomes a social phenomenon ingrained in the super-personal forces which pattern our lives in society.\(^7\) This Kingdom-ideal guides toward a specific social ethical praxis and at the same time represents its utopian results.

Bultmann's hermeneutical method exhibits a more subtle ethical-oriented

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\(^1\)Rauschenbusch, 1.

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Ibid., 12.

\(^4\)Ibid., 210.

\(^5\)Ibid., 211.


\(^7\)Ibid., 30, 31.
eschatology. His approach includes de-mythologizing the eschatological thematic and linking existentialist philosophy with New Testament interpretation.\(^1\) His demythologizing simply discloses the existential meaning to the eschatological myths, which in effect opens the way for ethics.\(^2\) While he sees an intrinsic connection between eschatology and ethical demand, Bultmann implies that "Jesus was first an existentialist, and only afterward an eschatologist."\(^3\) Here the priority of ethics is explicitly asserted in the existential preceding that of eschatology in importance. This is further affirmed in his statement that "the only true interpretation of eschatology is one which makes it a real experience of human life."\(^4\) Bultmann's approach thus virtually absorbs eschatology into ethics whereby eschatology becomes the whole of ethics.\(^5\) The eschatological thematic simply serves his existential, ethical purposes.

Reinhold Niebuhr's moral theory likewise advances an ethical-oriented...

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\(^3\)Bultmann affirms a unity between eschatology and ethics whereby each is incomplete without the other in calling man to radical obedience in terms of his *Now* as the hour of decision for God. See Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 52, 122, 129-131; idem, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 15, 21; Hiers, 94, 99.


\(^5\)Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics*, 551-552. Das asserts that for Bultmann, ethics essentially "becomes eschatology" (Das, 71).
eschatology. For Niebuhr, theology (and thus eschatology) was always in the service of ethics. He states that "[faith] illumines experience and is in turn validated by experience." This maxim about life was morally, socially, and politically relevant. And while theology and ethics for him were dialectically related, weight was clearly on ethics. The basic eschatological themes of Scripture were seen by Niebuhr as "symbols." While he gives a very straightforward explanation of these so-called eschatological "symbols," it is important to realize that not all of Niebuhr's eschatology is as obviously presented. In other theological writings, and certainly in his political writings for a secular audience, Niebuhr seldom makes mention of eschatology per se. In his ethical writings, Christian eschatology is often implicit. Furthermore, the "symbol" of

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1 R. Niebuhr was always careful to point out that he was an ethicist concerned with problems of action in history, and not a theologian interested in ideation (Stackhouse, 245).

2 Gustafson, "Theology in the Service of Ethics," 44. Niebuhr drew on Christian doctrine insofar as it illumined the human ethical predicament, otherwise it had no a priori value (Stackhouse, 244-245).


4 Gustafson, "Theology in the Service of Ethics," 36.

5 "The symbol of the second coming of Jesus can neither be taken literally nor dismissed as unimportant." They (the return of Christ, the last judgment, and the resurrection) serve as pointers to the character of the eternal which finite minds cannot comprehend. Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, 2:289-301 passim; Watts, 5-7.

6 This is seen in his phrase "impossible possibility" and the development of his psychological metaphor of self within an overarching moral frame of reference in terms of a tension between the ideal and the actual. Reinhold Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 37; idem, The Self and the Dramas of History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955); Watts, 7; Stackhouse, 2, 27, 238-
eschatology enabled Niebuhr to express an ethical realism which takes into full account the immoral nature of social interaction, and at the same time articulate how the "eschaton" brings ethical meaning to present social action. In so doing, Niebuhr uses the eschatological thematic in a way that theologically coheres with his ethical and political thought.

Eschatological-Oriented Ethics

Weiss's radical opposition to Ritschl's bonding of eschatology and ethics in an evolutionistic, immanent, and cultural-ethical interpretation of the Kingdom of God served to bring renewed focus toward biblical eschatology and attempts to explicate it theologically. This renewed biblical theological focus engendered waves of eschatological thought that made eschatology the determining factor in ethics, i.e., eschatological-oriented ethics. Ethics would now take shape under the themes and presuppositions of eschatology. Ethics would be understood in an eschatological mode. This approach can be seen in the works of Barth, Thielicke, Pannenberg, Moltmann, and Braaten.

Barth drew the first broad (but clear) stokes towards eschatological-oriented ethics

247; Gustafson, "Theology in the Service of Ethics," 34.

1Watts, 203.


in his now classic Epistle to the Romans. "If Christianity be not altogether thoroughgoing eschatology," he wrote, "there remains in it no relationship whatever with Christ." While his eschatological reaction to liberal excesses had been too strong (and existentialist), it nevertheless raised eschatology to an unparalleled prominent position in systematic theology. Theology would now be approached through eschatology. Ethics would follow suit. "Human possibilities become ethical," Barth pressed, "only in the shadow of the final eschatological possibility." And "when . . . they [human possibilities] do stand there [in the shadow of the final eschatological possibility], they become at once the only possibility, for they are an urgent, compelling necessity." Accordingly, "the way of theological ethics" for Barth is through the eschatological thematic. While not yet a fully developed eschatological-oriented ethics, it is nevertheless seminal.

Thielicke’s motto, “Theological ethics is eschatological or it is nothing,” clearly expressed the maturing understanding of the meaning of the Kingdom of God and the

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1Barth, Epistle to the Romans, 314.

2Barth’s existential eschatology lost sight of the telos, the goal and end of history. He later admits, however, to his own excesses and begins to bring adjustments to his perspective. See the comparison of his exegesis of Rom 13:11 in Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 2, pt. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 635, and idem, Romans, 500; Berkouwer, 26-29.

3Barth, Romans, 449.


5For ethics Barth’s eschatological thematic is expressed under the rubric of God as Redeemer, where the divine command is heard. Barth, Ethics, 52-61.

importance of eschatology for the foundations of Christian ethics. While following the broad path outlined by Barth, Thielicke went on to focus eschatology more clearly with respect to its formative influence on ethics. In keeping with the New Testament witness, He placed Christian ethics in the field of tension between the old and the new aeons—with its resultant continuity and discontinuity—and the question of how they intersect within the individual moral agent. The theme of ethics became "walking between two worlds," a paradoxical "impossible possibility."

The most far-reaching proposals to recover the significance of eschatology for Christian ethics have been advanced by Pannenberg, Moltmann, and Braaten. For them, a complete reconstruction of the foundations of ethics follows from the supposed "return" to the fundamental categories of "hope" and "future" in eschatological thought.

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2 Thielicke, Theological Ethics, 43-44.

3 Ibid., 44, 47.

4 Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God; idem, Ethics, 175-197; Moltmann, Theology of Hope; Braaten, The Future of God; idem, Eschatology and Ethics. Pannenberg and Moltmann are the key visionaries here. Braaten essentially Americanizes Pannenbergian eschatological thought. See also Das, 74-86; Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 108; Gardner, 204.

5 Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 108, 12.
the future—"the real genesis is not at the beginning, but at the end"—is worked over into a broad theological metaphysics that posits reality as eschatological.\textsuperscript{1} "Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present."\textsuperscript{2} Eschatology, then, is seen as determining the goal, the norm, the motive, and the context of Christian ethics.\textsuperscript{3} The result has been termed "eschatological ethics," "proleptic ethics," or "eschatopraxis."\textsuperscript{4} It is doing the future now, ahead of time.\textsuperscript{5}

Emerging Imagery for Eschatology and Ethics

Within the context of the above two paths that the bonding of eschatology and ethics have taken in our century, three significant models of the Kingdom of God have likewise emerged: (1) the already/not yet dialectic; (2) the reign of God motif; and (3) the horizon of the future perspective.\textsuperscript{6} These three models have come to serve as conceptual bridges to interpret the meaning of the Kingdom of God, and to resolve several tensions

\textsuperscript{1} Moltmann, \textit{Theology of Hope}, 9; Braaten, \textit{Eschatology and Ethics}, 34, 37, 45, 46; Bloch, 1628.

\textsuperscript{2} Moltmann, \textit{Theology of Hope}, 16.

\textsuperscript{3} Braaten, \textit{Eschatology and Ethics}, 122.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 6, 110-111, 116-122.

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 121-122.

\textsuperscript{6} The reader should be reminded here that, at bottom, the eschatology/ethics question within Christianity in our century has revolved primarily around the biblical imagery of the Kingdom of God.
and problems that are recognized as fundamental to the eschatology/ethics discussion.¹

This study has further defined these three models as “components” of the eschatological paradigm. The purpose for defining these three models as “components” has to do with the interrelation of models, primary models, and paradigms in conceptual theory. This is developed and explained under coming segments of this chapter, i.e., “Eschatology as Paradigm” and “Components of Eschatological Paradigm.”

**Tensions and Problems**

The tensions and problems that the eschatology/ethics question raises with respect to the Kingdom of God include the following fundamental concerns:

immanence/transcendence, Kingdom/history, future/hope, church/world,

principles/content, philosophical categories, and Christology. Together these tensions

¹Numerous images have emerged through Christian history as conceptual bridges to explicate the meaning of the Kingdom of God. Theoretically, the possibility of an infinite number of models exists. Just eight of those possible images have been insightfully outlined by Howard A. Snyder (Models of the Kingdom [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991]). These include the Kingdom as: future hope, inner spiritual experience, mystical communion, institutional church, countersystem, political state, Christianized society, and earthly utopia. Snyder, however, correctly asks the question, “Are all these really models of the Kingdom, or are some of them rather models of spirituality or of the Christian life, unrelated to the question of the Kingdom? For in some of the proposed models, kingdom language is scarcely found” (ibid., 18-19). The point at issue for this study here is an important one. While all possible images of the Kingdom may in one way or another provide an open window into the meaning of the Kingdom of God, all may not provide a sustained and systematic metaphor for a comprehensive understanding with respect to application in moral theory. Furthermore, they all may not operate on the same level hermeneutically. Some images are evidently primary in that they open the way for other images to operate or provide supplementary imagery. This study takes the position that the images selected herein are of that primary nature. They operate from the level of exegesis and theological foundations.
and problems have comprised the major relevant concerns which a comprehensive eschatological paradigm for ethics would need to satisfactorily balance and resolve.¹

These tensions and problems are briefly explored before outlining the three models which have emerged, in part, towards their resolution.

Immanence/transcendence

Eschatology and ethics are set between the two levels of immanence and transcendence.² The sphere of eschatology for immanence is this-worldly present and is realized by (or with the help of) human activity. It is evolutionary, cultural-ethical, and marked by continuity. The opposite extreme of transcendence focuses on an other-worldly future that is achieved by God and not man. It is cataclysmic, individual-soteriological, and marked by discontinuity.³ Eschatology as paradigm obviously would

¹Snyder presents six fundamental tension points or polarities as central to the mystery of God’s reign, i.e., present versus future, individual versus social, spirit versus matter, gradual versus climactic, divine action versus human action, and the church’s relation to the world (ibid., 16-18). The outline of tensions and problems which this study proposes encompass those of Snyder and go beyond to include important issues relevant to our concerns with regards to ethics (e.g., principles/content, philosophical categories, and Christology).

²Johnstone, 50.

³This century’s renewed emphasis on eschatology as an integral part of the whole of Christian theology brought with it a critical reaction to the immanent evolutionary views of the nineteenth century. This re-assertion of transcendence, however, tended to again strain (or separate) the two lines of eschatology and ethics. Within the theological current that emphasized transcendence, however, intentional effort was made to relate the transcendent eschatological dimension to the world of man, ethical experience, and political reality (ibid., 51). A “return” to nuanced immanental patterns would continue to be an attraction for those focusing on a strong and direct social concern (ibid., 48).
need to articulate theological/ethical balance between these two perspectives.

_Closely linked to the problem of immanence/transcendence is the relation between the Kingdom and history._ In other words, how does eschatology relate to historical movement and the passage of time? Is the Kingdom here but not now—historical and future? Or is it here and now—historical and present? Or not here but now—above history and present? Or not here and not now—above history and future?1 The sphere and time of eschatology—whether it is in history or outside of history, past, present, or future—has significant implications for ethics.2

The _Kingdom/history_ dialogue has led toward the question of the future of the

1Chastain, "Eschatology and Ethics," 238.

2Ibid., 239. The issue revolves around the notion that ethics is concerned with the "this-worldly and present" and not the "other-worldly and future"—that there is no ethics beyond the here and now, beyond history and time. It follows that an eschatologically founded ethic would in essence be an unreal ethic. For Christian ethics to be possible, then, the Kingdom must in some way be here and now, historical. A theological interpretation of history or the Kingdom, then, is called for in order to link the eschatological vision with the concrete history lived by men in a world of change and social exigencies (Johnstone, 73). But while eschatology would need to affirm the reality of the Kingdom of God in history, it would need to do so in a way that would not equate the Kingdom with the process of history or deny its (the Kingdom's) future dynamic (Johnstone, 63). An important methodological concern here is whether a specific concept of history predetermines the eschatological outlook or whether the eschatological perspective determines the view of history (Hutter, 28).
Kingdom and the future of the world. At issue is an adequate hermeneutical bridge spanning the eschatological horizon of the biblical message and the orientation of modern secular culture toward an open future.\textsuperscript{1} The Blochian neo-Marxist-influenced return to the fundamental categories of "hope" and "future" in eschatological thought pressed the need for a merging of these respective horizons.\textsuperscript{2} The issue here is also the significance of present ethical action in the light of the coming future. In what way does the reality of the future enter the present and exert moral influence?\textsuperscript{3}

\textit{Church/world}

The field of operation for the moral implications of the eschatological Kingdom are set within the dualities between the Church and world, and between the social and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Braaten, \textit{The Future of God}, 18, 23, 32.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 17-32; Pannenberg, \textit{Ethics}, 175-197; idem, \textit{Theology and the Kingdom of God}, 51-71; Moltmann, \textit{Theology of Hope}, 15-36.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Peters writes that one of the abiding questions being directed towards any eschatological theory which takes temporal movement seriously is the issue of disjunction and conjunction. Will the ultimate future be so radically different from the present that there will be little or no continuity, i.e., disjunctive? Or will actions in the present have significance for the reality yet to come, i.e., conjunctive? The former (disjunction), it is proposed, would make present ethical actions irrelevant to God's future. Thus eschatology could not function as a sanction for intrahistorical ethics. On the other hand, it is asserted that conjunction would allow present ethical actions to have a determining impact on what will ultimately come. But this would come at the risk of collapsing eschatology into history, and losing the divinely consummated Kingdom. It follows, then, that an ethic based on eschatology must affirm both disjunction and conjunction. And it must do so in a way that the future exerts moral influence on the present. See Ted F. Peters, "Pannenberg's Eschatological Ethics," in \textit{The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg}, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 246.
\end{itemize}
personal.\textsuperscript{1} Overcoming these dualities presents a challenge for eschatology and ethics. The issues revolve around the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility, and whether Kingdom ethics is focused toward the Church or toward the future of the whole world.\textsuperscript{2} Can eschatology articulate a worldview and life-view that embraces world questions and societal needs, and do so in a way that all the spheres of human life and action are included within the range of Christian responsibility? Is eschatology able to merge the future of the church and the future of the world into a common moral horizon?\textsuperscript{3}

\textit{Philosophical categories}

The ability to find conceptual bridges between what the biblical texts say about the moral life and the presumptions and questions of philosophical ethics has been an integral part of the eschatology/ethics dialogue. This comes from the fact that dominant philosophical conceptions of moral life have consistently influenced directions (or

\textsuperscript{1}Chastain, “Eschatology and Ethics,” 238-239; Johnstone, 54, 56.

\textsuperscript{2}Does eschatology produce a pessimism that sets the Church against the world and its fallen structures with evangelism of the individual as focus rather than social moral renewal? Or is there an optimism that finds the Church as a community for the world, a transforming agent of the world? If the Church exists to serve the Kingdom in history, how is it to be pointed toward the world? See Arthur P. Johnston, “The Kingdom in Relation to the Church and the World,” in \textit{In Word and Deed}, ed. Bruce Nicholls (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1985), 109-132; Wolfhart Pannenberg, “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” \textit{Una Sancta} (Christmas 1967): 3-27; Henry, \textit{The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism}.

\textsuperscript{3}These questions revolve around the need for an eschatological perspective which both denies the ultimate value of the present (thus opening it up to criticism and change) and affirms the value of the present as a valid field for Christian action. See Braaten, \textit{The Future of God}, 23-32, 109-116; Pannenberg, “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” 5; and Johnstone, 57.
response) in Christian ethics.\textsuperscript{1} The concern is whether an eschatologically informed ethics can be reciprocally related to philosophical ethics in a way that it can: (1) appropriate the categories which appear in the light of philosophical analysis, and, at the same time; (2) offer a comprehensive viewpoint which can overcome the contradictions that classically cling to the various types of philosophical ethics?\textsuperscript{2} Furthermore, there is the question as to what kind of ethic eschatology generates.\textsuperscript{3} Within this context of bridging eschatological ethics toward philosophical modes of moral thought, there is also the question of the highest good (\textit{summum bonum}) and what is right morally.\textsuperscript{4} Finally, eschatology is being challenged to articulate an ontological foundation for ethics which locates the point of convergence between the source of the good and the source of being.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{1}I.e., teleology (consequentialism), deontology, perfectionism (virtue ethics), situationalism (contextualism), etc.


\textsuperscript{3}More specifically, is it a mixture of philosophical perspectives or does it provide a dynamic perspective and methodology which is distinct from them? Or viewed oppositely, what kind of eschatology does Christian ethics need in order to adequately resolve the various concerns raised by philosophical ethics? See Ezell, 81-87; Braaten, \textit{Eschatology and Ethics}, 105, 113, 115-116.

\textsuperscript{4}The \textit{summum bonum} has to do with moral value and the ultimate worthwhile end or goal of living. In ethics, goodness has two main senses, i.e., moral goodness and teleological goodness (which overlaps with eschatology). The question of "what is right" has to do with moral obligation and refers to actions or conduct that is ethically correct. It deals with behavior rather than overall ideals of life. Eschatology is being challenged with bringing unity to these questions whereas philosophical ethics has tended to set them in competition. See Burton F. Porter, \textit{Reasons for Living: A Basic Ethics} (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1988), vii, viii; Braaten, \textit{Eschatology and Ethics}, 114; Peters, 241, 245.

\textsuperscript{5}In metaphysics the \textit{summum bonum} (highest good) is the highest value or good in a hierarchy of values or goods, where the subordinate values or goods are related.
Principles/content

The bridging of eschatology toward the concerns and categories of philosophical ethics, as well as contemporary social exigencies, naturally raises the question of specificity and precision. How concrete is its ethical content? Can eschatology provide a blueprint for social action or ethical behavior in the world? Or will it merely provide moral imagery from which one draws analogies and makes inferences? How much of the eschatological vision is moral content, and how much is inspiration and motivation toward vision-defined action? The answer to these questions is basic to ethical method and application.

Christology

Finally, an understanding of the relationship between eschatology and ethics is linked inexorably with an understanding of the person and work of Jesus. The New Testament locates the Kingdom in Jesus' person and ministry, thus forging a direct link ontologically and derive their value accordingly. The point of such convergence for Christian ethics is God. God determines both what is and also what is good, and Who ultimately frames the nuances of the eschatological paradigm that will define more specifically the good and the right. Peters, 241.

1If eschatology generates deontological or teleological themes, or articulates the summum bonum and what is right, how precise can it be?

2Johnstone, 56; Dahl, 375, 376.

3The questions here include, too, whether or not eschatology leaves us with middle-axioms (which are neither too general nor too particular), proximate norms and principles, or only horizontal ultimate Christian norms? Johnstone, 63; Das, 86.

between Jesus and eschatology. It is a link where, some would say, eschatology includes the entire history of Jesus, and which sees eschatology as having proleptic presence in Christ. The questions here revolve around the function of Christology in eschatological ethics. Does Christology provide a paradigm for the good and the right within the eschatological thematic? Does it provide a proleptic sample of eschatological fulfillment in human existence? Can it bring some precision to determining what goals in life are worth seeking and by what means?

Already/Not Yet Dialectic

The "eschatological-oriented ethic" approach to the ethics question initially opened the way toward greater biblical/theological precision with regard to the meaning of the Kingdom of God and the interpretation of New Testament eschatology. The most characteristic feature of this precision was found in the temporal tension between the present and the future, i.e., the already/not yet dialectic. In this component, the

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1 See Konig, 1.
2 Ibid., 5.
3 Ezell, 78.
4 Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 115.

5 This study is outlining here just one developing and, subsequently, generally accepted view within Protestant systematic theology. It is understood that the imagery outlined here is not the only or unique way to see the Kingdom of God as expressed in New Testament eschatology. However, it is this study's position that Mott and Ogletree assume it and worked within this viewpoint, and that Ladd, Schrage, and the other NT theologians cited represent "givens" with regard to this important New Testament eschatology imagery. Ladd, The Presence of the Future; idem, A Theology of the New Testament; Schrage, 19.
simultaneity of present and future is characteristic of Jesus whose person and work brings the effectual presence of the Kingdom into the realm of historical reality. Since Jesus proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom as a future event and at the same time anticipated it in His person in a proleptic way, the Kingdom of God has already come into history in advance of its apocalyptic manifestation. In a unique and dynamic way then, the Kingdom is and is not here. It is both present and future. Because of this, there is an overlapping of the two ages—this present age and the age to come—where believers live “between the times.” The present old age goes on, but the powers of the new age have erupted into the old age. Eschatology, then, has been inaugurated but not consummated.

This already/not yet component recaptures the essential bi-polarity of the biblical witness. Furthermore, it enables the required conceptual balance between the

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2 A key term for some working within this imagery is “proleptic.” Jesus is the sign of the proleptic presence of the future (Schrage, 19). There is a proleptic presence of the eschatological kingdom in the person and work of Jesus (Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 110; Schwarz, 515).


6 Ibid., 93.

7 See above discussion, 33-39.
immanent and transcendental realities of the Kingdom.\textsuperscript{1} It facilitates clarification with regard to the relation between the Kingdom and history. It also affirms that eschatology cannot be isolated from Christology.\textsuperscript{2} The already/not yet must still be articulated more precisely: (1) in what sense the Kingdom is here; (2) in what sense it is to be further realized before the second coming of Christ; and (3) in what sense it will be fully realized at the second coming.\textsuperscript{3} Nevertheless, the already/not yet component presents broad imagery for structuring theological and ethical implications of New Testament eschatology.

Reign of God

Another characteristic feature of the growing biblical/theological precision in New Testament eschatology came with the reign of God component. The biblical witness expresses diverse contexts in which the Kingdom of God theme appears. The Kingdom is presented in: (1) an abstract meaning of reign or rule; (2) as the apocalyptic future order; (3) as something present among men; and (4) as a present realm or sphere into which men are now entering.\textsuperscript{4} Furthermore, there is the distinction between the

\textsuperscript{1}Furthermore, the "already" and the "not yet" depend on each other and presuppose each other. Assertions about the present point toward the coming fulfillment, while claims concerning the future are grounded in their present anticipation and initiation. Schwarz, 515.

\textsuperscript{2}Ezell, 80.

\textsuperscript{3}Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism, 53.

\textsuperscript{4}Ladd, The Presence of the Future, 123.
Kingdom as the reign of God and the Kingdom as the realm over which He reigns. The reign of God component is understood as defining the Kingdom primarily in its abstract or dynamic idea of reign, rather than the concrete idea of the realm over which God rules. It also posits God’s dynamic reign as the integrating concept for the diverse nuances of the Kingdom found in the biblical witness.

The reign of God component has made it possible to understand how the Kingdom can be both present and future, both inward and outward, both spiritual and apocalyptic. It has made it possible, as well, to understand how the Kingdom can manifest itself in two different ways (reign/realm), at two different times (present/future), to accomplish the same ultimate redemptive end. Furthermore, this component is seen as opening the way toward overcoming the dualities between the Church and the world, and between the social and the personal. It reaches out over all spheres of human life and action so that the world, too, is clearly affirmed as the subject of God’s dominion. Yet this dynamic reign of God invades the present age without transforming it into the

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1Ibid., 124.
2Ibid., 128, 130; Johnston, 128.
3Ladd, The Presence of the Future, 42.
4Ibid., 139.
5Johnstone, 54.
age to come.\textsuperscript{1} God's "reign" still stands in total opposition to the world, its sin, and its oppressive systems and materialism.\textsuperscript{2} While the full implications of the reign of God component must still be articulated, it nevertheless provides useful imagery for structuring the theological and ethical ramifications of New Testament eschatology.

**Horizon of the Future**

The third component model that has emerged in conceptualizing the bond between eschatology and ethics is the horizon of the future imagery. Biblical eschatology by nature is future-oriented. It points beyond this life to something that is more ultimate and complete—not mere spiritual survival only, but a final cosmic reconciliation which encompasses a "new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."\textsuperscript{3} Here the Kingdom of God is the Christian's future hope. This hope naturally elicits a forward-looking stance, a peering into the future, an imagining of what will be.\textsuperscript{4} The practical result for Christian ethics is that this gazing towards the horizon of "what is about to come" inevitably influences present moral life.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{1}Ladd, The Presence of the Future, 149.

\textsuperscript{2}At bottom, God's reign in the world is one in which He rules not only providentially in history to call a people to Himself from out of the world, but where He rules also in the church and through the lives of believers for the world (Johnston, 127, 125).


\textsuperscript{4}Rom 8:18-25; Heb 11:8-16.

\textsuperscript{5}1 John 3:1-3; 2 Pet 3:11-13; Col 3:1f.; Heb 12:18-28; Titus 2:11-14; Matt 24:45-51; 25:31-46.
The horizon of the future component is seen as facilitating this leaping forward in imagination toward what lies ahead—until that "not yet" evokes powerful images which bring moral value and meaning back to the present. Furthermore, it is a component that, for some, represents the future's potential for bringing hermeneutical, epistemological, and motivational value into the present.¹ It affirms the reality that Christian hope leads to Christian practice. And it is an invitation to Christian ethical consciousness in the light of what lies ahead in the coming Kingdom.²

While the horizon of the future component emerges naturally from the biblical witness of the moral reality of the eschatological Kingdom of God, it has been nuanced significantly by futuristic eschatology which posits that the essence of things lies in their future.³ According to this view, since the essence of things lies in their future, the

¹Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 52.
²See Douglas J. Schuurman, Creation, Eschaton, and Ethics: The Ethical Significance of the Creation-Eschaton Relation in the Thought of Emil Brunner and Jürgen Moltmann (New York: Peter Lang, 1991); 1-12, 149-174; Childs, 347-360.
³Peter Kuzmic, "History and Eschatology: Evangelical Views," in In Word and Deed, ed. Bruce Nicholls (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1985), 149. Its philosophical backdrop is the Blochian neo-Marxist-influenced hermeneutic of the ontological priority of the future—"the real genesis is not at the beginning, but at the end"—which is worked over into a broad theological metaphysics that posits reality as eschatological (Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 34, 37, 45, 46; Bloch, 16-28; and Moltmann, Theology of Hope, 9). The intent, of course, is not to imitate or baptize Bloch's messianic philosophy, but to build a theology of hope and future (eschatology) on presuppositions of Christian theology, where the God of promise and exodus—who is a God with future as His essential nature—reigns unconditionally in the present because of and through the power of the resurrection of Jesus. Within this theology of hope, God is in Himself the power of the future. He is the ultimate future. There is no future beyond God Himself. God in His very being is the future of the world. God has been the future of all past events. See Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, 61-63, 133; idem, Ethics, 190-193;
ultimate future becomes the new paradigm of transcendence whose power transforms and
brings about alteration in the conditions of history itself.\footnote{1} Within this thinking, the notion
of the \textit{horizon of the future} supposedly encapsulates that sought-for hermeneutical bridge
that can help span the eschatological horizon of the biblical message and the orientation
of modern secular culture toward an open future.\footnote{2} It is a component whose imagery is
consciously aimed more directly at the secular world rather than being limited to the
church alone.\footnote{3} The bottom line here is that the Kingdom is seen as the future of the entire
world and, as such, it defines the ultimate horizon for all ethical statements.\footnote{4}
Unfortunately the bipolarity of the biblical teaching has been lost in much of this
evangelical futuristic eschatology.\footnote{5}

\textit{The horizon of the future} component, however, remains a powerful figure for

\textbf{Moltmann, Theology of Hope, 9, 15-36.}

\footnote{1}Das, 78.

\footnote{2}Modern secular culture's orientation toward an open future assumes an
anthropology of hope, and stresses the newness of that which lies in the future. Braaten,

\footnote{3}It seeks to find a common horizon between the biblical worlds of meaning and
those which make up our sense of reality. It facilitates the significance of present ethical
action in the light of the coming future in a way which avoids the disjunction/conjunction

\footnote{4}This is predicated on the fact that, ultimately, it is God who determines the good.
He is the ultimate good when He is understood as relating Himself to our world in the
coming of His rule (kingdom). Peters, 241; Pannenberg, \textit{Theology and the Kingdom of
God}, 74, 111.

\footnote{5}At bottom it has become a philosophy of hope more than a biblical apocalyptic
eschatology. Kuzmic, 149.
structuring the theological and ethical implications of New Testament eschatology. And like the *already/not yet* and *reign of God* components, its full implications for our eschatology/ethics question still need articulating.

Paradigm Synthesis Through the 1970s

The relationship between eschatology and ethics essentially remained problematic through the first half of the twentieth century. And while solutions to the tension and problems were emerging, no final clarification of their relationship could be given even by the 1970s. Yet, by the 1970s a twofold pattern had emerged with respect to the eschatology/ethics question. First, eschatology was becoming increasingly recognized for its potential as a paradigm for Christian ethics. Second, eschatology was being viewed/articulated primarily through the three component models which have been outlined above, i.e., *already/not yet, reign of God*, and the *horizon of the future*.

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1 The reader should remember that "it is not the future, only the futuristic, that conflicts with the meaning of eschatology" (Berkouwer, 31). And so there must be care to articulate the nuances of the horizon of the future within the sphere of biblical eschatology rather than philosophical categories of hope. In addition, this nuancing of eschatology must be kept in balance with protology, as any ontological dynamics of future cannot be divorced from those of creation (see Schuurman, *Creation, Eschaton, and Ethics*, 1-12, 149-174; Childs, 347-360).

2 Johnstone, 73; Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics*, 550. "A bias against the full significance for ethics of the Christian doctrine of last things . . . continues to be a major problem of ethics in the mid-twentieth century," says Henry (ibid.).

3 Johnstone, 85.

4 The resources for developing this section on "Paradigm Synthesis Through the 1970s" and the following section on "Implications for Moral Theory" are drawn, for the most part, from theologians/ethicists representative of this synthesis period.
Eschatology as Paradigm

The emergence of eschatology as a paradigm for Christian moral thought followed the cultural wave on which the theology of hope was riding following World War II. It developed as part of the concern towards how to get beyond the general existentialism of the post-war era and how to acquire future perspectives for building a more just, more peaceable and more humane world. Hope took the place of apathy. The 1960s in particular were seen as years of hope, a new beginning and a turn to the future. It included, too, the emergence of a post-holocaust theology, i.e., asking the question if one’s theology could remain unchanged before and after Auschwitz (If this is the case, be on your guard.), the need to do theology in conversation with the Jews, and a linkage with other forms of oppression.

The emergence of eschatology as a paradigm for Christian moral thought also coincided with the discussion and development of the use of models and paradigms in theology—specifically in discussing the Kingdom of God. Considerable literature on

1Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 7.


using models and paradigms in theology has developed since the early 1960s.\textsuperscript{1} And models are increasingly employed today as a method of theological exploration.\textsuperscript{2}

Historically, this focus on models and paradigms in theology has mirrored the discussion and changing place of models in mathematics and the natural and social sciences.\textsuperscript{3} As with math and the sciences, the model method represents attempts in theology to describe or to explore some biblical/theological reality not fully understood.\textsuperscript{4} Given this historical


\textsuperscript{3}The widespread use of the model method was not a matter of chance. It grew, rather, out of a historical situation that called for methodology that was both open and flexible, but which at the same time allowed for precision and clarity. It was based on the assumption that reality is multi-dimensional and that there is a need for a variety of forms to reflect it. See Cousins, 81; Barbour, 3-10 passim; Ramsey, Models and Mystery, 1-21 passim; Ferré, 9.

\textsuperscript{4}The emphasis has been towards "disclosure" rather than "picturing," toward "mental models" of systems rather than "scale models" or "working models." See, Ramsey, Models and Mystery, 1-21; Barbour, 6, 30-34, 49-70.
situation in theological method, it is only natural that eschatology would become nuanced accordingly.

It will be helpful at this point to note some important distinctions between the nature and role of models and that of paradigms. "A model is, in essence, a sustained and systematic metaphor,"¹ an "organizing image" which gives particular emphasis, enabling one to notice and interpret certain aspects of some reality not fully understood.² "Well-constructed models are simple and clear enough to be grasped more or less intuitively; yet they have a logical or, better, an analogical relation to the larger reality being investigated."³ A paradigm, on the other hand, is comprehensive. It is an "interpretive framework," a "basic metaphorical strategy" in which a given discipline does its work.⁴ While models and paradigms together share the essential quality of being "ways of looking at things" or "conceptual systems," a paradigm encompasses and interprets a larger, more comprehensive conceptual picture and uses models to explicate aspects of that larger picture or envision that larger picture as a whole.⁵ Furthermore, a paradigm

¹McFague, Metaphorical Theology, 67.
²Barbour, 6-8, 29-70.
³Snyder, 20.
⁴McFague, Metaphorical Theology, 79-80. Kuhn asserts that a paradigm embodies a set of conceptual, methodological, and metaphysical assumptions (Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962]).
⁵While all paradigms are models, not all models are paradigms. McFague, Metaphorical Theology, 80; Barbour, 8-11; 92-146.
sets the limits on the range of acceptable models.\textsuperscript{1}

Given this distinction between models and paradigms, it can be suggested that the inherent metaphysical nature of eschatology predisposes its performing a paradigmatic role in theology and moral theory rather than that of a modeling role. In addition, the inherent metaphysical nature of eschatology necessitates supporting models for elucidation. This is true not only for explication of particular aspects of the eschatological reality, but for envisioning it as a whole as well.

In the context of the discussion and development of the model method in theology, together with the broader re-interpretation of eschatology in this century, eschatology thus became recognized for its potential as a paradigm for theology and moral theory. Eschatology became, for many, an "interpretive framework," a "metaphorical strategy" for doing theology and ethics. This is seen in the literature developing during this time, and is expressed most clearly in the convergence of ideas regarding the role of eschatology in theology and ethics through the mid-1970s.\textsuperscript{2}

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\textsuperscript{1}Barbour, 124; McFague, \textit{Metaphorical Theology}, 109.

Components of Eschatological Paradigm

By the 1970s eschatology was commonly being viewed/articulated through the three significant models outlined thus far, i.e., \textit{already/not yet, reign of God}, and the \textit{horizon of the future}.\textsuperscript{1} As we have already noted, these three models have come to serve as conceptual bridges to interpret the meaning of the Kingdom of God, and to resolve the

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\textsuperscript{1}Not every theologian or ethicist has represented these component models with the same language or wording. The theological nuances of the \textit{horizon of the future}, for instance, have been expressed through such varied language as “theology of hope,” “the future of God,” “theology of promise,” etc. Likewise, the \textit{reign of God} has been termed as “divine kingship,” ”kingship of God,” ”kingship of Christ,” etc., and the \textit{already/not yet} as “between the times,” “between two aeons,” ”the presence of the future,” ”prolepsis,” etc. It is important, too, to note that, since by this time the fundamental nuances of each of these component models were assumed as givens, they may not always play an equally explicit role in a given theologian’s or ethicist’s project. That is why one component model might be stressed significantly in a given project while the other two are hardly mentioned at all.
tensions and problems that are acknowledged as fundamental to the eschatology/ethics discussion. Here, it is suggested, that these three models are in effect "models elucidating the eschatological paradigm." Models, as has been noted above, are "organizing images" which give particular emphasis, enabling one to notice and interpret certain aspects of some reality not fully understood. The models of the already/not yet, reign of God, and the horizon of the future provide just that. They each give a particular emphasis, and enable one to notice and interpret certain aspects of the larger eschatological paradigm.

It would be helpful at this point, however, to note the relationship that models may have towards one another within an overarching paradigm. After all, the three models we are focusing on here are not the only models that theologians or ethicists have found useful in understanding the Kingdom of God and eschatology. In addition, Scripture itself gives numerous models for the eschatological Kingdom. Why, then, have these three models become commonly accepted points of reference for viewing or articulating Christian eschatology?

First, not all models are of equal scope or status. While all models may contribute important insight toward a larger picture, they may do so at different levels of application or importance. They may manifest differing potential for bringing hermeneutical, epistemological, or motivational value to the question at hand. Second, some models are clearly primary in terms of structural relationships within a given range of images. These primary models are capable of both engendering and organizing a

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1Ferré maps the logic of models in terms of their type (degree of concreteness), scope (degree of inclusiveness), and status (degree of importance) (Ferré, 13-23).
network of models. They both assemble and scatter. They assemble subordinate images together and they scatter concepts on a higher level.\(^1\) Paradigms can rise or fall or shift according to primary models and the subordinate models which support and enrich them. For New Testament eschatology, the Kingdom of God is the primary model linking eschatology as paradigm and the array of models that would elucidate it.\(^2\) As indicated in the introduction to this study, the "eschatological paradigm" is understood as being the overall integrating worldview generated by the New Testament Kingdom of God.

With these distinctions in mind, it is further suggested that the already/not yet, reign of God, and horizon of the future models most closely explicate the fundamental

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\(^2\)That is why any discussion of eschatology within a Christian context will inevitably revolve around the notion of the Kingdom of God. This century's re-interpretation of eschatology has been fueled by its sustained biblical/theological focus on the eschatological Kingdom of God. See Snyder, 22-24.

While this study affirms the broad differentiations and relationships that are being made between models, primary models, and paradigms in interpretation theory, there is reluctance to include either metaphorical language or metaphorical interpretation. Both Ricoeur's and McFague's projects highlight metaphorical language and metaphorical interpretation in their interpretation theory. In particular, McFague defines the Kingdom of God as the "root-metaphor" bridging the overarching eschatological paradigm and all its supporting models (McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 109-111). Metaphors by nature imply a double meaning where the relation between the literal meaning and the figurative meaning is elusive, relative, and open to interpretation. Because of this, the reality towards which the metaphor supposedly points becomes equivocal or even paradoxical. Models and paradigms, however, assume a direct, clearly defined relation to the reality which they express or interpret. Models and paradigms assume that reality as truth or fact so that their agency likewise expresses reality, whereas metaphors always leave that reality in question and open to interpretation. That is why this study prefers the term "primary model" when referring to the Kingdom of God. It assumes the Kingdom of God as a divine reality that can communicate objective truth about our human reality.
meaning of the Kingdom of God as expressed by the array of models it (the Kingdom of God) assembles and scatters as a primary model. In other words, these three models provide the key theological images which the Kingdom of God, together with its other supporting models, projects within the eschatological paradigm. Furthermore, these three models are conceptually interwoven and complementary. They amount to a framework that, at least in theory, can embrace the range of possible conceptions of the Kingdom of God. As such, they have potential for bringing hermeneutical, epistemological, and motivational value to Christian eschatology as a paradigm for theology and moral theory.

This study suggests, then, that like a three-stranded cord, these three models form

1Some might correctly ask, "What about the concepts of the 'kingdom of grace,' or the 'kingdom of glory'?” And “Where is the traditional theological/ethical emphasis on the ‘indicative’ and ‘imperative’?” Furthermore, it might be asked, “Where are the concepts of judgment, reward, justification, and condemnation in the discussion here of eschatology and ethics?” “In what way,” it may be asked, “do the three component models encapsule ‘key’ theological images over that of other important concepts which we have traditionally found important?” First, this study is dealing with foundational, methodological concerns with respect to moral theory. It is not outlining all the possible themes apparent within Christian eschatology, nor does it need to. It is looking for those foundational concepts which contemporary Christian ethicists have found useful in opening eschatology most fully towards ethics. Second, these ethicists do not work in a theological or biblical vacuum. To assert that these three component models are primary in the context of this century’s re-interpretation of eschatology does not imply that other concepts are not apparent or important or even useful, but rather that their expression has found focus through these components. Third, these three models simply come to the overall eschatological picture from a different angle that, in reality, is being expressed through these other concepts. For instance, why and how does one make the distinction between the “kingdom of grace” and the “kingdom of glory,” or determine that one is present and the other is still coming? Is it not because of and through the reality of the already/not yet? And what of the indicative and the imperative? Do not both the reign of God and the horizon of the future evoke the context for us to use this traditional ethical terminology?
the "components" of a comprehensive eschatological paradigm for Christian ethics.¹

They give rise to what has become termed by some as "eschatological ethics." With these distinctions and interrelation between models, primary models, and paradigms clearly in mind, this study from now on refers to these three models as "components" of the eschatological paradigm rather than mere "models" of the paradigm.

Implications for Moral Theory

With the paradigm of twentieth-century re-interpreted eschatology in view, the question can naturally be asked as to its implications for Christian ethics. Answers to this question are explored from three perspectives: (1) the specific ethical nuances that each of the paradigm’s components imply; (2) the methodological nuances that the paradigm evokes/expresses with regard to the three principles of verification (role of Scripture, role of community, and the nature of social involvement); and (3) the theoretical level of moral reflection on which the paradigm appears to operate. Obviously, the perceived

¹Dulles suggests that when working with types or models it is best to employ "a relatively small number of types, all of which can be kept simultaneously in mind. The typology will be more successful if the types are sharply delineated, so that their differences are evident, and if each is capable of being characterized by a single orientation or metaphor that gives the key to the positions taken on a large number of questions" (Dulles, Models of Revelation, 26). These three component models most closely explicate the fundamental meaning of the Kingdom of God as expressed by the array of models it assembles and scatters as a primary model. Whether they be biblical models (as expressed in Christ’s parables of four soils, tares, mustard seed, leaven, treasure and pearl, etc.) or contemporary models constructed by theologians and ethicists (as expressed by Snyder’s future hope, inner spiritual experience, mystical communion, countersystem, political state, etc.) they are interpreted and/or facilitated within the context of these three fundamental images and what they express in relation to the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, these three images provide the theological and hermeneutical context that leads us toward Mott’s and Ogletree’s projects.
moral implications of the paradigm may vary according to the unique perspectives of differing theological traditions. For the purposes of this study, discussion is limited here to that branch of Protestant theology which has facilitated the paradigm's synthesis, and which has congealed the basic concepts assumed by Mott and Ogletree that are central to most Protestant Christians.

Nuances of Paradigm's Components

By way of introduction, it might be helpful to note that each of the paradigm's components generates specific ethical nuances. Within the paradigm, the *already/not yet* dialectic appears as the primary point of reference around which the reality and the religious/moral impact of the eschatological Kingdom of God find expression.¹ The *reign of God* and *horizon of the future*, then, are closely nuanced dimensions (issues) of the Kingdom of God that are integrated within this already/not yet dialectic. The *already/not yet* gives rise to the question of the moral implications evident from the horizon of the coming future. In addition, it gives rise to the question of the moral implications highlighted by the reality of the reign of God which has already broken into the present. Viewed oppositely, the *reign of God* and *horizon of the future* motifs explicate the crucial realms where the moral implications of the *already/not yet* dialectic are both indicated and need to be worked out for everyday life.²

¹Schrage, 19.

²Moltmann and Pannenberg, however, appear to find their primary point of reference for theology and ethics in the *horizon of the future* component, while Ladd, Hooft, and others find it in the *reign of God*. One could conclude here that their works
Already/Not yet

According to Ladd, the characteristic feature which the *already/not yet* brings to Christian ethics is that ethics, like the Kingdom itself, stands in tension between present realization and future eschatological perfection.\(^1\) It evokes an analogy between the manifestation of the Kingdom itself and the attainment of the moral righteousness of the Kingdom. Perfect human righteousness, like the Kingdom itself, awaits the eschatological consummation.\(^2\) In some sense it is attainable; in another unattainable. It can be attained, but not in full measure.\(^3\) It is attainable qualitatively if not quantitatively.\(^4\) In its essence, righteousness can be realized here and now, in this age, because at bottom it is an ethics of the inner life and assumes a radical, unqualified

\(^1\)Ladd, *A Theology and the Kingdom of God*, 129. Ladd has congealed the basic concepts regarding the *already/not yet* as has commonly been accepted by most Protestant Christians as central to New Testament eschatology.

\(^2\)Ibid. Perfect righteousness has been realized and revealed in the person and life of Jesus Christ, however. Justification brings His perfect righteousness to the believer, now, in this age.

\(^3\)Ibid., 131.

\(^4\)Ibid., 130.
decision for the Kingdom and Jesus Christ who embodies it.\textsuperscript{1}

Braaten will add that the key concepts regarding the \textit{already/not yet} are prolepsis and approximation, participation and provisionality. Ethical actions are seen as real, although never more than provisional representations and approximations of the Kingdom's ultimate qualities.\textsuperscript{2} In the overlapping of the ages then, ethical actions will always be a paradox and in some way bring ambiguity in every act. This tension between the ages for ethics is considered significant:

The proleptic structure of eschatological ethics has a twofold edge. On the one side, the futurity of the kingdom maintains a critical distance over against the present, so that every human effort and every social form are revealed to be imperfect and tentative approximations of the future kingdom, giving no one any ground for boasting before the Lord who judges all things. On the other side, the presence of the future kingdom in proleptic form offers a real participation in its life, generating a vision of hope and the courage of action to change the present in the direction of ever more adequate approximations of the eschatological kingdom.\textsuperscript{3}

Furthermore, the \textit{already/not yet} is regarded as bringing definitive imagery through its perspective of the overlapping of the two ages.

1. The overlapping of the ages is seen as affirming the continued reality of the this-worldly present evil age.\textsuperscript{4} There is no hint that the present social order is to be

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 129-133.

\textsuperscript{2}Braaten, \textit{Eschatology and Ethics}, 111.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{4}The present evil age is seen as a self-contained life-context that is out of sync with and in opposition to the moral patterns of the age to come which has broken in. It is an age whose evil social order calls for the reign of God. It is an age that has its own god. See Herman Ridderbos, \textit{Paul: An Outline of His Theology} (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 91-93.
changed by the application of Kingdom ethics. Rather, the Kingdom has entered history, but without transforming history. It has come into human society, but without purifying society. The geography of this evil age is in “this world,” and is seen as including the evil in the heart, the evil in social order, the evil in worldly powers, and the evil spiritual powers that work through political and social bodies.

2. The overlapping of the ages is seen as affirming that Christian ethics is based not on some future coming, but on the current presence of the Kingdom. The moral perspective of such ethics would be, then, not other-worldly, but this-worldly. According to Schrage, it suggests a contemporary alternative ethic from that of the sinful praxis of

1Owen, 378.

2Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, 129. These are significant statements about the presence of the Kingdom. They guard against turning eschatology into an ideology of Christian social action, where the social present is under the demands of the social future in a one-to-one correspondence. They raise, too, the issue of methodology in terms of how the eschatological Kingdom expresses its values in a fallen world. While revolutionary in moral principle, it is not revolutionary in process. Finally, it safeguards against inadequate ends and goals for Christian social ethics. The all-inclusive redemptive context is maintained. In essence then, while the two ages overlap, “between the times,” the things of Caesar and the things of God remain fundamentally independent of each other (Owen, 379). Furthermore, the eschatological Kingdom will always stand in judgment upon all non-Christian solutions to the present moral order (Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism, 42).

3Ridderbos, Paul: An Outline of His Theology, 91-93.

4Schrage, 29.
the world.\textsuperscript{1} The point is that the future enters the present and exerts influence.\textsuperscript{2}

3. The overlapping of the ages is viewed as affirming that the powers of evil have been attacked and defeated. The Kingdom has entered into dynamic conflict with the realm of Satan, and God’s reign is manifesting its powers in history and through the church. The world, then, will feel the influence of the Kingdom.\textsuperscript{3} This is seen as legitimatizing and encouraging human moral effort and social action as authentic approximations of the coming Kingdom. According to Henry, any implied futility of trying to win all (the world) does not mean that it is futile to win some areas of influence and life.\textsuperscript{4}

4. The \textit{already/not yet} is perceived as calling Christians toward a conscious “thinking between the times.” The fact that the individual moral agent or the Christian Church finds itself in the moral tension and ambiguity that the \textit{already/not yet} elicits suggests there is need for a level of moral reflection where Christians are consciously engaged in sorting through the implications of that tension for everyday life.\textsuperscript{5}

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  \item \textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 46.
  \item \textsuperscript{2}Peters, 248. It is suggested that, when found, the Kingdom evokes participation, with contemporary conduct appropriate to the coming age. The crucial point is seen as the transformation of the individual—a new heart, not a way of acting but a way of being, not works but character (Schrage, 43; Ladd, \textit{The Presence of the Future}, 292-294).
  \item \textsuperscript{3}Ladd, \textit{The Presence of the Future}, 303.
  \item \textsuperscript{4}Henry, \textit{The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism}, 77.
  \item \textsuperscript{5}On the surface, the \textit{already/not yet} appears to bring a mere broad outline for moral theory and practice. And yet that seemingly inexplicit profile is considered poignant and evocative with respect to Christian moral life. Like New Testament ethics generally, the \textit{already/not yet} appears more prescriptive and motivational than analytical
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Defining the Kingdom through the dynamic idea of "rule" rather than the concrete idea of "realm" yields, for many, significant implications for moral theory (i.e., Christian ethics is seen as the ethics of the reign of God).¹

1. The reign of God says something about the field of Christian moral responsibility. It has already been noted how the reign of God motif is viewed as proving valuable in overcoming the dualities between the Church and the world, and between the social and the personal. It has been noted, too, how the reign of God is perceived as reaching over all spheres of human life and action so that the world, too, is clearly affirmed as the subject of God's dominion.² This is understood as suggesting that the present will of God is made dynamically relevant to all men and all areas of human existence, and that man and human existence everywhere is placed under the ethical demand of the reign of God.³ Furthermore, the reign of God is understood as providing a single point of departure for Christian personal and social ethics. It suggests that there and descriptive with respect to practice (Schrage, 3, 4). Yet there are clear points of reference and guidelines within the New Testament witness that affirm that the already/not yet implies specific content and criteria rather than abstract formal principles (Schrage, 11).


²Johnstone, 54.

Correspondingly, in principle at least, all spheres of human life and action are seen as included within the range of Christian moral responsibility—including society and politics. The phrase "in principle" is used because practically and functionally the ethics of the reign of God may be actually relevant only for those who have experienced the reign of God by submitting themselves to His rule.
are not two strictly heterogeneous ethics (i.e., one for the realm of personal relations, and another for the secular realm of social relations, structures and institutions).\(^1\)

2. The \textit{reign of God} is thought to reveal the essential nature and content of Christian ethics. This is seen as coming through two perspectives: (1) the character of God's reign; and (2) the preaching and life of Jesus Christ. With respect to the former, if the Kingdom is the \textit{reign of God}, then every aspect of the Kingdom must be derived from the character and the action of God.\(^2\) More specifically, as Ezell states, it is the character of the God who reigns that will determine the context of our eschatology and the character of our ethic.\(^3\) Here, it is suggested, lies the essential link between ethics and eschatology—the nature, character, and action of God.\(^4\) The Kingdom as God's rule will be an expression of His will and values. His character and actions will have moral authority and influence. Within this horizon of God's character, reign, and eschatological activity in the present age, the essential nature of eschatological ethics comes into focus. This focus comes because the \textit{reign of God} provides the answer to the question of what is good—ultimately.\(^5\) Braaten asserts that the \textit{reign of God} presents us with the heart of a

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\item Braaten, \textit{Eschatology and Ethics}, 120.
\item Ladd, \textit{A Theology of the New Testament}, 81. It is \textit{basilea tou theou}. The emphasis is recognized as falling on the third word, not the first. It is God's kingly rule that is in view.
\item Ezell, 86.
\item Ibid.
\item Braaten, \textit{Eschatology and Ethics}, 114. Jesus said, "But seek first His kingdom even His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matt 6:33). Whether one translates the \textit{kai} here as adjunctive (also) or ascensive (even), God's righteousness is
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theory of moral value which orients us toward ethical activity.\textsuperscript{1}

The essential nature and content of Christian ethics is further revealed through the preaching and life of Jesus Christ. Ladd asserts the impossibility of detaching the ethics of the \textit{reign of God} from the context of what Jesus preached and practiced.\textsuperscript{2} God’s character, reign, and eschatological activity in the present age find concrete expression in and through Jesus. One way of defining eschatology, then, is by picturing the ultimate fulfillment of the values of God revealed in Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{3} In this connection, eschatological ethics can be defined as the way in which the values revealed in Jesus Christ are to be lived out in the present age.\textsuperscript{4} Jesus brings a proleptic sample of their fulfillment in human existence.\textsuperscript{5}

seen as a clear expression of His reign. To seek the one is to seek the other.

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid. It can be further asserted that the reign of God provides us with specific and concrete expressions of God’s righteous reign, e.g., mercy, love, justice, holiness, etc. These concrete expressions of God’s character and eschatological activity bring more than just paradigm and principle for the Christian moral agent to imitate and apply. They both imply and exhibit specific moral behavior. As such they are expressions of the unconditional will of God. Matt 5:48; Eph 4:32-5:2; 1 John 2:6; John 13:14, 15.

\textsuperscript{2}Ladd, \textit{A Theology of the New Testament}, 128.

\textsuperscript{3}Ezell, 86.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 86-87. As with the expressions of the character and eschatological activity of God, the person and life of Jesus bring both paradigm and principle for the Christian moral agent to imitate and apply (Braaten, \textit{Eschatology and Ethics}, 115).

\textsuperscript{5}This sample is tangible enough to bring concrete shape to the nature of Christian ethics between the times. As with the implications of the character and action of God, it can be further asserted that the paradigm and principles expressed through the life of Jesus are far from moral abstractions. They are realities that draw one towards clearly defined moral responsibilities. See Ezell, 85-87.
The preaching of Jesus brings further concreteness to the shape of eschatological ethics. Here one is moved beyond somewhat generalized paradigm and principles towards more clearly defined prescriptions, pronouncements, and commands. The specific words of Jesus are fundamental to living between the times. They express the fact that we are not left to our human imagination as to how the reign of God is to shape Christian moral reflection or find practical expression in Christian moral behavior. They determine whether or not the reign of God is a reality in our own life.\(^1\) The reign of God which Jesus both preached and practiced is thus seen as providing the normative starting point for Christian ethics.\(^2\)

In summary, the characteristic feature of eschatological ethics is viewed as the ethics of the reign of God,\(^3\) and as such, according to Ladd, it will be an absolute ethics.\(^4\) It embodies the standard of righteousness which God demands of men in any age.\(^5\) Here is sufficient, specific content to bring concreteness in both visualizing and applying its implications. In principle, then, this component of the eschatological paradigm lends both content and precision to Christian moral theory.

\(^1\)Luke 8:4-15; John 8:31; Matt 7:21-27.
\(^2\)Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 105.
\(^5\)Ibid., 291.
Horizon of the future

As noted above, the Kingdom of God, as the Christian's future hope, naturally elicits a forward-looking stance, a peering into the future, an imagining of "what will be." The practical results for Christian ethics is that this gazing towards the horizon of "what is about to come" inevitably influences present moral life. This moral image of what "will be" is seen as bringing contemporary definition to the "ought." This view from the future is seen as normatively determining the way we live in the present. The present is seen as uniquely qualified by God's own end-time purposes. Furthermore, the image of the good which appears on the "horizon" of the future Kingdom of God is

1It is suggested that the dynamic language of the eschatological Kingdom of God has the unique power to split our perceptions in two, so that in seeing what already exists we can leap forward in imagination to perceive the fuller state which has not yet come into being. This is further seen as the characteristic feature that the horizon of the future brings to Christian ethics—leaping forward in imagination to what lies ahead until that "not yet" evokes powerful images which bring moral value and meaning back to the present. See Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 19.


3In this way the horizon of the future is perceived as bringing an essential ingredient to Christian moral theory. For "ethics is not simply an argument about what ought to be," but "an almost uninterrupted argument about what is, what has been, and what will be" (Geyer, 135).

4Kuzmic, 157.

5Alsup, 50.

6The term "horizon" is used because the proleptic presence of the Kingdom in Jesus Christ together with the promises of God and the coming of Holy Spirit is seen as creating a larger vista of meaning with respect to the future. While the future has not yet come, nor been grasped in its fullness, it is nevertheless present and can be seen as though it were from a distance on the horizon. There is a horizon of meaning stemming from the
understood as defining the ultimate horizon for all ethical statements.¹

In the context of the already/not yet, the horizon of the future is, therefore, seen as a call to "being alive to God’s endtime work in the present."² Here ethics is identified by its most important valuation: God is at work in you!³ Here ethics is seen as the “arena where the God of the endtime is at work to accomplish endtime goals in the present.”⁴ This component of the eschatological paradigm then, in its most basic biblical orientation, is understood as an invitation to ethical consciousness and the discovery of God’s end-time purposes for one’s life, the church, and society.⁵

¹Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, 111.
²Alsup, 50.
³Ibid., 49.
⁴Ibid., 44. This would suggest for some that fundamentally eschatological ethics is not an ethic of morality based either deontologically, teleologically, or situationally. Rather it is a relational ethic where we hear, believe, surrender to, and live God’s end-time will and word of promise through His presence in our lives. It is an ethic of the realities of God’s presence and reign (see Ezell, 85). There is a tendency, however, towards identifying only general or ultimate Christian values and norms, rather than specific concrete moral directions. It can be asserted that the biblical imagery of moral states in the final consummation, together with the life and Word of Jesus and the New Testament picture of Christian lifestyle “between the times,” can bring substantial normative specificity to what God’s end-time purposes are. Since the eschatological consummation is in reality the restoration of all things, the biblical perspective of creation, imago dei, fall, and redemption can likewise facilitate meaning and specificity to these purposes (Schuurman, Creation, Eschaton, and Ethics, 1-12, 149-174; Childs, 347-360). In this way Christian hope leads to Christian practice for which we are not left to our imagination as to what it should include.

⁵Schuurman, Creation, Eschaton, and Ethics, 1-12, 149-174; Childs, 347-360. What God is ultimately against we must stand against in His power. What God is ultimately for we must stand for in His strength (Ezell, 95).
These principal implications of the *horizon of the future* have been pushed further, however, toward perspectives that see our view of the future as a call to participation on the journey toward the future.\(^1\) Here Christians are called to anticipatory living that produces proleptic lifestyle.\(^2\) This future-oriented ethics becomes essentially "eschatopraxis" (i.e., doing the future now ahead of time).\(^3\) At bottom this means: (1) a fundamental openness to the future of new things;\(^4\) (2) that man is free towards experiencing and facilitating that open future;\(^5\) (3) that Christian ethics should be an ethics of change that extends to the area of social relationships and societal structures;\(^6\)

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\(^1\) Kuzmic, 157.

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Das, 81.

\(^4\) Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 52.

\(^5\) Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, 69.

\(^6\) Kuzmic, 157, 158. This focus on change and an open future, which the *horizon of the future* is inferred to have, appears to open the way toward relativism. Gustafson correctly noted the problem when he said: "The current celebration of the openness toward the future is proper insofar as it recognizes that the God whose will one seeks to discern for the future is the God who has willed in the past. Much of this celebration refers primarily to human attitude in any case, and as such is insufficient to determine what men ought to be doing in a particular instant. Attitude alone does not determine act. To be open to the future is not to discern what one ought to do in it" (James M. Gustafson, *Theology and Christian Ethics* [Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1974], 118). Gustafson also noted that "it is a theological interpretation of 'the world' from which a basic orientation toward life can be derived but which provides no significant bases theologically, historically, or naturally for the guidance of human action" (James M. Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Theology and Ethics*, vol. 1 [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981], 48). Rendtorff states that "serious reservations must be voiced against . . . attempts to form a normative eschatological ethics, because the distinction between ethical criteria for human life and action and religious goals that transcend human action could not and cannot be defined" (Trutz
and (4) that future realities should motivate us to work toward their greater realization on earth.¹ The point is that, belief in the absolute future which God brings will not make one indifferent to the present reality, but such an eschatological perspective enables and empowers one to work in the world with seriousness and particularity.² Christians surely can initiate some significant changes in the world as they proclaim and live out the values visualized on the horizon of the future.³

The intent in all this is to enable responsible Christian social action as well as


This criticism of specificity and concreteness has been vigorously debated. It is asserted that the eschatological perspective stemming from the horizon of the future does not provide proximate norms and principles, but rather ultimate Christian norms of love and justice (Das, 86). The rubric of the ontological priority of the future is asserted as obviating strict relativism both inside and outside theological ethics because it provides "essential" evidence of "the good" in the structures of existence and as proleptically present in Christ (Childs, 409-414). There has been discussion, too, about it providing "middle axioms" which are neither too general nor too particular, but which provide a conceptual bridge between the ultimate and proximate, and allow interplay between that which is absolute and relative (Childs, 414-423; Das, 86). Some assert, though, that the open-endedness that the "horizon of the future" is pressed towards cannot provide even "middle axioms" (Das, 86). We need to appreciate, however, what this nuanced perspective of the horizon of the future can provide us for ethical thinking and doing in terms of attitude and orientation. The challenge comes in keeping it in balance by the specificity and concreteness which the biblical picture provides.

¹Kuzmic, 158. On balance, this perspective of eschatological ethics is not understood as the means of producing the future Kingdom of God, but only as an annunciation, anticipation, and approximation. Eschatological ethics becomes the "signs of the coming Kingdom." The coming of the Kingdom in its priority and power is simply seen as the possibility and invitation of doing God's will on earth today (see Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 110-111). The ambiguity of language used, however, can lead toward confusion, and the views expressed have in fact blurred the distinction between human and divine effort with regard to the coming of the Kingdom.

²Das, 83.

³Kuzmic, 158.
evangelism. Yet, it has often been pushed beyond this broad orientation towards philosophical and sociological perspectives which include liberation theologies\(^1\) and other revolutionary perceptions of change.\(^2\) Here moral action in the light of the future is social/political action which will bring about justice.\(^3\) Significant concerns naturally arise in the context of this subtle shift from biblical specificity, priorities, and spiritual dynamics of Christian moral theory towards a more secular, philosophical moral theory which works within a Christian context and uses Christian verbiage.

**Principles of Verification**

The methodological nuances that the paradigm evokes/expresses with regard to the earlier stated three principles of verification—role of Scripture, role of community, and the nature of social involvement—lend further insight into the implications that it has for moral theory.\(^4\) Here one gets a sense for how effectively the paradigm answers the

\(^{1}\) Peters, 263.


\(^{3}\) Das, 82. We work for political changes (however aggressively) in the light of the future because it involves the future of the essence of humanity. The Kingdom is seen as "pointedly political" (Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, 80) and hope for the future as necessarily including "political hope" (McKeating, 62). See also Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 133, 191; Robert W. Jenson, "Eschatological Politics and Political Eschatology," *Dialog* 8 (Autumn 1969): 272-278. This fusing of the biblical eschatological horizon with the philosophical horizon of modern secular futurity expresses the desire to directly aim Christian moral theory towards the secular world and not toward the Church alone (Peters, 241; Braaten, *The Future of God*, 23-32 passim).

\(^{4}\) See above, 18-24.
crisis of "authority" and "relevance" in Christian ethics. They can explore, too, whether the paradigm influences or is influenced by presuppositions regarding these significant issues within contemporary Christian moral dialogue. In addition, one is able to raise questions of foundations and presuppositions. In other words, is the eschatological paradigm, or one's orientation to it, rooted in philosophy, philosophical ethics, social moral agenda, biblical theology, the community (tradition), or some hybrid of these?

**Role of Scripture**

Issues of revelation and the use of Scripture have been at the very heart of the eschatology/ethics dialogue. They have played an important part in both the re-discovery and re-shaping of eschatology in this century.¹ This can be observed from two interrelated perspectives: (1) how Scripture and/or presuppositions regarding Scripture

¹Johnstone, 52; Gulley, 22-36. The role of Scripture in the eschatology/ethics question has been a checkered one throughout Christian history. Some readers may wonder why this study has not made mention of either the Old Testament or Divine Law, or made an issue of divine revelation much earlier in my account of the history of theological ethics in relation to eschatology. By default, they may be saying, it is conceding to an ethics that is searching for its ground outside the law and explicit revelation of God. The fact of the matter is that that has been true for some involved in the eschatology/ethics question. This survey, however, for the most part is merely stating where others are. The majority of those working with Christian eschatology, however, have perceived themselves as working in the context of God’s revelation in Scripture. Furthermore, the question of revelation or theological foundations is not the point of question at this point in this study. It is dealing mainly with background issues here. Questions of biblical and theological foundations are discussed in the evaluation in chapter 5. At this point, however, it would be helpful to be aware that these issues exist and perhaps ask the question as to which ideology stands behind the use of Scripture both in the formation and application of eschatology as paradigm; liberal theology (Bultmann), neo-Marxism (Bloch), a hybrid of liberal/Marxist (Troeltsch), or conservative Evangelical (Henry, Ladd), Catholic, etc.? The paradigm as conceived through the 1970s has been influenced in part or whole by each.
have influenced the paradigm's development and subsequent ethical implications; and (2) how the paradigm itself nuances the role Scripture and/or presuppositions regarding Scripture in developing and/or articulating Christian moral theory. For the purposes of this study, we will be exploring patterns and directions so as to understand the broad picture regarding these issues through the 1970s. The terms Scripture/Paradigm and Paradigm/Scripture are used respectively for the above two perspectives, both for purposes of differentiation and brevity.

The Scripture/Paradigm relation has paralleled closely the "eschatological-oriented ethics"/"ethical-oriented eschatology" approaches I have outlined above. Ethical-oriented eschatology has generally employed Scripture in a subordinated role with respect to its development and in outlining issues, solutions, and praxis. It has interpreted eschatology through a theology of revelation "from below" in the function of a theology of experience in history. It has tended to be an inductive method which proceeds from the context of concrete ethical exigencies. Scripture in ethical-oriented eschatology has often been merely a source of moral images or a shaper of moral identity rather than an ultimate authority through which norms are provided either as specific rules or as general principles or presuppositions. Here, too, Scripture has been employed as sanction for making eschatology a chief warrant for social action.

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1See 47-54 above.
2Johnstone, 52.
3Ibid., 53.
4Dahl, 375.
On the other hand, eschatological-oriented ethics has generally kept Scripture in a prominent role with respect to its development and outlining issues, solutions, and praxis. On a functional level, however, this prominence reflects multifarious views of revelation and disparate perceptions with regard to the actual role Scripture should/does play. The dominant backdrop in the re-discovery and re-shaping of eschatology in this century with respect to Scripture has been historical-critical theology. The most basic underlying presuppositions informing this methodology evoke a practical "remoteness to the Bible" even while bringing apparent focus and illumination toward specified biblical texts or themes.

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3It is not within the scope of this dissertation to discuss in depth the pros and cons of historical-critical theology or methodology, but to simply outline broadly its link and implications with respect to the Scripture/Paradigm question at hand. In addition, it is not maintaining that historical-critical methodology has no positive results whatsoever to show for its labors. Certainly many useful, detailed investigations have been produced. The recognition of the importance of eschatology in the New Testament is one such example, as well as the huge strides toward understanding biblical thought in its own terms (Linnemann, 29; Minear, 16). Nevertheless, those positive contributions are usually impaired because they are closely connected with underlying presuppositions which in effect subordinate Scripture and faith to reason and science.

For instance, its principles of correlation, analogy, and criticism tend towards disunity of Scripture with a "culturally-conditioned" nature and which contains, but does not equal, the Word of God (see Richard M. Davidson, "Revelation/Inspiration in the Old Testament: A Critique of Alden Thompson's 'Incarnational' Model," in Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers, ed Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson,
The impact of historical-critical theology can be seen in the “one-sided eschatologies” which either focus primarily on the past, the present, or the future. This one-sidedness can be seen as well in the eschatological Christologies that have developed. Each of these eschatologies and eschatological Christologies projects images of the history and the eschaton different from the one the Bible foresees. This century’s revelation-and-history debate illustrates, too, the marginal way Scripture often actually factors into the development of the eschatological paradigm.

[Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992], 106-110; and Gerhard F. Hasel, Biblical Interpretation Today [Lincoln, NE: College View Press, 1985], 73-99). This approach essentially relativizes Scripture and influences the way Scripture is actually handled (see Eta Linnemann, Historical Criticism of the Bible [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990], 84-85). Furthermore, it views Scripture as “text” which requires interpretation and allows critical reason to decide what is reality in the Bible and what cannot be reality (see Linnemann, Historical Criticism of the Bible, 87-88; and Gulley, 23-29).

1See Gulley, 29.
2E.g., Dodd’s “realized eschatology.”
3E.g., Bultmann’s “existential eschatology.”
4E.g., Pannenberg/Moltmann’s “proleptic eschatology.”
5E.g., Schweitzer and Barth, both who ultimately ended without eschatologies themselves (see Gully, 26, 30).

6Henry, God, Revelation and Authority, 281-334. Some suggest, however, that the paradigm New Testament eschatology brings to theology and ethics has actually brought about some limits to the operation of historical-critical reasoning (Minear, 17). Responsible studies of New Testament eschatology are said to have produced great strain on its presuppositions and methodology. Biblical attitudes toward time and history have been outlined which not only claim to be true, but which also commend themselves with increasing power. The entire historical-critical hermeneutical system, it has been said, has thus been placed in question (Minear, 19-20). However, while Scripture appears to be bringing supposed limits, these limits have not yet been satisfactorily delineated, nor
Eschatological-oriented ethics, however, has also included some serious
exegetical and theological studies where Scripture has played a significant, formative role
in the paradigm’s development. This is reflected in this century’s revival of “biblical
theology” which sets forth the message of Scripture in its historical setting and which
seeks to expound its meaning in its own historical setting, and its own terms, categories,
and thought.¹ Here the themes of the already/not yet and the reign of God have been
worked out with an exegetical and theological precision that has kept Scripture in the
forefront.² In fact, these two paradigm components have proven invaluable in both
orienting and nuancing the developing eschatological paradigm. Their own biblical focus
-as components of the overarching paradigm has provided an important base for the
priority of Scripture in the paradigm as a whole.³

With respect to Paradigm/Scripture—how the paradigm nuances the role of
Scripture in developing and/or articulating Christian moral theory—some broad patterns
can likewise be noted.


²This is represented most clearly in Ladd’s A Theology of the New Testament as
well as in the works of Thielicke, Berkouwer, and Ridderbos.

³It has already been noted, however, how the horizon of the future, while
reflecting an important biblical thematic, has been nuanced predominately by neo-
Marxist philosophy and hermeneutics. Because of this, its potential for bringing a strong
Scriptural influence in the formation of the paradigm has been threatened and undermined
significantly.
1. It can generally be asserted that an eschatological-oriented ethics will tend to be more Scriptural than an ethical-oriented eschatology. The paradigm where Scripture has been used only marginally, subordinately, or pragmatically as sanction with respect to its development, will naturally display marginal, subordinate, or pragmatic nuances with respect to Scripture in its practical application for moral theory.

2. Just as the eschatological-oriented ethics approach shows diversity with respect to the actual functional role of Scripture in the development of the eschatological paradigm, one would expect that that same diversity be apparent in their respective practical application of Scripture for moral theory. This is just the case. The paradigm as conceived and articulated from the standpoint of historical-critical theology appears to use Scripture or influence the use of Scripture in ways similar to those of the ethical-oriented eschatology approach. Scripture is relativized and used as a source of ultimate Christian norms, rather than an ultimate authority which can bring proximate norms and principles.1 But where the paradigm has been conceived and articulated from the standpoint of biblical theology and exegesis, it appears to use Scripture or influence the use of Scripture in a way in which Scripture maintains an authoritative, assertive role in the process of application. With respect to concreteness and specificity, historical-critical theology and methodology evokes an approach which “wholly relativizes the past and the present” and, hence, is “remarkably thin” when compared with the wealth of biblical

1Das, 86.
specifics. The biblical theology and exegetical approach, however, appears to elicit a clearer intentional dialogue with Scripture with respect to given social issues, solutions, and praxis.

The role Scripture has played in the eschatology/ethics question—both in the formation and application of eschatology as a paradigm for theology and ethics—has been a checkered one. Its role has been significantly influenced by various and often opposing theological and ideological perspectives. As implied above, the Scripture/Paradigm and Paradigm/Scripture questions during this time were seen as remaining in an unpredictable transition. For some, the direction of this transition was clearly seen as a move away again from Scripture as being the fundamental frame of reference for both doing ethics and reflecting on eschatology.

Role of Christian community

The Church sits conceptually at the very core of the eschatology/ethics question. The role which it assumes in eschatological ethics has revolved around three fundamental issues: (1) as a source of moral authority; (2) the field of moral operation; and (3) its

1Henry, God, Revelation and Authority, 283-305.

2E.g., liberal theology (Bultmann), neo-Marxism (Bloch), hybrid liberal/ Marxist views (Troeltsch), conservative Evangelical (Henry, Ladd), Catholic, etc.

3Minear, 20.

4See Johnstone, 52.

5This is observable in the theologies of the principle participants in the eschatology/ethics dialogue.
linkage with the ethical needs/agenda of the larger human society. Related issues include
the dualities of Christian social and personal ethics, and the relationship between
evangelism and social responsibility in terms of mission. The role of the Christian
community is organically linked, too, with the question of the nature of social
involvement.

1. As with Scripture, the role of the Christian community has both influenced,
and been influenced by, this century’s emerging eschatological paradigm.

Rauschenbusch recognized early on that the most decisive fact in transforming the
substance of primitive New Testament eschatology has been the Church itself. Decades
later, Dulles affirmed this fact by tracing more clearly how one’s ecclesiology clearly
influences one’s eschatology. During this century the paradigm’s implied ecclesiology
has often served as a barometer of the adequacy of the paradigm itself. In this respect,
too, presuppositions with regard to the Church’s authority (tradition and/or living
community) in relation to Scripture have had defining roles for the paradigm as well.

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1. The discussion here of ecclesiology has been intentionally limited to those areas
which illuminate most obviously the ethical perspectives of the eschatological paradigm.

2. Rauschenbusch, 222. See above, "Eschatology and Ethics before the Twentieth-
Century," 33-44.

3. See Avery Dulles’ discussion of “Church and Eschatology” in Models of the
Church, 103-122. There are as many ecclesiologies in currency as there are
eschatologies, and the possible relationships are numerous. Dulles suggests the different
ways eschatology is influenced by the institutional, mystical communion, sacramental,
herald, and servant models of the church.

4. It appears that the issue of the role of the Christian community as authority in the
eschatological paradigm has followed (mirrored) this century’s theological trends in both
ecclesiology and revelation/inspiration. See Avery Dulles, "The Church: Bearer of
Correspondingly, how the Church’s “ethical nature” has been understood has naturally depended on one’s own understanding of history, eschatology, and the Kingdom.¹ For some, the eschatological paradigm, in principle at least, is said to project the doctrine of the Church as beginning with the Kingdom of God, rather than with the Church.² In this way the eschatological Kingdom is seen as markedly imprinting its implications on the moral reality and the role of community.³ The result has been that ecclesiology has become the servant of eschatology. Ecclesiology has become a crucial factor in articulating and expressing the moral implications evoked through the eschatological paradigm.

Furthermore, the general trend in eschatology/ethics through this century has been

Revelation" and “Revelation and Eschatology," in Models of Revelation, 211-227, 228-245. In these chapters Dulles outlines the complex relationship between the various models of the church (institutional, mystical communion, sacramental, herald, and servant) and the various models of revelation (doctrine, history, inner experience, dialectical presence, and new awareness) together with their implications for eschatology.

¹Hutter, 28.


³See Ladd, “The Kingdom and the Church,” in A Theology of the New Testament, 105-119; Braaten, “The Prolepsy of a New World-Church, in The Future of God, 109-140. Ladd makes five basic points concerning the relationship between the Kingdom and the Church: (1) the Church is not the Kingdom; (2) the Kingdom creates the Church; (3) the Church witnesses to the Kingdom; (4) the Church is the instrument of the Kingdom; and (5) the Church is the custodian of the Kingdom. Braaten suggests that the eschatological character of the message which the Church transmits relativizes all its structures, doctrines, or traditions. Nothing in and of the Church can be exempt from the criticism that emanates from the eschatological word of God’s Kingdom.
to fuse the theological and ethical within the practice of the Church.¹ The result has been
that, functionally, the Church community has played an increasingly significant and
authoritative role. This has been true both in the frame of reference with which the
eschatological perspective is being interpreted, and in the development of moral theory as
the application of the paradigm.² In fact, the Christian community has emerged as a
principal source of authority with respect to the praxis of the paradigm for contemporary
ethical exigencies. The Christian community has become the normative, creative
sphere where issues of specificity and praxis with regard to the paradigm's ultimate
Christian norms are both shaped and worked out conceptually.

2. Organically linked with the above question of authority, the eschatological
paradigm is viewed as projecting the Christian community as its fundamental field of
moral operation.³ Whether this is so exclusively, principally, or initially has been
vigorously debated. For some, the proleptic impact of the Kingdom belongs strictly to
the Church. For others, it belongs to the Church, for sure, but to the world as well.⁴
Nevertheless, the Christian community has been seen as the "product of the powers of the

¹Johnstone, 84, 85, 48. This locating of theological reflection within ethical
consciousness supposedly frees the Church from the limitations of pregiven, supposedly
normative for all, theological patterns. It also supposedly enables creative Christian
solutions to concrete questions of moral responsibility.

²Ibid., 85.

³The "ekklesia" is the eschatological community called out from the "world."
"The Church is not only a place where the great eschatological realities are announced. It
is itself an eschatological fact" (Visser 't Hooft, 96).

⁴Yoder and Pannenberg respectively (see Peters, 251-252).
Age to Come,¹ and as a society of men under the dynamic reign or kingly rule of God.² It has been viewed as the community of the Kingdom—those who enter it, live under it, and are governed by it³ — and as such display in an empirical way the moral reality of God's invisible Kingdom.⁴

Furthermore, some have concluded that, if it is true that there can be no Kingdom without a Church, then a "concrete social context" is intrinsic to the purposes of the Kingdom.⁵ Only as being somehow set apart from society as a kind of "counter-society" of its own can the Church be the Church. Only thus can she act appropriately to her ethical nature.⁶ For some this means that the Church is the heuristic location from whence God's acting in the world can be perceived.⁷ It also means that the Church represents in its own social life (as a paradigmatic social-ethical reality) a prefiguration of

³Ibid.
⁵Ibid., 119.
⁶John Howard Yoder, "The Otherness of the Church," The Mennonite Quarterly Review (October 1961): 286-296. "The Church's responsibility to and for the world is first and always to be the Church" (ibid., 293). "The visible distinctness of Church and world . . . was a particular, structurally appropriate way, and the most effective way, to be responsible" (ibid., 287). See also Hutter, 33, on Rauschenbusch's "socializing of the soul" (Rauschenbusch, 99).
⁷Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, 159.
the Kingdom. Furthermore, it is implied, through its common life, the Christian community is guided in discerning what the Christian moral life entails. The Church is enabled with regard to “practical moral reasoning” whereby particular moral choices are worked through by means of here-and-now thought processes. The ecclesiological dynamics of the eschatological paradigm have also been interpreted as having significant ecumenical potential and imperative.

3. There is the question of the community’s linkage with the ethical needs/agenda of the larger human society. While it is generally accepted that the eschatological community (*ekklesia*) is set apart as a distinct social organization, that fact has not been seen as necessarily implying that the horizon of the Church’s moral perception and action is coextensive with that of its organizational limits. On the contrary, the inherent nature of the Church in relation to the Kingdom is regarded as implying “the imperative of having as a *limited* organization a *universal* impact.” The essential nature of this “universal impact,” however, is still an open discussion. For sure it includes that of

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1Hutter, 45.


3Johnstone, 48; Pannenberg, *Ethics*, 17. “From the beginning of the Ecumenical Movement until our own day, this [eschatology] is the underlying theme to which we are forced back again and again” (Visser ‘t Hooft, as quoted by Johnstone, 47).

4Hutter, 33. The truth is that the Church can only be understood completely in its relation to the World (Pannenberg, “The Kingdom and the Church,” 3).
prophetic witness and critic over against that of the world of the secular community. But some would go beyond and see the Church as having a shared moral experience and task with the world of man outside its formal structures. They view eschatology as delineating the Christian community as the transforming agent of the secular community. They assert that there can be little doubt but that the eschatological Kingdom unequivocally demands social responsibility.

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2 Johnstone, 84. It is maintained that while the Church and the World remain two visible realities, they nevertheless have one and the same Lord (Yoder, "The Otherness of the Church," 287, 288). Visser 't Hooft asserts that "the Lord of the Church is the Lord of the World" (Visser 't Hooft, 59). He further states that the "Church and world have . . . a great deal in common. Both have the same Lord. Both live in the light of the same victory of Christ over the powers of sin and death . . . The Church is the inner circle, the world the outer circle, but both together are the realm over which Christ is King" (ibid., 119, 120); as well as, "the 'Lord rules already outside as well as inside the Church and . . . he uses the worldly powers for his purpose'" (ibid., 122). Pannenberg writes that the Kingdom (through the Church) is as leaven in the world, and that because of this, there is a shared future on the horizon. He sees the Kingdom of God as the future of the whole world (Pannenberg, "The Kingdom of God and the Church," 4).

3 The nature of that social responsibility, however, remains ambiguous. At this point in this study, however, it can be noted that, for many, the paradigm definitely evokes social responsibility. It can also be noted here that, for those who understand the Church’s nature as essentially ethical, and its relation to the Kingdom as exclusively functional, there is a tendency towards blurring the spiritual/moral dynamics of the eschatological Kingdom with the social ethical needs/agenda of the world at large (Hutter, 27-35). Additionally, it can be noted that there is danger that the man-centered quality of earlier Liberal theology—which had focused on humanity as a whole—may find renewed expression through an eschatologically nuanced ecclesiology. If so, ecclesiology in essence would be secularized! See Johnstone, 61.
The components of the paradigm appear to bring varied but complementary nuances with respect to the role of the Christian community. The already/not yet has been recognized as affirming the reality that the Church has a dual character (i.e., that she belongs to two ages).\textsuperscript{1} In doing so, this component asserts both the Christian community's moral uniqueness and moral distinctiveness over that of the larger secular community. It does so in a way, however, that does not isolate the Church from the world. This component is understood as well as affirming the Christian community as the principal field of operation for the outworking of the moral implications of the Kingdom of God.

The reign of God is thought to conceptually extend the moral parameters of the believing community more clearly toward that of the larger world community. It does so, however, with important qualification. (1) The supposed \textit{de facto} reign exists in this age only when men submit themselves to the divine rule.\textsuperscript{2} This would again affirm the community of faith as the principal field for the outworking of the moral implications of the divine reign. (2) God's dynamic reign invades the present age without transforming it into the age to come.\textsuperscript{3} This implies that there are fundamental limitations or parameters with regard to the actual moral role/impact the Christian community is to/will have in the world as a socio-ethical entity. Nevertheless, God's invading reign is understood as

\textsuperscript{1}Ladd, \textit{A Theology of the New Testament}, 115.

\textsuperscript{2}Ladd, \textit{The Presence of the Future}, 132, 137, 138.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., 149.
concerned with the total man and with the conquest of evil in whatever form it manifests itself. This includes the evils that bring misery and suffering on the physical and social level.\(^1\) Here the paradigm presents for the community an incipient theology which needs closer study and attention.\(^2\)

The *horizon of the future* has been perceived as providing vision and motivational value for both the moral reasoning and praxis of the community. It is seen as a call to ethical consciousness and application. In a sense, it is claimed, "everything in the Church of Christ is dominated by the 'not yet.'"\(^3\) To be in the Christian community is to be oriented toward that final goal. The Church aims at that which comes afterwards.\(^4\) And as this "horizon of the future" is proleptically realized *within* the community—as a paradigmatic social-ethical reality—it is both mirrored and illustrated *through* the Christian community for the secular community. Thus the secular community is seen as confronted with the moral dynamics of the *horizon of the future*. Where the *horizon of the future* is perceived as encompassing both that of biblical eschatology and secular futurology, the Christian community is challenged to take up, criticize, and advance the futurological tendencies of the modern world within the horizon of an eschatological concept of the future.\(^5\)

\(^1\)Ibid., 303, 304.

\(^2\)Ibid., 304.

\(^3\)Visser 't Hooft, 98.

\(^4\)Ibid., 99.

The issue of social involvement has likewise been an integral part of this century’s re-interpretation of eschatology. It has been recognized as a significant contemporary issue of "eschatopraxis" in Christian ethics. During this century, there has been a persistent inclination to find a this-age significance in the New Testament eschatology and, therewith, the justification for a substantial social ethic. The problem has been that, traditionally, the obligation of the Church to the world was seen as limited to evangelism, intercession, and exemplification of the true society as a model for unregenerate society. Only the eschaton, it was thought, would deal with social ills, structures, and patterns. Furthermore, there appeared to be little explicit teaching on social ethics in the Gospels. Additionally, Christianity in the early part of this century had essentially left eschatology behind as it entered the field of social ethics.

1Johnstone, 47-85; Dahl, 375; Das, 63-86.


3Wilder, Kerygma, Eschatology and Ethics, 9.


5Writing in 1953, Heinz-Dietrich Endland wrote, “Thirty years ago, if someone had asked what the relevance of eschatology was for social ethics, he would have received a rather knowing smile and the retort that Christianity had fortunately gone beyond eschatology into the field of ethics.” Eschatology was essentially left out of the horizon for Christian social ethics. See Heinz-Dietrich Wendland, “The Relevance of Eschatology for Social Ethics,” The Ecumenical Review 5, no. 4 (July 1953): 364.
process it secularized both the Gospel and the Church. There came, then, a recognized need to have Christian social ethics both validated and balanced by a proper eschatology.¹

But what shape or form should Christian social involvement thus take?

The moral implications of the eschatological paradigm have seen three broad models with respect to this question of the Christian social involvement.

1. There is what has been termed the **soft revolution**. This is the more quiet ministry of practical mercy (e.g., child care centers, orphanages, nursing and health-care establishments, schools, prison ministries, food kitchens, community services and welfare programming, etc.).² These ministries are seen as legitimate expressions of Christian social concern and responsibility. They are part of the caring function of the Church. Here social responsibility exhibits direct and visible involvement in the social concerns of this present age. These quiet ministries of mercy are viewed as serving the important role of a subsidiary, temporary substitute for the social-political community that is either inadequate or uninterested in certain social needs and concerns.³

2. There is what has been termed the **hard revolution**. This includes a radical activism where the Church aggressively engages the existing establishment.⁴ The goal is

¹"Today we need to move in the opposite direction, away from a social ethic which had its roots in a secular, autonomous, idealistic or humanistic outlook, away even from a ‘Christian sociology’ back into the realm of eschatology" (ibid.).


³Ibid., 153, 154.

⁴This model includes the Christian community using power politics, public protests, and revolutionary methodology against the existing establishment which either creates or maintains social ills.
political and social liberation.¹ This **hard revolution** presses for transformation in the foundations of the social system—whether economical, political, moral, or religious.² It is driven by the perception that the social present is under the demands of the social future.³ It is to be achieved as the eschatological community provides the new social pattern to the present. Thus, eschatology becomes an aggressive transforming agent of the world through the eschatological community.

A gentler form of the **hard revolution** consists in taking up, criticizing, and advancing the futurological tendencies in the modern world within an eschatological concept of the future.⁴ This includes a "theology of revolution" which posits the Church as the agent ultimately responsible for the revolutionary consciousness that is emerging around the world.⁵ The Christian community is seen as the mediator who plays a creative and healing role in the often tragic tension between the old and the new.⁶ This model presents the Christian community with a choice. It can join the often wrenching forces of

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¹Peters, 256-264.


³I.e., "The society of the existing order must be patterned, now, after the community of 'that other' order." See Petry, 185.


⁵Ibid., 142-145. This responsibility for revolutionary consciousness is viewed as coming through its gospel preaching. This theology of revolution seeks to help the Church understand revolution, not to win a political contest as such, but because it cannot escape responsibility for the outcome. It sees our century as a century of revolutions, which the Church has both indirectly sponsored and is in need of guiding.

⁶Ibid.
moral/social/political inertia and reaction, or it can cooperate with, encourage, and lead
those in society who hope and act for a better future for mankind on earth.¹

3. There is the model of social responsibility. Here, in addition to the caring
functions of the soft revolution model, the eschatological community is called to express
its total opposition to all moral evils, whether societal or personal, both within its own
community and within the larger society.² By dealing with moral issues rather than
political issues, this protest can be expressed in a fundamentally positive way.³ In
addition to this moral protest, there is the active involvement and personal influence of
individuals in the social arena itself.⁴ Both these means—moral protest and personal
influence—have the potential to affect significantly some areas of influence and life

¹Ibid., 161. There are obvious problems with both the soft and hard revolution
models. The former, while appropriate and significant, does not deal adequately with the
root moral and social evils of which the problems it ministers toward are merely
symptomatic. The latter is delusive, and often expresses a radical theory that tends
toward secularizing Christian eschatology. It is often merely sanctioning the actions of
radicals and revolutionaries. This hard revolution model likewise pollutes social action
by giving it an apologetic twist, i.e., using Christian social action to prove the relevance
of Christianity (Dahl, 375). In addition, inadequate non-Christian ends and non-
redemptive methodology are often uncritically accepted for pragmatic reasons (Henry,
The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism, 30-34.). Finally, radical social
movements influenced by this model often oppose any emphasis on personal salvation
(Chastain, "Eschatology and Ethics," 238).

²Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism, 76, 79.

³Ibid., 76-81. This includes speaking out against moral evil rather than against the
existing political social order. It is affirming the importance of the social issues politics
takes on, but not the political system itself. It means raising moral concerns regarding the
process and methodology society and/or politicians use in addressing social concerns.

⁴Carl F. H. Henry, Evangelicals at the Brink of Crisis: Significance of the World
within the world.⁴ According to this model, Christians can surely initiate, share in, and provide leadership over some significant changes in the world. They can effectively do this only as they at the same time, both personally and as a community of faith, live the values of the Kingdom.² These anticipated changes in social relationships and societal structures are seen as nurtured through non-violent, non-revolutionary methods.³

Fundamental to this social responsibility model is the reality of the Christian community itself. Here is where the social moral implications of the Kingdom are seen as first experienced and lived.⁴ The actions and decision of the Church in the secular realm are seen as simply expressing by analogy what the Church is and what it confesses.⁵ In this way the believing community is seen as “the primary social structure through which the eschatological Kingdom works to change other structures.”⁶ For some,

As Henry correctly states, “The futility of trying to win all does not mean that it is futile to try to win some areas of influence and life” (Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism, 77).

Kuzmic, 157-158; Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism, 76-79.

Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, 190, 152. Yoder infers that, since the “new humanity” of the community was created by the cross and not the sword, the Church will have a radical attitude towards society which will be free from violent and revolutionary methodology. Visser ‘t Hooft affirms this when he states, “Christ rules through his Word . . . His victories are spiritual victories. The Church has no right to claim any other power or to use any other means of persuasion” (Visser ‘t Hooft, 131).


Visser ‘t Hooft, 146.

Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, 157. Pannenberg writes that “human beings cannot force the coming of the Kingdom; they can only respond themselves to the call of God’s future and symbolize it in the present world.” The Church as an effective sign of the
this social responsibility model is further predicated upon an all-inclusive redemptive context for the Church's assault upon global ills. This redemptive context offers not only a higher ethical standard than any other system of thought, it provides also in Christ a dynamic to lift humanity to its highest level of moral achievement.1

Given the diversity of views expressed in these three models of social involvement, it is apparent that the relationship between eschatological hope and social ethics during the 1970s remained problematic.2 Application of the paradigm for social moral theory still needed refinement. The paradigm's potential for providing both content and specificity with regard to Christian social responsibility still needed clarification.3 There was no doubt, though, that eschatology had a productive significance for social ethics,4 or that Christian social ethics must be constantly related to eschatology.5 The problem lay with perceived ties between New Testament eschatology

Kingdom constitutes the alternative to the devious attempt to establish the Kingdom by political action. The social moral integrity of the community has profound moral influence before the world. See Pannenberg, Human Nature, Election, and History, 30-31.

1Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism, 76.
2Johnstone, 73.
3Generally speaking the already/not yet component of the eschatological paradigm tends to mediate the kind of balance which is found in the social responsibility model. In principle the reign of God and horizon of the future components mediate this kind of balance as well, but they have often been nuanced energetically towards evoking more aggressive and unacceptable forms of social responsibility.
4Wendland, 365.
5Ibid., 368.
and social action. For some, those apparent ties were seen as indirect and subtle, manifold and complex.\footnote{Dahl, 376.} For others, they were explicit and prominent, few in number and straightforward.

**The Level of Moral Reflection**

At this point in the discussion, it will be helpful to briefly outline some related issues with regard to the application of eschatology as paradigm in contemporary Christian ethics. These related issues include: (1) the theoretical level of moral reflection which the paradigm appears to elicit; (2) the meaning and function of paradigm in moral theory; and (3) the relation of the eschatological paradigm to philosophical ethics.

*Level of moral reflection*

On the one hand, ethicists distinguish between four ingredients when structuring ethics: (1) theological or philosophical bases; (2) underlying principles that can be applied to various areas of activity; (3) directive moral rules that apply to various areas of life; and (4) particular concrete cases.\footnote{Holmes, 50-51.} On the other hand, paradigms can serve on a macro, meso, or micro level. Paradigms can bring solutions to: (1) broad, global theological or philosophical issues; (2) problems in intermediate areas, as well as (3) detailed specific situations, respectively.\footnote{Küng, 9, 10.} On this basis, this study has suggested that a
correspondence exists, in that order, between the eschatological paradigm operating on the macro, meso, or micro level, and the ingredients in the structure of ethics. This correlation can provide important insights toward clarifying issues of application and consistency of methodology for the eschatological paradigm in moral theory. The question of "theoretical level" enables one to clarify how concretely the paradigm might legitimately speak to contemporary ethical exigencies and/or influence the interplay of the ethical nuances of its components.

First, ethics always assumes a metaphysics.¹ One's perception of reality, one's worldview, significantly affects moral attitudes and determines moral behavior. Through the primary model of the Kingdom of God, our eschatological paradigm frames a worldview, a perception of reality. As such, it is grounded in metaphysics.² That is the foundation on which it is possible to say that "eschatology generates an ethic to go along with it,"³ that eschatology "in effect determines ethics."⁴ Thus eschatology is seen as confronting moral theory with a perceptual challenge of great importance.⁵ And because each of the eschatological paradigm's components express an assumed metaphysics, it

¹This is particularly true in Hebrew-Christian thought, which "historically, has stood as a closely-knit world and life view. Metaphysics and ethics went everywhere together, in biblical intent" (Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism, 38).

²This is true with any eschatology.

³Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 20.

⁴Owen, 370. Obviously, "everything depends upon the kind of eschatology chosen as the model" (Scroggs, 85).

⁵Scroggs, 83.
seems reasonable to consider these component models as belonging to the macro level of paradigm operation.¹

But what about the meso and the micro levels of paradigm that in ethics would correspond to principles and rules? Is there sufficient specificity within the components of the eschatological paradigm to include in itself also these levels of moral reflection? Or are the meso and micro levels left open to creative application on the part of the community or Christian ethicist? Generally speaking, it is the metaphysical level (macro, bases) toward which most theologians and ethicists have approached the eschatological paradigm with respect to nuancing their application for moral theory. Its implicit generality leaves ample room for constructing moral theory at the theoretical level of ultimate Christian norms and creative open-endedness.² Yet, some appear to read the components of the eschatological paradigm as tending additionally toward the "meso" level of moral reflection as well. They read the paradigm’s components as opening the way toward identifiable content and reasonable specificity with respect to application for moral theory (i.e., "area rules").³

¹This would be so in view of the role that biblical concept of the Kingdom of God plays in creating a worldview. This would also correspond, then, to the theological/philosophical base or presupposition level within the structure of ethics.

²Das, 86; Gustafson, Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, 45, 48.

³That is because the eschatological paradigm is being read within the larger context of Scripture, and the opinion that Scripture has a great deal more to say on the basic elements of our common life from an eschatological perspective than we might at first think. This obviously overlaps with the question of the role of Scripture in the eschatological paradigm, and whether or not the specific, concrete moral application of the Kingdom—on the micro or rule level—by Jesus’ life and preaching (as well as that of
No doubt, this question of the theoretical level of moral reflection is an important issue. It determines the ultimate practicality of the paradigm for moral theory. For ultimately, to be practical, the eschatological paradigm must not only motivate, but adequately direct (to some degree, at least) human activity.¹ The moral agent must be able to move beyond mere orientation to the arena of action.²

*The meaning and function of paradigm*

Closely related to the question of the theoretical level of moral reflection is the meaning and function of paradigm. Paradigm has already been generally defined in this study as an organizing idea, or structure around which an approach to ethics is shaped and articulated. Paradigms are "a way of looking at something."³ They provide a moral "frame of reference" from which moral thinking is organized and articulated. More precisely, a paradigm can be viewed from two broad perspectives: (1) that of an abstract basic principle; and (2) that of an imprinted inner gripping image.

¹ For the first, a paradigm is "a particular case used to illustrate a general

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¹Ibid.

²Das, 86.

³Angeles, 203.
principle.\textsuperscript{1} It functions "as a model or example for other cases where a basic principle remains unchanged, though details differ."\textsuperscript{2} Furthermore, it "is not so much imitated as applied."\textsuperscript{3} Here a "basic principle" that remains unchanged forms the link between paradigm and the new situation to which it is applied.\textsuperscript{4}

2. The second perspective posits paradigm as a "personally and holistically conceived image of a model . . . that imprints itself immediately and nonconceptually on the characters and action of those who hold it."\textsuperscript{5} The point here is that paradigms can become effective in shaping people ethically through their complete and direct impact on the inner moral eye. A paradigm need not be reduced first to a set of abstract principles that must first be retranslated into life.\textsuperscript{6} This perspective sees a dynamic relationship between paradigm and principles and law, where paradigm is in certain ways of prior ethical importance to those of law and principle.\textsuperscript{7} The point is not that the latter are secondary, but that a paradigm by nature encompasses them, elicits them, affirms them, mediates them, but not through reductionistic abstraction.

\textsuperscript{1}Wright, 16.
\textsuperscript{2}Christopher J. H. Wright, \textit{An Eye for An Eye: The Place of Old Testament Ethics Today} (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 43.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., 27, 28.
\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{7}Ibid., 30.
These distinctions are helpful as we explore the way the eschatological paradigm has been applied toward moral theory.\(^1\) Those approaching the paradigm from the first perspective—that a paradigm is an abstract illustrating principle—have tended towards a larger, sweeping, reductionistic process that results in considerable loss with respect to actual biblical ethical yield.\(^2\) The macro/bases level often predominates. Content and specificity are ambiguous and left to creative open-ended moral reflection. On the other hand, those approaching the paradigm from the second perspective—that a paradigm elicits an imprinted moral image—have tended to focus on the biblical reality of the invading Kingdom. Here the person and message of Jesus, together with the experienced life of the New Testament Church and apostolic instruction, yield significant moral imagery.\(^3\) A comprehensive moral picture is projected, one which evokes both principle and law—but in a nonreductionistic way.

Finally, one would expect that a paradigm created or composed of components will find its moral specificity or abstraction through or from the moral clarity of those components. By extension, the moral specificity or abstraction of a given component is likewise determined by the moral clarity of the biblical witness with which it is defined.

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\(^1\)No doubt, individual theologians/ethicists have instinctively gravitated toward one model or the other as a result of their own presuppositions and purposes. It is likely, though, that this instinctive gravitation, and the distinctions in how paradigm affects moral reflection, may not have been consciously apparent to them in the process.


\(^3\)Here the biblical witness includes that of stories and written instruction.
abstractions from Scripture, it will not be able to either produce moral specificity or bring sustained focus toward Scripture in the context of its application in moral theory. On the other hand, if the eschatological paradigm is seen as reflecting comprehensive Scriptural/moral focus through the structuring of its components, it will tend toward greater specificity/content in the moral images it evokes. In addition, it will elicit sustained focus toward Scripture in the context of its application in moral theory. Obviously, the meaning and function of paradigm in the mind of the theologian or ethicist will significantly influence his perceptions of the potential application of the eschatological paradigm.

Relation to philosophical ethics

The discussion of the relation of the eschatological paradigm to the categories of philosophical ethics has been held until now. It fits appropriately with this discussion of the theoretical level and the meaning and function of paradigm. The question has been whether an eschatologically informed ethic can be reciprocally related to philosophical ethics in a way that it can: (1) appropriate the categories which appear in the light of philosophical analysis—teleological (consequentialist), deontological, virtue (perfectionist), situational (contextual), etc.; and (2) at the same time offer a comprehensive viewpoint which can overcome the contradictions that classically cling to the various types of philosophical ethics.¹

No definitive answer to these questions has yet emerged with the eschatological

¹Das, 79, 65, 83; Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 105, 113, 115-116.
paradigm except the "messy conclusion that eschatological ethics does not fit into either of the philosophical modes."\(^1\) At best, the eschatological paradigm is seen as providing a dynamic perspective and methodology which is distinctive,\(^2\) or as a hybrid that encompasses balancing elements of each.\(^3\) For some, the underlying question is whether the eschatological paradigm evokes an ethics that is oriented around morality or around revelation.\(^4\) Parallel to this question—and nuancing it strongly—is the concern for a wide moral frame of reference which is both transcendent and objective.\(^5\) In addition, there is the desire for Christian moral theory which avoids any connotation of rule and external authority.\(^6\) For some this has to do with how the moral agent is gripped personally. For others, it has to do with maintaining an open orientation toward future moral exigencies.

Summary Orientation

The principle theological and philosophical characteristics—as they illumine the ethical perspectives—of twentieth-century re-interpreted eschatology have now been reviewed. This outline of the principal characteristics of re-interpreted eschatology has entailed a summary, critical survey of the development of eschatology as a new paradigm

\(^{1}\)Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 115.

\(^{2}\)Das, 79.

\(^{3}\)Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 116.

\(^{4}\)Ezell, 83, 85. It should be noted that a revelation-oriented ethic does not necessarily imply Scriptural priority in moral theory.

\(^{5}\)Das, 83, 64, 65.

\(^{6}\)Ezell, 81-87.
for Christian ethics. It has included, as well, an evaluative description of the paradigm's implications for Christian moral theory as it crystallized in the 1970s. In the process, it has explored briefly the checkered history of the eschatology/ethics relationship before the twentieth century. Here was found the development of an "eschatology sans ethics" and an "ethics sans eschatology." These anomalies express the essential blurring of the vivid eschatology and corresponding moral consciousness of the early Church. Not only has there not been a solid or sustained discussion of eschatology and ethics in any of the prominent minds in pre-twentieth-century Christian ethics, but the dawn of the twentieth century found both Christian ethics and eschatology secularized by Liberalism and a philosophical rift between the two.

The twentieth century, however, has witnessed a radical renewed interest in both eschatology and the eschatology/ethics dialogue. So much so, that eschatology has become a dominating theme in twentieth-century theology. In the process, overlapping waves of eschatological thought have generated varying shades of ethical-oriented eschatologies and eschatological-oriented ethics. The search to adequately bond eschatology and ethics came to revolve around several critical problems and tensions which needed satisfactory synthesis. These included problems and tensions as viewed from the perspectives of immanence/transcendence, kingdom/history, future/hope, Church/world, philosophical categories, principle/content, and Christology.

By the 1970s three significant images had emerged as commonly accepted conceptual bridges to explicate the fundamental meaning of the Kingdom of God, and to resolve the tensions and problems that were seen as fundamental to the eschatology/ethics
discussion. It has been suggested that these three images—already/not yet, reign of God, and horizon of the future—are in effect component models elucidating the eschatological paradigm in relation to its biblical primary model, the Kingdom of God. It is further suggested that these images are like a three-stranded cord forming the components of a commonly accepted comprehensive eschatological paradigm for Christian ethics.

With this paradigm of twentieth-century re-interpreted eschatology in view, its implications for Christian moral theory were then briefly explored. This chapter surveyed: (1) the specific ethical nuances that each of the paradigm’s components appear to imply; (2) the methodological nuances that the paradigm evokes/expresses with regard to my three principles of verification; and (3) the theoretical level of moral reflection on which the paradigm appears to operate. In doing so, these implications have been outlined as seen through the eyes of the principle participants in the eschatology/ethics dialogue through the 1970s. This survey has been limited to that branch of Protestant theology which has facilitated the paradigm’s synthesis and which has congealed the basic concepts believed to be assumed by Mott and Ogletree and central to most Protestant Christians.

It has been found that each of the paradigm’s components generate forceful and specific ethical nuances which are rich for application toward moral theory. It has been also learned, however, that a challenge remains in determining how these moral nuances are actually elicited and/or have themselves been cast with respect to moral theory. This has become evident when viewed against the designated principles of verification and the varied ways we have seen that theologians/ethicists have perceived them in relation to the
divergent moral nuances projected through the paradigm. As we have seen, the possible combinations of implications for moral theory are both numerous and complex. Furthermore, we have noted that adequately applying eschatology as paradigm toward moral theory demands an understanding of the subtle dynamics of paradigm in relation to models, primary models, and principles and laws.

This chapter’s survey has found that, while a commonly accepted comprehensive eschatological paradigm had both emerged and crystallized through the 1970s, no final clarification of the relationship of eschatology and Christian ethics could yet be given.¹ The eschatology/ethics question was still problematic in actual application. This is especially true with respect to the implications regarding the principles of verification. In fact, for some, eschatology remained one of those “slippery words” with a “multiplicity of meanings” which at best is “ambiguous and makes for looseness of expression and thought.”² This survey has revealed how the complex and subtle nuances of the paradigm—both in itself and in relation to our principles of verification—can, indeed, evoke a “slipperiness” in meaning. There is clearly the need for further refinement and development of the eschatological paradigm in relation to Christian ethics.³ Clearer principles need to be outlined with respect to the carefulness in its use and consistency

¹This is particularly true for the Christian social ethics as expressed in the principle of verification—the nature of social involvement.


³Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics, 7; Johnstone, 85.
with respect to its application.

This chapter is suggesting that this need for further refinement and development does not lay in the paradigm per se, but in its application for moral theory. There is need for further refinement and development in how its application for moral theory facilitates and is facilitated by the role of Scripture, the role of community, and the nature of social involvement. Thus this study turns to Stephen Charles Mott and Thomas W. Ogletree. As two ethicists standing in the tradition of this eschatological paradigm, they have consciously incorporated and further developed the role of the eschatological paradigm in their moral theory. In doing so, they have been expressing greater refinement with respect to application of the paradigm to moral theory. In the process, they can reveal more precisely the impact that the application of the paradigm has had in contemporary Christian moral theory and ethical method. In addition, this study looks over their shoulders, as it were, and observes how they work their way through the subtle and complex nuances expressed between the paradigm’s components and in relation to the principles of verification.

Before moving on to Mott and Ogletree, however, one more point for reference should be suggested. I believe that this chapter’s review of the principal characteristics of the eschatological paradigm in relation to its application to moral theory has shown the important role that Scripture has played (or not played) in the discussion. It is my

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1This chapter’s summary critical review of the eschatological paradigm has affirmed the validity of the principles of verification. They are crucial areas of concern and determine directions with regard to the paradigm and its application.
opinion that the role of Scripture continues to be the most critical issue in the eschatology/ethics discussion. Its importance has become obvious as ethicists make the important transition from either formulating or understanding the eschatological paradigm itself, to that of its actual application for moral theory. Mott and Ogletree demonstrate that focus on Scripture, I believe, in that both their well-known works have revolved around the question of Scripture, eschatology, and ethics, i.e., Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, and Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics.
CHAPTER 3

STEPHEN CHARLES MOTT’S USE OF ESCHATOLOGY
IN MORAL THEORY

Stephen Charles Mott’s use of eschatology in moral theory is set in the context of
the conviction that "a vivid view of the future and of the imminence of the endtime,
including Christ’s return can be, has been, and should be a stimulus for social activism."¹
While the path from eschatology to social activism is obviously a direct one for Mott, he
has recognized that the "not so easy" hermeneutical problem of actual, responsible
application of that link demands methodological precision.² Thus his project is more than


²The question of hermeneutics is a fundamental concern for Mott. His positions
have been critiqued as weak because they neglect particular hermeneutical problems or
because of perceived faulty hermeneutics, e.g., Richard B. Hays, “Recent Books on New
Testament Ethics,” Quarterly Review 6, no. 4 (Winter 1986): 26; Dale Goldsmith,
Review of Biblical Ethics and Social Change, by Stephen Charles Mott, Journal of the
American Academy of Religion 51 (September 1983): 520; Allen Verhey, 24-27; Udo
Middlemann, “A Response to Stephen Mott,” Transformation 4, nos. 3 and 4 (June-
Sept./Oct.-Dec. 1987): 36-40). In addition, Mott himself has directly approached the
question of hermeneutics in major ways, e.g., “The Use of the New Testament for Social
1984 two-part series in Transformation 1, no. 2 (April/June 1984): 21-26 and 1, no. 3
(July/September 1984): 19-25, which has also appeared as a Grove Booklet on Ethics
with the title Jesus and Social Ethics (Bramcote: Grove Books, Grove Booklet on Ethics
55, 1984); idem, “How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible? A Study in

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a mere outline of the contours of an eschatology-inspired "social activism." It is a comprehensive "critique of easy solutions." It is a reaction "in general to liberal optimism regarding history particularly under [Reinhold] Niebuhr’s influence and to the neglect of social content and implications of eschatology by conservative Christians." It is an attempt to provide a biblical and theological framework through which, in part, the eschatological paradigm can be responsibly applied to the diverse issues confronting contemporary moral theory.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to explore Mott’s use of eschatology in moral theory particularly as it concerns methodology toward application. In doing so I will: (1) describe the way in which Mott both perceives and nuances the eschatological paradigm, including his leitmotif with regard to the paradigm’s components; (2) outline the methodological nuances that his application evokes/expresses with regard to my three principles of verification (Scripture, Community, and nature of social involvement), including a broad contour of his view of the nature of social involvement; and (3) survey

Hermeneutics," Bulletin of the Association of Christian Economists 13 (Spring 1989):7-
19. In addition, his preface to Biblical Ethics and Social Change and introduction to A Christian Perspective on Political Thought articulate hermeneutical issues. Both his books divide into two sections, with the first providing theological and methodological focus which becomes the framework for application towards specific issues in the second. It is evident that the question of hermeneutics has become more focused for Mott following reviews upon the publication of his Biblical Ethics and Social Change.


2Mott to Lichtenwalter, 2.
his application of the paradigm's ethical implications with respect to level of moral reflection (paradigm—macro, meso, micro; and ethics—bases, underlying principles, area rules) and social content. In the process it should become apparent what Mott means by his evocative phrase, "social activism."

Eschatological Paradigm and Ethics

Perceiving the Paradigm

Mott’s understanding of eschatology fits the general contours of the eschatological paradigm that this study has outlined as being commonly accepted in contemporary theology by the 1970s. Each of the components of the paradigm (already/not yet, reign of God, horizon of the future) is thus evident in his thinking, though not with equal explicit reference or precise terminology in his writings.

Already/Not Yet

For Mott the "breaking in" of the reign of God brings a "partial fulfillment" which "will be characteristic of history until the second coming of Christ." There is thus a

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1His focused discussions of eschatology are found in “The Long March of God” in Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 82-106; idem, “The Politics of Time” in A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 97-112; idem, “How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible? A Study of Hermeneutics,” 15-16. Mott indicates that, personally, he early moved from a dispensational, pre-tribulation position on eschatology, and although he has not moved sharply away from a premillennial position, the millennium does not factor sharply in his thinking. He attributes A. Berkeley Mickelsen’s views of the reign of God, which according to Mott are similar to George Ladd’s, as being a significant influence during his transitional and formative thinking on eschatology (Mott to Lichtenwalter, 1).

"tension of the new and the old," a "between the times" reality in which the people of God find the "dual challenge" of having a "normative glimpse of a perfect society."

Along with this normative glimpse we have the "ongoing responsibilities in a world in the midst of which Christ has left us (John 17:18) — a society which is unable to live on that renewed basis." 

"By faith we live in Christ’s victory, yet we must continue to struggle." 

In the context of this already/not yet, Mott calls for a "realism" that captures "a deep sense of the depths and permanence of human sin," and which brings a "continual reminder of the imperfection of all human efforts." 

But this "awareness that we cannot build a perfect society in history must not deflect us from the obligation to work for a better society." According to Mott, "God is not asking us to build eternal structures but to accept our responsibility for God’s creation."

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1Ibid.

2Ibid.; Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 106.

3Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 18.

4Mott, "How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?" 16; idem, A Christian Perspective of Political Thought, 26-41; idem, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 3-21. Mott asserts that "despite the introduction of the Reign of God into history with Christ, not only God’s reign but also evil increase to the time of Christ’s return" and that "the basic solution to history lies in the atonement of Jesus Christ. Only at the end of history is this work brought to completion in the reconciliation of all things with the second coming of Christ" (Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 99).

5Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 91.

6Ibid. In this context Mott states that "we would not think of postponing personal righteousness—sexual purity, for example—on the grounds that perfection will not come until after the Second Coming." He makes a similar comparison with respect to evangelism, i.e., "Our task is to bring the message of his love to every person, even if only a remnant will be believers at the Second Coming" (ibid., 91).
Reign of God

Mott views the reign of God as “a technical phrase for the idea of the rule of God over history.”¹ It is the “universal rule of the eternal God” with “transcendent demand” which challenges present life in a comprehensive way and which includes every sphere of life—personal, social, political, physical (the body), spiritual, and the material world (creation).² The point is that the Kingdom of God is seen as impinging upon present Christian conduct, and that the reign of God “provides a context for God’s universal ethical concerns.”³ Thus we are confronted, “not with an ethics of preparation or of waiting for the Reign,” but with the “ethics of the present Reign of God.”⁴ Furthermore,

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¹Ibid., 83. In keeping with the eschatological paradigm, Mott writes that “the Greek word basileia, which is used for reign or kingdom, means primarily the act of reigning rather than the place of reigning, thus in most cases should be translated as reign, rule, kingship, or sovereignty, rather than its usual English rendering, kingdom” (ibid.).

²Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 109-111; idem, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 99-105. Referring to James Gustafson, Mott writes that “attention to the Reign of the sovereign God creates moral responsibility for all spheres of life. We cannot do everything ‘but we cannot arbitrarily decide that something is outside the scope of Christian moral responsibility’” (Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 104).

While agreeing with Ladd’s balance of the present and future aspects of the reign of God, Mott is critical of the apparent individualism of his position regarding the breaking in of the reign, particularly the lack of social emphasis and the lack of emphasis on its relationship to all of creation (Mott to Lichtenwalter, 1; idem, “How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?” 15-16).


⁴Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 89.
"the demand of God upon us now is intensified by anticipation of the future."\(^1\) The nearness of the full manifestation of God's reign gives urgency to the present. It "reveals today as the day of decision and action."\(^2\)

**Horizon of the Future**

While Mott does not use the terminology *horizon of the future*, the nuances of this paradigm component are nevertheless significant to his thinking. The inbreaking *reign of God* includes a corresponding "eschatological vision" which brings "a normative glimpse of a perfect society," and which "presents a continuing critique of all that falls short of it."\(^3\) Here one is confronted with a "broad horizon of what is intended for humanity and indeed of what is possible by God's grace."\(^4\) This "view of the future provides new reasons for decisive action in the present."\(^5\) The reality of promise "draws the mind to the future in creative and obedient expectation."\(^6\) "Such expectation produces a conduct of life that conforms to the imminent hope."\(^7\) When the future *reign of God* is taken seriously as a reality confronting the present, "human energies are stimulated for efforts

\(^1\)Ibid., 91.

\(^2\)Ibid., 88.

\(^3\)Mott, "How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?" 15.

\(^4\)Ibid., 16.


\(^6\)Ibid.

\(^7\)Ibid., 110.
to bring about change in the certainty of the abiding meaning of such labor."¹ We can
either open ourselves up to this "new and updated force in history"—which is seen as the
"force of the future"—or cling to the increasingly outmoded past in selfish fear.² For
Mott, "the coming of the Reign gives fresh substance, motivation, and power to the
political task of changing the world in the direction of God’s promises."³ However,
"along with the power of the future, there is also an eschatological reserve."⁴

This outline of Mott’s use of eschatology reveals how each of the components of
the eschatological paradigm are evident in his thinking, though not with equal explicit
reference or precise terminology. His understanding of eschatology fits the general
contours of the eschatological paradigm that this study has outlined as being commonly
accepted in contemporary theology by the 1970s. It is significant that Mott spends no
time laboring over whether or how eschatology is to be construed as normative for ethics.
He simply assumes that it is, and then proceeds to apply its implications for moral theory
accordingly.

¹Ibid., 107.
²Ibid., 109.
³Ibid., 110.
⁴Ibid. Mott acknowledges that he has drawn heavily upon the Christian realists,
especially Reinhold Niebuhr, but also Paul Tillich and Eduard Heimann. Niebuhr had
a formative influence upon his own development that has continued (Mott, A Christian
Perspective on Political Thought, see “Acknowledgments”). It was Niebuhr who
increased his “appreciation of the eschatological reserve which the more pessimistic side
of eschatology gives.” For Mott then, “the solutions of history do not lie in history;
eschatology puts in question illusions about human achievement and progress” (Mott to
Lichtenwalter, 2-3).
Leitmotif

While Mott works within the general contours of the eschatological paradigm, he clearly nuances the reign of God component part over that of the already/not yet and horizon of the future. Nearly every reference to eschatological themes falls within the context of this paradigm component. While, as we have seen, the already/not yet and horizon of the future perspectives are evident in his thinking, eschatology for Mott is both viewed from and applied through the perspective of the reign of God. The reign of God is Mott’s leitmotif for nuancing the eschatological paradigm.

Hermeneutical Nuances

As Mott’s leitmotif for nuancing the moral implications of the eschatological paradigm, the reign of God yields significant hermeneutical value:

Context for universal ethical concerns

The reign of God "provides a context for God’s universal ethical concerns."1 In response to Christians in the Fundamentalist, liberal, and existential traditions who have argued that the New Testament does not provide instruction for the ordering of social relations,2 Mott posits an essential organic relationship between the Old and New Testaments. It is a relationship which reveals God’s enduring ethical concerns for all of

2Ibid., 226.
human life and history and which is set within the horizon of the reign of God.\footnote{Ibid., 227-234; idem, “How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?” 7-19.} The reign of God provides a context for “God’s universal ethical concerns” in that “divine actions are interrelated and God’s purpose in history has a unity.”\footnote{Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 102.} For Mott, “the Bible does not teach independent ethical universals. God is the universal, and God’s acts supply means and power for the ethics.”\footnote{Mott, “How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?” 11-12.} What God does is significant. God’s reign through history is paradigmatic. The various ethical materials of the Bible are placed within the history of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration of creation—each representing an aspect of God’s restorative concerns.\footnote{Ibid., 8.} Using the rubric “The Long March of God,”\footnote{“The Long March of God” is Mott’s title for his chapter on the reign of God in his Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 82-106.} Mott posits the reign of God as one extended, relentless reassertion of God’s sovereignty to overcome the fall and to realize His purposes in history. It has been a long march through the history of people, and powers, and institutions,\footnote{Ibid., 106.} but it has one goal. God’s ethical concerns are universal. “The ethic of the Reign of God is an ethic of the restoration of God’s purposes for the creation.”\footnote{Mott, “How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?” 16.}
Integrating concept of history

The *reign of God* "furnishes a concept of history into which other New Testament themes can be placed."¹ Some of the New Testament themes Mott has in mind include the place of status in society, the reality of social evil in the structures of the human community as a whole, grace, love, justice, human nature, power, time, etc. The ability to place diverse themes against a common backdrop can lend both coherence and comprehensiveness to one's moral theory. Given the right backdrop, diverse themes can converge with compelling potency. While Mott indicates that he presents "a social activism inspired *in part* by the present aspects of the Reign,"² the *reign of God* nevertheless provides the hermeneutical strategy which both holds his theory of social activism together and gives it compelling potency. Organizationally, the *reign of God* thematic appears at key positions in Mott's developing thought. He concludes the theological orientation sections of his major works *Biblical Ethics and Social Change* and *A Christian Perspective on Political Thought* with extended discussions of the *reign of God*. In doing so, he consciously links each of the preceding themes to the dynamic reality of the *reign of God*. Likewise, his discussion of hermeneutics with regard to the normative character of biblical economic materials inserts the *reign of God* thematic at

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²Mott to Lichtenwalter, 2 (italics supplied).
key transition points in his developing thought. The reign of God is not merely one of the several emerging themes in Mott’s writings, it is a determinant ingredient in his hermeneutic.

*Elucidates centrality of biblical justice*

The reign of God elucidates the centrality of biblical justice as “an attribute of God and a major mandate of Scripture.” If the reign of God is Mott’s leitmotif in eschatology, biblical justice is his leitmotif for social ethics. Finding the Bible full of the


3Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 82-106; idem, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 74, 112.

language of justice, and justice a chief attribute of God. Mott affirms that "justice is very important in the Biblical order of values . . . a central duty of the child of God." God's justice is paradigmatic. We learn justice from God. "Our justice corresponds to God's justice just as our grace corresponds to God's grace and our love to God's love." As individuals or groups we can be channels of God's justice.

Mott further asserts that "it is methodologically necessary to look at the biblical materials describing God's social justice to develop the understanding of human responsibilities in justice." This is where the reign of God comes forcefully into play—justice characterizes God's reign, is an expression of God's reign, and the proclamation


1Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 59.
3Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 78.
4Ibid., 79.
5Ibid., 80.
6Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 59.
8Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 80.
9Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 85.
10Mott writes that "the dynamic character of justice . . . reflects the philosophy of history in which justice is an expression of God's reign overcoming the rebellion of the
of the reign of God brings with it an imperative for justice. Hence, we are to seek not only the Reign, but also the justice that belongs to it. The "long march of God," then, elucidates the centrality of biblical justice:

Rather than merely an ethical principle, justice is made part of the story of God's provision—the fall of humanity, the coming of Christ, and the final reconciliation of all things under the sovereign rule of God. We can then understand social righteousness [justice] in the context of God's patient toil to win back God's lost creation.

By thus interpreting the reign of God primarily through the category of biblical justice, Mott facilitates his leitmotif for social ethics.

*Incorporates social responsibility imperative*

The reign of God is "a central biblical concept which incorporates the imperative for social responsibility into God's goals in history." This is a natural corollary of interpreting the reign of God through the category of biblical justice. Christian social creation and finally emerging triumphant at the end of history" (Stephen Charles Mott, "The Contribution of the Bible to Human Rights," in Human Rights and the Global Mission of the Church, ed. A. Dyck (Cambridge, MA: Boston Theological Institute, 1985), 32.

1Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 97, 100.

2Interpreting Matt. 6:33 Mott writes, "First of all seek the Reign and its justice" (Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 104).

3Ibid., 82.

4Ibid. Mott indicates that Walter Rauschenbush and Herman Ridderbos proved helpful in developing the social aspects of his interpretation of the reign of God and the continuity of the reign of God with the Old Testament. They are seen however, as enforcing certain directions in his thinking rather than originating them (Mott to Lichtenwalter, 1).
responsibility becomes an imperative because "justice presupposes God's intention for people to be in community."¹ The concept of justice is part of the way the Bible understands the nature of society.² It is something which concerns other persons. It is "the basic norm for social behavior,"³ "a social norm, regulating the conduct of people in association with one another,"⁴ "a socially active principle demanding responsibility on the part of the people of God."⁵ The promise of the reign of God is that of God's lordship, justice, and peace. As such "it is a public hope, not merely personal."⁶ The reign of God breaking into history brings a new form of social existence and a demand for justice,⁷ hence the imperative for social responsibility. The reign of God, however, "is not a social program, but faithfulness to its demands for justice necessitates social programs and social struggle."⁸ Mott is deeply interested in social ethics and social


³Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 77.

⁴Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 74.


⁶Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 110.


⁸Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 106. Mott further writes, "The people of God as a whole share responsibility for justice in society, including the political sphere" (ibid., 74).
change. For Him Scripture yields rich social content towards facilitating those interests.¹

By interpreting the *reign of God* through the category of biblical justice, Mott opens the way for a Christian social responsibility that is rich both in content and motivation.²

**Christology**

In addition to these nuances within Mott’s use of the eschatological paradigm, there is the question of Christology. Christology does not play largely in Mott’s eschatology except to communicate that Jesus is the way in which the *reign of God* is inaugurated and empowered in human history, e.g., through His life, death, and resurrection.³ Jesus’ ministry and teachings, however, are viewed as paradigmatic.⁴ His counsels are not wisdom maxims or legal commentary for a static society, but rather the principles of conduct of God’s reign emerging in concrete form.⁵ His actual deeds of compassion for physical suffering are the evidence that He is “the agent of God’s Reign.”⁶

¹Mott, “The Use of the New Testament for Social Ethics,” 227-231, 241-243. “The Bible contributes substantial content to the following structural components of a social ethic, among others: justice, the nature of humanity, the concept of history, the nature of society and groups, the understanding of power and property, and the purpose of government” (ibid., 241).

²For Mott, “justice is a powerful motivator” (Mott, *A Christian Perspective on Political Thought*, 74).

³There are only brief, but helpful, exposes of Christology by Mott: Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 88-100; and “The Use of the New Testament for Social Ethics,” 228-238.


⁵Ibid., 233.

⁶Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 92.
His healing ministry, the way He treated people, His sensitivity and partiality for the weak, and His serving physical and social needs, together express the normative values of the reign of God.

It is significant for Mott that New Testament writers have interpreted new life in Christ in continuity with the Old Testament social hopes and concerns. Jesus came to, and was received by, humble people of the land who were looking for the manifestation of divine power to reverse the roles of possessors and the dispossessed by bringing in social and economic justice. Mott suggests that, for Jesus, the Old Testament was an important component of His culture. Its writings supplied an anthropology and social perception that was expressed in the meaning of His ministry and teaching. When Jesus' social tradition is thus recognized, the concept of justice (which is rooted in the Old Testament) can be more clearly identified with His life and ethic.

Functionally, the role of Christology in Mott's eschatological leitmotif—reign of God—largely facilitates his leitmotif for social ethics (justice).

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1Ibid., 91-94.
3Ibid., 228.
4Ibid., 230.
5Ibid.
6While treating the canon as a vast theological unity, Mott has been critiqued as offering no extended sketches of the ethics of the different New Testament writers (Hays, 25). The weight of Mott’s focus is clearly toward Old Testament theological and moral reflection in an anthropological and sociological context. One does not read Mott long without being impressed with the fact that he/she is becoming immersed in the culture.
Summary

While Mott works within the general contours of the eschatological paradigm, he clearly nuances the *reign of God* component part over that of the *already/not yet* and *horizon of the future*. The *reign of God* thus becomes his leitmotif for nuancing the moral implications of the eschatological paradigm. These hermeneutical nuances include (1) providing a context for God's universal ethical concerns; (2) furnishing a concept of history into which other New Testament themes can be placed; (3) elucidating the centrality of biblical justice as an attribute of God and a major mandate of Scripture; and (4) incorporating the imperative for social responsibility into God's goals in history. Finally, Christology does not factor largely in his view of eschatology except to facilitate his leitmotif for social ethics, i.e., justice.

**Paradigm and Principles of Verification**

The methodological nuances which Mott's application of the eschatological paradigm to moral theory evokes/expresses with regard to my three principles of verification (Scripture, Community, and nature of social involvement) are now explored. and world of Old Testament thought and life. For Mott, of course, all this is for sensitive background understanding in order to open fully the normative nuances of both the *reign of God* and New Testament social content for contemporary moral theory. Because of this, some important issues to eschatology—like Christology—may receive what appears to be cursory or only functional attention in relation to other themes that are important to Mott's social analysis of Scripture and the culture of biblical times. His "The Use of the New Testament for Social Ethics" is illustrative of his sensitivity toward New Testament themes. His discussion of the place of status in society and in the message of the New Testament demonstrates a similarity of approach towards the social context of both testaments (Mott, "The Use of the New Testament for Social Ethics," 234-237).
In doing so, a broad contour of Mott's view of the nature of social involvement is included.

Role of Scripture

That Mott undertakes the task of constructing a "biblical basis for implementing social change" is indicative of the assumed role Scripture has in his moral theory. He spends no time laboring over whether or how the Bible is to be construed as authoritative, but simply assumes that it is authoritative for the community of faith and proceeds to show how it can be applied toward the problems of society.

Mott is very deliberate, however, in explaining his approach to the social or political application of the Bible. It is a fourfold methodology which he calls "a dialogical approach to biblical hermeneutics." The process includes the interplay of Scripture, reason, Christian tradition, and experience. Mott does not profess the sufficiency of the Bible for ethics. Christian ethics is not synonymous with biblical ethics. The necessary foundation of Scriptural understanding requires corroborating and expanding insights from political theory, sociology, anthropology, economics, and science.
psychology, secular history, as well as theology and church history.¹

But the process begins with a fundamental commitment to the primacy and ultimate authority of Scripture.² Practically this means that "the text itself is the revelation of God,"³ and that "the authority of the Scriptures lies within the intentionality of the passage."⁴ It also affirms the essential theological and ethical unity of the Bible,⁵ and it assumes the primary orientation of Scripture as historical.⁶ Each of the other

¹Mott, "When the Bible Seems Silent," 39; idem, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 7.

²Mott, "Avoiding the Capture of the Gospel," 38; idem, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 7. Mott writes, "We identify the ultimate authority of the Bible on the issues that it addresses and the crucial nature of those issues. The Bible is necessary for both faith and ethics. We do not, however, profess the sufficiency of the Bible for ethics" (Mott, "When the Bible Seems Silent," 39). But even where the Bible does not address a given issue, "we are not left without biblical guidance and motivation."

³Mott, "How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?" 11. Mott rejects neo-orthodox and feminist hermeneutics which posit the text as a divinely provided context for encountering the revelation behind the community which produced it, as well as Barthian hermeneutics which finds revelation occurring as the Spirit speaks from the text to the modern reader. We find him engaging, as well, fundamentalist, liberal, and existentialist approaches to the authority of Scripture.

⁴E.g., what concerns are meant to be addressed by the text, not what is incidental to them (ibid., 17).

⁵Mott, "The Use of the New Testament for Social Ethics," 227-234. Mott treats the canon as a vast theological unity (Hays, 25). Practically this means that, "if one views the whole canon as itself the revelation of God, then one must reflect upon the full biblical data on a particular issue" (Mott, "How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?" 14).

⁶Mott, "How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?" 7. The historical dimension of Scripture is the perspective which opens up the social context of Scripture for Mott, as well as the need for anthropological and sociological understanding of culture consonant with biblical times. While discussing appropriate and inappropriate questions for the biblical text, Mott gives two examples of what he refers to as

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aspects of the dialogue—careful use of reason, how other Christians have interpreted the Bible, and personal experience of society and of God's Spirit in our lives—guides the process or confirms one's interpretations. Mott's apparent respect for and command of historical-critical methodology in all this is balanced with his respect for the plenary inspiration of the biblical text and thoughtful exegesis. He is well aware of the value and dangers of the historical-critical method in relation to the authority of Scripture.

Of particular interest is Mott's concept of "biblically formed understanding" where the open reading of Scripture both initiates and deepens one's understanding of our social world. In the context of this new experience, relevant biblical materials that "anthropological insensitivity." "The failures in interpretation labeled as literalism come not from taking seriously the concreteness of the text but often from lacking an anthropological sensitivity in detecting how to translate legitimately the meaning of a practice from one cultural system to another. . . . Another form of anthropological insensitivity to the concreteness of Scripture is to force it to answer questions brought to the text which are culturally foreign to it" (Mott, "How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?" 16). It is in this context of using anthropology and sociology that Mott states, "The best methods of biblical exegesis must be used to understand what a particular injunction means within the text and within biblical culture. The authority of the Scriptures lies within the intentionality of the passage, what concerns are meant to be addressed by the text, not what is incidental to them" (ibid., 17).


2"The historical-critical method has value in putting the text at a distance from the interpreter so that the text can speak to him or her on its own terms. The danger of the method is that passages that have the potential of threatening one's ideology can be assigned to sources regarded as less authoritative" (Stephen Charles Mott, review of *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation*, by William M. Swartley, *Horizons In Biblical Theology: An International Dialogue* 7, no. 1 (June 1985): 119-122.

otherwise might be neglected receive attention. In the process,

modern sociological and ethical categories are applied to the materials of the
Bible to suggest new possibilities of meaning and to provide a means of assessing
the applicability of the results of exegesis to contemporary discussion. When
such terminology does clarify the meaning of Scripture, biblical interpretation
finds new vocabulary with which to address current problems. Sometimes,
however, the categories are dissonant with the text, and analysis makes it apparent
that the passages have little immediate relevance to modern questions. Then for
Scriptural guidance we must depend upon the more general framework of values
and attitudes in the Biblical witness. . . . These non-biblical constructs aid the
understanding of Scripture and are tested and refined where the biblical Word
relates to them; where it does not relate, they are set aside.1

This has been Mott's approach to the social application of the Bible, and can be seen in
the context of his reading and opening of Scripture towards the possibilities of meaning
in the two most important themes he has become impressed with for moral theory, e.g.,
social involvement and justice.

While the stated role of Scripture in Mott's moral theory is thus clear and forceful,
the concern here for this study relates to whether or how the eschatological paradigm
either influences or is influenced by Mott's presuppositions or methodology with regard
to Scripture. The following points can be noted from Mott's use of the eschatological
paradigm in relation to Scripture:

Unity of Scripture

The reign of God is inextricably linked with the question of the unity of Scripture.

Mott notes:

One of the most critical consequences of interpreting New Testament ethics in

1Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, viii, ix.
continuity with the Old Testament is the impact it makes upon the concept of the reign of God. The reign of God is a theme which sums up the hope of the Old Testament.¹

And again:

A logical progression can be traced from the neglect of the Old Testament context for New Testament ethics to a denial of the social aspects of the Reign of God concept to a dismissal of the social ethics of the New Testament.²

The unity of Scripture is fundamental to Mott’s social moral theory in that “without the Old Testament” the contribution of the New Testament to social ethics is “incomplete.”³ Mott affirms the Old Testament as the Scripture of Jesus and the early church, and as such, New Testament ethical topics, raised to meet ad hoc problems, do not form the entire content of the New Testament church’s ethical belief.⁴ Behind the New Testament lies an authoritative text which demonstrates rich social moral content.

For Mott, this theological and ethical unity provides the hermeneutical context for adequately understanding and articulating the reign of God and subsequently New Testament social ethics. Two complementary perspectives are apparent here. One is that Scripture is informing the social content of the reign of God. The other is that the reign of God is informing and facilitating an understanding of the social content of Scripture.

While “the most critical consequence of interpreting New Testament ethics in continuity with the Old testament is the impact it makes upon the concept of the reign of God,” the

²Ibid., 232.
³Ibid., 227.
⁴Ibid.
opposite is functionally true for Mott as well, e.g., a proper understanding and nuancing of the reign of God will both affirm the unity of Scripture for moral theory and facilitate its interpretation in the context of the New Testament. This can be particularly observed in how Mott traces his leitmotif of justice through Scripture and ascribes it as fundamental to the meaning of the reign of God. The eschatological paradigm, then, becomes a hermeneutical bridge between testaments.

Meaning and Content of Text and Words

The reign of God is related to the authoritative meaning and content of the biblical text and words themselves. Mott notes that the social meaning of the reign of God is obscured when the reign of God is defined as symbol rather than a concept. Symbol is seen in contrast to concept. Symbol is figurative, invoking meaning and/or experience. Concept is literal, containing its own truth claim. According to Mott, an existential symbolic interpretation of the reign of God separates it “from its Biblical background and its social and ethical content.” For Mott, Scripture provides objective content in its text and words, and the concept of a just rule and an ideal order is part of the biblical

1 Mott states that the concept of the reign of God presses us to deal with what is new in the New Testament in addition to the social tradition it has inherited (Ibid., 233).

2 Ibid., 232.

3 Ibid., 233.

4 Mott is aware, however, that this objective content may be expressed in symbolism or metaphor. While developing his biblical perspective of prohibiting interest on loans because it undermines the poor, Mott refers to hand as a metaphor for power. The Hebrew expression “his hand quivers with you” refers to how the poor person is one whose power in the community is slipping and who is becoming dependent on others.
portrayal of reign. The reign of God, then, is a historical reality with truth claims about rule, just rule, and an ideal new social order.¹

Theological Affirmation of Scripture

The reign of God is viewed as a basic theological affirmation of Scripture.² For Mott, the recognition of the authority of God in the particular teachings and stories of the Bible—concrete injunctions—must be combined with an acknowledgment of the other ways in which the Bible is authoritative:

The authority of God in the concrete injunction must be interpreted with attention to God's authority in mighty acts, in the theological affirmations, and in the prevailing ethical principles. And the specific teachings and propositions are needed to give concrete interpretation of the broad and general truths and actions.³

As one of the theological affirmations of Scripture, the reign of God brings broad conceptual imagery—authoritative truth—which is important in the interpretation of specific teachings and propositions found in particular passages of Scripture. It provides

(Stephen Charles Mott, “The Prohibition of Interest on Loans,” Christian Social Action 4, no. 8 [September 1991]: 37). The exegetical and hermeneutical question at bottom is a longstanding principle of Evangelical interpretation that the interpreter must communicate what is intended in the metaphor (Stephen Charles Mott, “Limiting Masculine References to God,” Christian Social Action 6, no. 7 [July/August 1993]: 38). But while metaphor and symbol can have intended meaning for Mott, e.g., objective content, he clearly rejects the notion that the reign of God falls within this category of biblical communication.


³Ibid., 11.
an authoritative umbrella for the exegesis and application of concrete biblical injunctions.\(^1\) But Mott considers the *reign of God* a "basic" theological affirmation which not only provides a context for interpreting concrete injunctions, but ties together and facilitates the interpretation of other Scriptural theological themes.\(^2\) This study has already observed this somewhat when it noted above how Mott nuances the eschatological paradigm through the reign of God leitmotif, e.g., (1) the reign of God provides a context for God's universal ethical concerns; (2) the reign of God furnishes a concept of history into which other New Testament themes can be placed, etc.

**Summary**

In each of the above—unity of Scripture, content and meaning of the biblical texts and words, and basic theological affirmations—there is indication that Mott consciously attempts to conceive and articulate the eschatological paradigm from the standpoint of

\(^1\)It is significant that Mott states that "the specific teachings and propositions are needed to give interpretation of the broad and general truths and actions." This is important balance for hermeneutical theory which relates to specificity and content in moral theory. See below pp. 172-181 for more detailed discussion of this principle in relation to the eschatological paradigm.

\(^2\)This can be observed in how Mott articulates the *reign of God* in relationship to social emphasis and all of creation. A particular example can be seen in one of his reviews: "If within a biblical theology of the reign of God one relates more closely the sphere of creation and the sphere of eternal personal salvation, one will not desire the formation of political philosophy to be so clearly separated from the sphere of the church and its theology. Then political work, while not providing personal salvation and not as independent human action, is done as a channel of God's reign, which is breaking into history, personally, and socially—although only in part in this age" (Stephen Charles Mott, review of *Everything Is Politics but Politics Is Not Everything*, by H. M Kuitert, *The Journal of Religion* 68 [July 1988]: 480).
biblical theology and exegesis. This attempt to articulate the eschatological paradigm from the standpoint of biblical theology and exegesis can be seen as well in how he both perceives and nuances the eschatological paradigm. His use of the eschatological paradigm further appears to use Scripture or influence the use of Scripture in a way in which Scripture maintains an authoritative, assertive role in the process of application. In addition, there is evidence that Scripture influences the understanding of the eschatological paradigm as well as the paradigm influencing the understanding of Scripture.

It should be noted, however, that while writing in the context of a clearly stated "eschatological reserve," Mott's nuancing of the horizon of the future appears to share some philosophical aspects found in the more liberal optimistic eschatological-oriented ethics.1 And because his leitmotif in eschatology (reign of God): (1) largely facilitates his leitmotif for social ethics (justice); (2) is useful in incorporating the imperative for social responsibility into his moral theory; and (3) sets Christology in the functional role of largely facilitating his leitmotif for social ethics, his intended focus on biblical theological and exegetical methodology appears to blur with aspects of an ethical-oriented eschatology.

Role of Community

For Mott, "the church . . . must be understood in relation to the Reign of God, the

1E.g., "changing the world in the direction of God's promises," etc. (Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 110).
eschatological order now appearing in history."\(^1\) As outlined in chapter 2, the role which the Church assumes in eschatological ethics has revolved around three fundamental issues, i.e., (1) as a source of moral authority; (2) the field of moral operation; and (3) its linkage with the ethical needs/agenda of the larger human society.\(^2\) The role of community in Mott’s application of the eschatological paradigm in these three areas is for the most part clear and deliberate.\(^3\)

**Subordinate to Scripture**

The Christian community assumes primarily a subordinate, yet vital, source of moral authority in relation to that of Scripture. While Mott does not address this question directly, his four-part “dialogical approach to biblical hermeneutics" brings insight toward his thinking. His dialogical approach includes the religious source of knowledge found in Christian tradition and history.\(^4\) “The careful use of reason, particularly as theology, guides the process"\(^5\) of interpretation. “The thought and practice of Christians who went

\(^1\)Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, 129.

\(^2\)See above, 99-107. Related issues include the dualities of Christian social and personal ethics, and the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility in terms of the Church’s mission. The role of the Christian community is organically linked, too, with the question of social involvement.

\(^3\)Extended discussions with regard to the role of community are found in Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, 82-141; idem, *A Christian Perspective on Political Thought*, 42-57, 109-112.


before in the history of the church, as well as that of fellow members of the present
church, confirm one's interpretation,"¹ he notes. Furthermore, "the task of interpretation
belongs in the church."² Since this dialogical process is one where "a great deal of post-
biblical information and reflection is needed,"³ and one where "biblical insights pertinent
to a social ethics may form a sociopolitical vision more fully formed than yet expressed
in Scripture,"⁴ the believing community holds an obvious important and vital role in the
interpretation and application process. And yet, the primacy of Scripture is maintained.

**Paradigmatic Social-Ethical Reality**

The Christian community is the primary, purposive, and distinct new society
whose victory provides unique visibility for the *reign of God.*⁵ The Church itself is a
unique society, a new realm of social existence:

The relationships among its members, the ways of dealing with their differences
and needs, and the patterns of leadership and decision making constitute a discrete
societal structure within the larger society. Thus the church can embody the
patterns of shared life that God desires for all humanity. Because the church is the
manifestation of the Reign of God, the norms that guide it must exemplify the
highest vision of human community.⁶

¹Ibid.

²Mott, review of "Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women: Case Issues in Biblical
Interpretation," 122.


⁴Ibid.

⁵Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, 129; idem, *A Christian Perspective on
Political Thought*, 111.

From the standpoint of the multiplicity of groups and the integrity of each type, the church is one among other groups in the society. From the standpoint of meaning and coherence, however, the church’s role is unique. Because it is the channel of faith that is comprehensive of all life, the church clarifies the normative purpose of other groups. It thus must resist identification with them or itself merely reflecting their understanding.¹

The transforming of human nature, however, a vital and central form of the Reign, is present only in the church.²

The Christian community, then, displays in an empirical way the moral reality of God’s invisible Kingdom. It is a concrete social context that is set apart from society as a kind of “counter society,”³ a paradigmatic social-ethical reality which prefigures Christ’s goals in history.⁴ It is the fundamental field of moral operation for the reign of God.

Embodying the presence of God’s reign, the Christian community “submits itself in uncompromising faithfulness to its new covenant ethics.”⁵

¹Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 47.

²Ibid., 112.

³For the church to have a corrective impact on culture it must maintain a separate and distinct identity from the surrounding society and any new society that it may help create. Mission is consistent with separation as long as it is kept in mind that the motivation for that separation is mission, and not separation for its own sake” (Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 133).

⁴“The church is to be the community in which, through its behavior and its mission, the Reign of God becomes visible, serving as a precursor and avant-garde of the society that will be the fulfillment of all hope. The church is called to represent the Reign of God ‘between the times” (ibid., 106).

⁵Ibid., 133. Mott clarifies the meaning of new covenant ethics: “Jesus’ ethical precepts are the ethics of the Reign, not ethics of preparation or of waiting for the Reign. They are the ethics of the present Reign of God, or new covenant ethics. . . . Those who respond to Jesus are to live by the demands of the new age of justice that is breaking into history” (ibid., 89).
Primary Social Structure for Change

The Christian community is the primary social structure through which the gospel works to change other structures.¹ Mott begins his discussion of the Church as a “counter-community” with the words of John Howard Yoder: “The primary social structure through which the gospel works to change other structures is that of the Christian community.”² While the Christian community is the fundamental field of moral operation for the reign of God, it is only so principally and initially. The Church is to have a “corrective impact on culture,”³ to “contribute to social change,”⁴ to “raise the general moral level in the secular world around it.”⁵

Mott is writing in the context of the biblical importance of groups and the reality that groups are channels for influencing society.⁶ It is a context, too, that affirms that the scope of God’s “kingdom work” is not confined to the Church.⁷ Furthermore, “history is fundamentally one, but its unity will be fully established only at the final reconciliation at

¹Ibid., 128.
³Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 133.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid., 136.
⁶Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 42-49. In this context Mott notes, “The state cannot be an effective agent for justice until its justice reflects the life of other groups of society. Such a group is the church, not only in terms of its own life, but also in terms of the meaning it is holding forth for the other groups of the community” (ibid., 56).
⁷Ibid., 111.
the end of history. Nevertheless, glimpses of that unity appear in the present time.\(^1\)

While "the activity of God outside the presence of the Church must be discerned by the eyes of faith,"\(^2\) and can only be "partial in its realization,"\(^3\) the reality of the Church in the world not only "provides unique visibility for the reign of God,"\(^4\) but through that visibility "produces social change in the surrounding society."\(^5\) However, the demonstration of Christian community is only one facet of social change, it is inadequate as an expression of social justice.\(^6\) Faithfulness to the demands for justice necessitates social programs and social struggle.\(^7\)

\(^{1}\)Mott, *A Christian Perspective on Political Thought*, 111. Mott cautions here: "Míguez Bonino correctly rejects the dualistic and monistic solutions to the relationship between God’s redemptive work and secular history. The dualistic solution of two separate histories—one of Israel and the church and the other secular—removes the Lordship of God from general history. In the monistic solution, on the other hand, there is but one history. The history of salvation is identical with the historical struggle for justice, an accusation made (often falsely) of liberation theology. This approach removes the independent significance of Jesus Christ and the church and renders a dangerous ultimacy to particular struggles" (ibid.).

\(^{2}\)Ibid.

\(^{3}\)Ibid., 112.

\(^{4}\)Ibid., 111. "The Christian community as a city shedding light in the world seems a fitting picture of the social impact of the Church as an alternative social reality" (Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, 137).

\(^{5}\)Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, 135. "Two movements in the Christian community help to effect such change. The first is withdrawal of support from practices contrary to the inbreaking of the Reign. The second is [sic] the example a community creates when its social relationships are characterized by the new human person that God is creating" (ibid.).

\(^{6}\)Ibid., 139.

\(^{7}\)Ibid., 106.
Summary

The role of the believing community in Mott’s application of the eschatological paradigm is clear and deliberate: (1) it is a subordinate, yet vital, source of moral authority in relation to that of Scripture; (2) it is the primary, purposive, and distinct new society which gives unique visibility to the reign of God; and (3) it is the principal social structure through which the gospel works to change other structures within the larger society. In addition, the Christian community’s mission to facilitate the demands for justice necessitates social programs and social struggle.

Nature of Social involvement

The nature of social involvement for Mott can be capsuled with one pregnant word, “justice.” “Justice, more than any other concept provides the positive meaning of politics,” he writes in his A Christian Perspective on Political Thought.1 But that could be said, too, about his social theory in general. “Paths to Justice” is how he outlines the second part of his Biblical Ethics and Social Change. After building a biblical theology of social involvement which revolves largely around the concept of biblical justice,2 he develops a variety of ways in which Christians bring about social change. These varied ways are, in his view, “Paths to Justice.” As outlined already above, as an attribute of

1Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 74.

2Chapters 4 and 5—“God’s Justice and Ours” and “The Long March of God”—which develop the theme of biblical justice, comprise nearly half of the first section (Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 59-106).
God and a major mandate of Scripture, biblical justice is Mott’s leitmotif for social ethics. And by interpreting the reign of God largely through the category of biblical justice, Mott facilitates his leitmotif for social ethics. But what practical shape does biblical justice take in Mott’s moral theory? What is the nature of social involvement as He perceives it under this eschatological-packaged leitmotif?

Character of Biblical Justice

According to Mott, the comprehensive character of biblical justice is shaped by several important perspectives:

1. Justice must be understood in the context of people as social beings. One’s conception of justice corresponds to an understanding of the relationship that the individual has to society. The biblical view assumes that people are social beings in contrast to modern liberal views which presupposes that individuals naturally live in separation from one another. In a social context, then, justice serves to enforce positive responsibilities of care for one another as opposed to only preventing one’s exercise of...

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1 Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 74.

2 Mott asserts that justice is a common biblical term even though English translations often veil the frequency and importance of justice in Scripture. According to Mott, ambiguity arises over the meaning of the biblical terms righteousness and judgment. The chief Hebrew and Greek words approximate our term justice. A rule of thumb is that when one sees righteousness or judgment in the context of social responsibility or oppression, one can assume that justice would be a better translation. See his discussion, Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 59; idem, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 77-78. This is a major presupposition behind Mott’s leitmotif.
freedom from causing harm to one another.¹

2. Justice is an essential characteristic of the children of God. "Justice is very important in the biblical order of values. It is a central duty of the children of God."² It shows that they have the true God as the object of their worship and devotion.³

3. Justice must be partial in order to be impartial, and that bias is toward the weak.⁴ Biblical justice presupposes that impartial treatment of all members of the community requires special attention to the groups of society who are most needy.⁵

Within the limits of what is due to the poor and oppressed, it is impartial.⁶ This bias


²Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 78. According to Mott, this mandate can be found in such passages as: “let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an overflowing stream” (Amos 5:24 NRSV); “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe on mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the Law: justice and mercy and faith” (Matt 23:23 NKJV); and “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Mic 6:8 NKJV). “Social justice is a theme that runs through the prophetic literature and into the New Testament, and it is regarded as so crucial to faith that without it other forms of piety are worthless” (Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 74-75).

³Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 79.


⁵The poor had specific claims as members of a needy group (Jer 5:28; Prov 29.7).

⁶According to Mott, “the difference between scriptural and classical justice lies in the understanding of what is to be the normal situation in society. The Scriptures do not allow the presupposition of a condition in which groups or individuals are denied the ability to participate fully and equally in the life of the society. For this reason, justice is primarily spoken of by the biblical writers as activity on behalf of the disadvantaged” (Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 65).
toward the weak means that in the social struggles in which the poor are perennially victims of injustice, God and the followers of God take up the cause of the weak.¹

4. Justice is “a call to action more than it is a principle of evaluation.”² Justice is not so much what we know, as what we are to do. “It goes beyond simply being just in one’s personal relationships; it implies an active responsibility to see that justice is done in the community.”³ The activism of the biblical language of justice is striking: “loose the bonds . . . undo the thongs . . . let the oppressed go free . . . break every yoke” (Isa 58:6-8, RSV). It means taking upon oneself the cause of those who are weak in their own defense.⁴ In this context, justice includes deliverance, i.e., the rectifying of gross social inequalities of the disadvantaged, the removal of oppression, and intervening power to overcome exploitive power over the weak.⁵

5. God’s justice is our model of justice oriented to the poor and weak.⁶ The justice which characterizes God’s defense of the poor is the same justice which is demanded of humanity.⁷

¹In passage after passage the group to whom justice is to be applied is the oppressed—the widow, the orphan, the resident alien, and the poor.

²Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 79.

³Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 72.

⁴Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 79.


⁷Ibid.
There is a continuity between divine and human justice. Human beings receive justice from God for their decisions and responsibilities, and they learn justice from God. It is methodologically necessary to look at the biblical materials describing God's social justice to develop the understanding of human responsibilities in justice.¹

6. Justice is a restoration to community and provides the basic conditions for active participation in community.² Justice presupposes God's intention for people to be in community.³ Community membership means "the ability to share fully within one's capacity and potential in each essential aspect of community."⁴ This restoration to community assumes a basic relative equality based on basic needs and rights rather than wealth, status, birth, education, ability, contract, religion, mathematical uniformity, etc.

There are benefit rights as well as freedom rights:⁵

When justice is set forth, it is the basic needs for inclusion in community which are set forth; and these concerns give direction to the economic, social and legal ordering of society.⁶

¹Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 80.
³Mott, "Justice," 828.
⁴Mott, "The Partiality of Biblical Justice," 25. According to Mott, the spheres of participation in the community have multiple dimensions, e.g., physical life itself, political protection and decision making, social interchange and standing, economic production, education, culture, and religion.
7. Love is the basis of biblical justice.1 Biblical justice is frequently found in close association with love. "Together, love and justice make up the most important and most characteristic component of biblical ethics."2 Because love is the meaning of Law, and Law provides content for love, justice as a major part of the demand of the Law provides structure to make love more possible in a social context.3 Love itself cannot present a reason for preferring the cause of one neighbor over another.4 Justice, then, is the servant of love. It specifies the meaning of love in the perennial situations of human conflict over the goods of social life.5 Furthermore, love gives justice moral meaning:

Love must persist even after it has propelled us into the realm of justice. 'Love can only do more, it can never do less, than justice requires.' It transcends justice because it is that which gives justice its moral meaning. Paul wrote, 'If I divide up and distribute my possessions . . . and do not have love, it is of no benefit' (1 Cor. 13.3).6

These characteristics of biblical justice are set within the context of the reality of social evil.7 A major component of Mott's social theory includes the background concept

1Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 92; idem, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 48-56.

2Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 59.

3Ibid., 48-54.

4Ibid., 54.

5"Justice is the guide for reaching a proper equilibrium in the midst of the conflicting claims upon our love" (Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 91, 92).

6Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 54.

7See ibid., 1-21 (these thoughts first appeared in an article by Stephen Charles Mott titled, “Biblical Faith and the Reality of Social Evil,” Christian Scholar's Review 9,
that evil has a social and political character beyond isolated actions of individuals. Evil is in the very fabric of our social existence. Furthermore, there is no radical distinction between the person as an individual and as a social being. Evil exists in the society outside the individual and exerts an influence upon him or her. The dynamic behind this evil within sociopolitical reality is the evil supernatural powers. The implications of this demonic-inspired evil residing in society concern its powerful influence on our customs, traditions, thinking, and institutions. And so,

our struggle with evil must correspond to the geography of evil. In combating evil in the heart through evangelism and Christian nurture we deal with a crucial aspect of evil, but only one aspect. Dealing with the evil of the social order and the worldly powers involves social action, action in the world.

And because we serve a different order, the reign of God, which comes in contrast to the prevailing way of life in the social order as supported by the fallen powers, we are to follow the Lordship of Christ who judges the world and conquers it. Our justice then, will necessarily include the structures of social reality.

no. 3 [1979/1980]: 225-240); idem, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 26-41.

1Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 4, 6.

2Ibid., 5.

3Ibid., 6-10. According to Mott, “the biblical concepts of cosmos and the supernatural powers comprise an objective social reality which can function for good or for evil” (ibid., 10).

4Ibid., 16.

5Ibid., 18. “The church is to be engaged in a battle against evils within the social structure, because they mark the points of these powers’ penetration into our history” (ibid., 19).
For Mott, "justice is more than a principle of analysis. It is a rallying point. Justice is a powerful motivator. One should have a passion for justice."¹ But what practical shape does this passion for justice take in social involvement?

**Paths to Justice**

According to Mott, the paths to justice begin with evangelism. Evangelism contributes significantly to moral change in the members of society, which in turn brings a leavening influence to society. It is also a major factor in heightening awareness of moral responsibility and producing social activists.² But there are limits to evangelism. The objective reality of social life and social evil are not directly or fully confronted by the more individualistic dynamics of evangelism. Paths to justice other than evangelism must also be followed.³ Evangelism and the implementation of justice are inseparable, however, both in Christian conduct and in the goal of God’s work in history. This interdependence can be seen from three perspectives: (1) witness is hurt when social action is absent; (2) witness is helped when social action is present; and (3) social action is needed to protect the fruits of witness.⁴ Mott notes that “social ministry and

¹Mott, *A Christian Perspective on Political Thought*, 74.

²Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, 110-112. Mott notes that when revival and spiritual awakenings have been widespread in a society, they have frequently resulted in movements of social concern and reform.

³Ibid., 122.

⁴Ibid., 122-126.
evangelical witness exist side by side in Scripture without conflict of subordination."¹

Because of this, there can be no designation of primary and secondary tasks. We need to render wholehearted obedience to both tasks.²

Beyond evangelical witness, the path to justice for Mott, is comprehensive:

The obligation to do justice makes us responsible for the conduct of society in the most comprehensive sense. Wherever there is a basic need, we are obliged to help to the extent of our ability and opportunity. ‘Do not hold back from those who are entitled to it, when you possess the power to do it’ (Prov. 3.27) sums up the whole teaching and how we are to relate it to our varying circumstances. Our power includes not only our personal resources but also class position and political opportunities.³

Wherever there is a basic need, help needs to be given to the extent of our ability or opportunity. We are to do this within the context of the understanding of biblical justice as outlined above.

This principle, of course, can be read primarily in the context of individual social responsibility and involvement. For Mott, though, such individual social responsibility is very significant in influencing society. While groups, not individuals, formulate public policy, the individual through associations "can get a piece of the action by participating in the process of making social decisions."⁴

By neglecting the associational involvement of their members, churches are often less effective in carrying out their professed mission of providing Christian

¹Ibid., 123.
²Ibid., 126-127.
³Ibid., 77.
⁴Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 47. Mott has in mind here lobbies, public interest groups, professional and trade associations, etc.
influence on the institutions of their society. The churches tend to promote a merely personal ethic and to ignore nonecclesiastical associational responsibilities. When members do participate, their associations are often not those that affect public policy; rather, they are those that are concerned with sociability.¹

Individual Christian social responsibility and influence is thus a significant part of Mott’s social moral theory. In this context, the Christian community’s responsibility is one of support and providing the biblical, theological, and ethical resources necessary for its individual members to intelligently address social and political issues in the context of their opportunities or calling.²

Mott’s view of the Church as a “counter-community,” however, goes beyond the action of its individual members. Because groups are channels for influencing society,³ and individuals are necessarily limited in what they can realistically contribute toward or oppose,⁴ the Christian community, as a group within society, must exert its influence through its own life, word, and deed.⁵

¹Ibid., 47-48. The point here concerns viewing society as a composite of groups rather than a composite of individuals. The associational slumber of the churches Mott refers to reflects “a composite of individuals” view of society, and overlooks how groups are channels for influencing society.

²Ibid., 10. No doubt this is what Mott is seeking to do in his social moral theory.

³Ibid., 47.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Mott suggests that the Christian community contributes to social change in three ways: (1) through various forms of social action and service; (2) though the impact its nonconforming life has on the surrounding community; and most important (3) the support it gives to the individual involved in social action and mission (Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 133).
It has already been noted that "the Reign of God is not a social program, but faithfulness to its demands for justice necessitates social programs and social struggle." The social programs and social struggle will be consistent with the vision of justice Mott has articulated, e.g., the economic, social, and legal ordering of the community. It will be necessarily political. But through it all, it will show "an eschatological reserve," and be a "realistic activism." Mott thus articulates a model of social responsibility that is inclusive of the caring functions of the soft revolution, evangelism, and moral protest and personal influence in the socio-political arena. It is interesting to note here, though, that the direction of his political theory strongly leans towards a non-Communist socialism. In his opinion, this form of the common life most closely approximates the Christian vision. It has communal, democratic elements, much like the kibbutz, about which he has written with considerable conviction. According to Mott, "the hidden elements of Christianity in Marxism make many of its concepts appropriate for an overtly Christian social philosophy."

1Ibid., 106.


3Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 110, 70.

4Ibid., 108-111.

5Ibid., 197. He adds, "It is also conceivable for a Christian to interpret history by means of a dialectical historical analysis subsumed under the Reign of God, never fully in history" (ibid.). See Mott's extended positive assessment of Marxist socialism and socialism in general, Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 183-218. See also, Max Lynn Stackhouse, review of A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, by Stephen Charles Mott, The Journal of Religion 75, no. 1 (January 1995): 149; and David Attwood, review of A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, by Stephen Charles
Summary

The nature of social involvement for Mott can be capsuled under the rubric, "biblical justice." The comprehensive character of biblical justice is shaped by several important perspectives, i.e., justice (1) must be understood in the context of people as social beings; (2) is an essential characteristic of the children of God; (3) must be partial in order to be impartial—biased toward the weak; (4) is a call to action more than a principle of evaluation; (5) reflects God's justice which is our model of justice oriented to the poor and weak; (6) includes a restoration to active participation in community; (7) finds its moral meaning in love. The reign of God is interpreted largely through this leitmotif for social ethics. In doing so, Mott brings practical shape to his moral theory through what he terms "paths to justice." These "paths to justice" include a variety of ways in which Christians can bring about social change, i.e., evangelism, individual social responsibility and influence, moral protest and personal influence in the socio-political arena, social programs and social struggle. A non-Communist form of socialism is envisioned as the form of the common life most closely approximating the Christian vision.

Implications for Moral Theory

While the broad outline of Mott's application of the eschatological paradigm to moral theory is now clear, it is important to survey his application of the paradigm's ethical implications with respect to the level of moral reflection and its potential for

concrete social content. The issues here deal primarily with questions of specificity and consistency with respect to the eschatological paradigm's application. They bring into practical focus where normative content and guidance lie in the application process, and the carefulness with which they are used towards concrete ethical exigencies. This survey includes: (1) the theoretical level of moral reflection which the paradigm appears to elicit in Mott's thinking; (2) the meaning and function of paradigm in Mott's moral theory; and (3) Mott's correlation of the eschatological paradigm to philosophical ethics.

Level of Moral Reflection

As indicated in an earlier chapter, a correspondence can exist between a paradigm operating on either the macro, meso, or micro level, and the ingredients in the structure of ethics. This correspondence between the levels of paradigm operation and ethical structure is only true in the order that has been suggested, i.e., macro/bases, meso/principles, micro/area rules. The question of "theoretical level," which this correspondence facilitates between paradigm operation and moral reflection, enables one to clarify how concretely the eschatological paradigm might legitimately speak to modern ethical concerns.

The issue of "sufficient concreteness" is at the heart of Mott's discussion of the use of Scripture in contemporary moral theory. His concern is understanding the place

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1See above, p. 23, note 1. The ethical categories and terminology used in this study reflect Holmes's ingredients for structuring an ethical theory (Holmes, 50-56).

2Mott, "The Use of the New Testament for Social Ethics," 238-247; idem, "How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?" 719; idem, "The Contribution of the Bible
of concrete decision making within different aspects of ethical thought, and showing how principles and concrete injunctions relate in Scriptural thought. It is within this larger discussion of the use of Scripture that the "theoretical level" of the eschatological paradigm comes into view.

Macro/Bases

For Mott, Scripture is authoritative for ethics in different but complementary ways. Scripture's contribution to ethics is found in the mighty acts of God, in prevailing ethical principles, in theological affirmations, and through particular concrete injunctions (teachings and stories of Scripture). It is in this context that he states an important hermeneutical principle:

"The authority of God in the concrete injunction must be interpreted with attention to God's authority in mighty acts, in the theological affirmations, and in the prevailing ethical principles. And the specific teachings and propositions are needed to give concrete interpretation of the broad and general truths and actions. . . . If the concrete commandments are interpreted apart from consideration of the implications of the great acts of God recorded in Scripture and its basic theological affirmations, our ethical response is in danger of being theologically vacuous and cut off from the core of Christian life and commitment."

Mott earlier asserts that "the concept of the Reign of God is an example of a basic theological affirmation, rather than a specific mighty act of God (although it involves

\[1\]Mott, "The Use of the New Testament for Social Ethics," 239.

\[2\]Ibid., 243; Mott, "How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?" 11.

\[3\]Mott, "How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?" 11.

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such)." As a "basic theological affirmation" of Scripture, the reign of God would be expected, then, to bring moral reflection from the "macro" level of paradigm application. In doing so, it would correspond primarily to the "theological or philosophical bases" ingredient in the structure of ethics. This is consistent with the broad way in which Mott does in fact apply the eschatological paradigm toward moral theory. As noted earlier, the reign of God "provides a context for God’s universal ethical concerns," and it "furnishes a concept of history into which other New Testament themes can be placed." There is an "eschatological vision" that presents "a continuing critique of all that falls short of it" and "a normative glimpse of a perfect society." The eschatological paradigm brings perceptions of reality, a particular view of the world which, according to Mott, is an integral aspect of interpreting both social reality and Scripture itself.

As a "basic theological affirmation," the reign of God is seen in the hermeneutical context of opening the ethical meaning of Scripture, and providing parameters for interpreting specific concrete injunctions of Scripture. The bridge between the two (theological affirmations and specific concrete injunctions) is the reality of their both yielding normative content of Scripture.

1Ibid., 10.


3Mott, "How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?" 15.

Meso/Underlying Principles

There is evidence, however, that Mott articulates moral reflection from the “meso” level of paradigm application as well. In the structure of ethics, this would mean articulating underlying principles that can be applied in a universal way to various areas of moral activity.¹ His statement that the “concept of the Reign of God is an example of a basic theological affirmation, rather than a specific mighty act of God (although it involves such),” yields an important qualification. While the reign of God is a basic theological affirmation, rather than a specific mighty act of God, it nevertheless involves such. The reign of God is not just a perception of reality, or a particular view of the world, it is the manifestation of God’s reassertion of sovereignty in history.² For Mott, what God does is significant, and it is paradigmatic. There is specific moral content in what God does, toward which one can focus one’s moral reflection. Through God’s acts one finds moral principles that touch upon life. According to Mott, we learn from God compassion, love, justice, and social responsibility. Because justice characterizes God’s reign,³ is an expression of God’s reign,⁴ and the proclamation of the reign of God brings with it an imperative for justice,⁵ one is drawn from the broad realm of worldview to the more concrete level of underlying principles that can be applied to life.

¹See Holmes, 51-53.
³Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 85.
⁵Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 97, 100.
Since for Mott, the biblical language (reign, justice) facilitates the merging of his leitmotif for eschatology with his leitmotif for social ethics, he is able to outline prevailing ethical principles which delineate the basic goals, priorities, and concerns of social life.¹ This application of the *reign of God* from the "meso" level of moral reflection (for ethics, underlying principles) illustrates that Mott’s approach to social ethics is a paradigmatic one, and that eschatology is likewise both perceived and employed paradigmatically.

It must be remembered that these observations come in the context of the important question of how to translate ethical reflection from one level to another.² It is important to note, too, that the so-called "basic theological affirmations" receive their concrete content and interpretation via the specific teachings and propositions found in concrete injunctions.³ An organic hermeneutical relationship exists between the two levels of moral reflection—one that is complementary, dependent, and interpretive. Concrete injunctions are necessary to interpret theological affirmations, and theological affirmations are needed to interpret concrete injunctions. Thus, the *reign of God* opens

¹These have been broadly outlined in the above discussion of the character of biblical justice.

²I.e., from the macro to the meso to the micro, and from theological/philosophical bases to underlying principles to area rules. This includes the ability to move oppositely, i.e., area rules to underlying principles to bases, and micro to meso and macro where possible.

³For Mott, Scripture provides content for one’s worldview. He writes, “Scripture’s most important contribution to ethics may be in the content it provides for one’s world view” (Mott, “The Use of the New Testament for Social Ethics,” 241).
the way toward identifiable content and reasonable specificity with respect to application for moral theory.

**Micro/Area Rules**

Having surveyed Mott's use of eschatology in moral theory, two important questions come to view with respect to the eschatological paradigm and contemporary praxis, i.e., (1) How does Mott's application of the eschatological paradigm relate to contemporary ethical issues? and (2) How specific or concrete does his application of the eschatological paradigm allow him to be with respect to these issues? These questions bring us to the "micro" level of paradigm application and the corresponding "area rules" in moral theory.1 Answers to these questions are twofold. One revolves around Mott's view of the nature of Scripture and his hermeneutic which attempts to interpret organically the different, but complementary, ways Scripture is authoritative for ethics. The other revolves around the nature of the themes he addresses as important in the context of his moral theory.

Mott reads Scripture "with the expectation of answers to questions of social justice and oppression."2 This is evidenced in his somewhat topical approach to Scripture which asks of Scripture a question that may be commonplace in contemporary Christian

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1Area rules are moral rules that apply to various areas of life, i.e., value of fetal life, truth telling, business transactions, economics, human rights, social justice, etc. (see Homes, 51, 53-54).

2Mott, **Biblical Ethics and Social Change**, viii.

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ethics, but which would likely have been unfamiliar to first-century Christians. He thus tends to produce studies of immediate and concrete relevance. His broad outline of the nature of social involvement and social change becomes focused, then, to include a wide array of specific contemporary ethical concerns. His "From the Word" column in *Christian Social Action* indicates this diversity, including such practical topics as interest on loans, ecological responsibility, capital punishment, homosexuality, centralized government, legislating religious values, unpaid wages, welfare reform, the interconnection of violence and injustice, gambling, and affirmative action.

Beyond these focused columns, Mott’s larger works also express practical concerns such as the nature and content of human rights, civil disobedience, revolutionary

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1Verhey, 25.

2Mott’s monthly “From the Word” contribution to *Christian Social Action* has been consistent since his first column in the July/August issue, 1990.

violence, and economics. His comprehensive discussion of politics opens toward the concrete concerns of power in society, groups in society, the purpose of government, a critique for the evaluation of political ideologies, and the shape of creative political reform.

Mott’s discussion of the homeless is particularly revealing as to how his works tend to focus ultimately towards practical needs. It is particularly interesting to note how his lengthy discussion of homelessness in Christian Social Action includes the full range of paradigm operation (macro, meso, and micro) and the ingredients of ethical structure under discussion here (bases, underlying principles, area rules). It presents a clear example of his methodology, both in operation and application. After outlining the realities and causes of homelessness in the United States, Mott presses for a political consciousness which goes beyond the relief of immediate needs or mere financial assistance to address the root causes found in society-wide patterns. Individuals and groups of Christians are called to work with local government agencies that serve as advocates for the poor and that address issues of empowerment. Here Mott’s


2See Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought; idem, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 192-208.

eschatological leitmotif—*reign of God*—becomes an integral part of his biblical study of our responsibility to the *homeless* by providing a theological base, underlying principles, concrete content, as well as moral stimulus (compassion and motivation towards ministry to the homeless).

This focus toward immediate and concrete relevance is not programmatic, however. While social programs and social struggle are viewed as inevitable realities in light of the demands for justice which the *reign of God* brings,¹ the “question of strategy” for implementation is not part of Mott’s focus.² He offers no easy syllabi for executing his moral theory. Mott is a theorist. He works primarily on the levels of theological bases and underlying principles. But he does so with an eye constantly toward concrete biblical injunctions and specific social needs of contemporary society. This awareness pulls him inevitably toward “area rules” in moral theory. Together with his hermeneutic of relating biblical principles and concrete injunctions, this tending toward “area rules” enables clear directions for Christian social involvement. This tending toward “area rules” in moral theory exhibits how paradigm for Mott includes this level of moral reflection.

**Summary**

With the above analysis in view, it is appropriate to conclude that, for Mott, the

²Verhey, 26.
eschatological paradigm facilitates moral reflection across the spectrum of macro, meso, and micro paradigm operation. Because of its close proximity to the biblical text, the eschatological paradigm enables moral reflection that includes theological bases, underlying principles, and area rules. The different levels of moral reflection are kept in view and are consciously related to so as to provide conceptual integrity and purposeful application for contemporary moral exigencies.

Paradigm Role and Function

Paradigm is an integral part of Mott's moral theory particularly as it relates to the question of an interpretive framework for concrete injunctions, finding values, overarching principles, and cross-cultural applicability. His discussion of paradigm comes in those contexts where he is articulating how principles and concrete injunctions

1While this study uses the concept of paradigm in conjunction with eschatology, paradigm is used more broadly and generally by both Mott and Ogletree. In order to understand fully how these two ethicists apply eschatology as a paradigm, it is useful to observe how they relate to the concept of paradigm more generally and/or in other areas thought. For the purpose of clarification, the term “eschatological paradigm” is used where this study is focusing principally on their application of eschatology, and “paradigm” where it is discussing paradigm generally in order to understand how eschatology as paradigm correspondingly would be viewed or applied.

2The concept of “values” is introduced here as a component in Mott’s moral theory, but it is not crucial for the purposes or argumentation of this study. According to Mott, “one must discover the values in the economic, social, and political systems in the Bible and in theological reflection upon the Bible and the subsequent history of the church and indicate the modern arrangements which would best implement those values. Such a case will require empirical and historical information far beyond that which can be furnished from the Bible” (Mott, “How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?” 17). It appears that values thus have a motivational function in both the search for and application of principles in the concrete injunctions of the biblical text.
relate in Scriptural thought.\textsuperscript{1} 

The "concrete materials" of Scripture have "normative significance."\textsuperscript{2} "Scripture is very concrete because of God's care for humanity in its particular material and social existence."\textsuperscript{3} This affirmation about the normative significance of concrete materials should not, however, 

mean a denial of the differences in our situation from that of the original reception of the biblical passages, nor should it deny the incompleteness of these commandments for the whole of ethical guidance. It means that since God's revelation does come in concrete forms, every passage and every commandment of Scripture should be examined for whatever meaning that they might contain which would transcend the original situation and relate to the situation of the reader of another place and time.\textsuperscript{4} 

This search for meaning that would transcend the original situation includes finding values, overarching principles, and cross-cultural applicability. It means understanding "the often strange and seemingly archaic concreteness of Scripture as an historical expression of transcendental truth designed for all humanity." We thus "approach the Bible anticipating an inexhaustible richness of meaning." Through valid exegesis we discover "in the particulars truths of greater universality." Behind specific

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 11-15; idem, "The Use of the New Testament for Social Ethics," 243-246; idem, "The Bible and Economics," 26, 31-33; idem, "Limiting Personal Enforcement of the Law," 37. 

\textsuperscript{2}Mott, "How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?" 16. 

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid. 

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 11. "The Bible's very involvement with the historical moment makes the injunctions of the Scripture dated for those who are struggling to be faithful in situations far removed in time" (ibid., 16). 

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injunctions, we look for ethical principles.\footnote{Mott, "The Use of the New Testament for Social Ethics," 244.} The paradigmatic nature of specific commands comes into view against this search for ethical principles:

In addition to general and summary commands, many very specific commands have within themselves a generalizing character. . . . These specific commands are paradigmatic. They point to a range of activity much broader than what is stated. They model behavior which the hearer, or reader, is expected to identify and to apply to similar areas of life. . . . The identification of other applications requires the hearer at some level of thought to define a principle of conduct which unites the specific commandment to other specific, yet different applications. The modern reader similarly must identify the principle and determine appropriate applications in her or his social situation.\footnote{Mott, "How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?" 13.}

Furthermore, the nature of Hebrew Law itself is viewed as paradigmatic and partial.\footnote{Ibid., 14.} It does not attempt to list everything that a law covered, but rather it provides a prominent example. It was to be applied to other similar examples.\footnote{"Mott, "Limiting Personal Enforcement of the Law," 37. "The Law functioned in a paradigmatic fashion, providing guidance for the village elders or other judges. . . . Paradigmatic means that its provisions served as examples and guides for application to specific cases as they arose. They were not directives to be carried out in exact detail" (Mott, "The Bible and Economics," 31).} The role and function of paradigm, then, articulate how principles and concrete injunctions relate in Scriptural thought.

Additionally, paradigmatic injunctions can appeal to imagination rather than express mere abstract propositions:

Most of Jesus's injunctions were paradigmatic. . . . As in his parables, Jesus commands had a dramatic, poetic, and pictorial character. Rather than abstract
principles, they appealed to imagination to stir conscience to look for the principle.¹

While Mott discusses paradigm primarily in the context of eliciting authoritative meaning from concrete injunctions, paradigm nevertheless factors largely in his overall hermeneutic.² This importance here is not paradigm itself, but the authoritative nature of Scripture and the broad way in which it can be approached and interpreted. The normative content—whether in concrete injunction, prevailing ethical principles, mighty acts of God, theological affirmations, or enduring values—is not in any paradigmatic reality itself, but in the text. While the text creates the paradigm, the paradigm opens back towards the text. Again, the hermeneutical principle Mott articulates is that

The authority of God in the concrete injunction must be interpreted with attention to God’s authority in mighty acts, in the theological affirmations, and in the

¹Mott, “The Use of the New Testament for Social Ethics,” 245. An example Mott cites is the command to “turn the other cheek,” which points to a much broader range of activity than a literal slap on the face. It is paradigmatic in that it is a model of behavior where the hearer is expected to recognize the principle and apply it. “Even though the injunction is limited and incomplete, the way it applies its principles sets a pattern for later Christians to follow in different circumstances which possibly allow a fuller understanding. Since the controlling factor is the principle of which the injunction is an example, it allows a flexible adaptation to new historical situations. . . . Although exemplary, the specific injunction is to be taken seriously. In fact, the argument that, because the injunction is paradigmatic, it is not law misses the paradigmatic nature of the Torah. In addition, the fact that the commands of Jesus are difficult to obey or to enforce does not rule out their character as law. Law has an important symbolic and educative function even when it does not actually control behavior. It gives expression to social imagination” (ibid., 245, 246).

²Mott asserts that the Exodus is a paradigm of justice (Mott, “The Bible and Economics,” 26), and in his view, in interpretation “one seeks to express in social life meaning which is analogous to the basic acts and affirmations of the Bible” (Mott, “How Should Christian Economists Use the Bible?” 11). God models justice, compassion, deliverance, etc. (Mott, “The Partiality of Biblical Justice,” 25).
prevailing ethical principles. And the specific teachings and propositions are needed to give concrete interpretation of the broad and general truths and actions.1

These observations are significant for Mott’s application of the eschatological paradigm in that the normative content for the eschatological paradigm likewise would lay primarily in the biblical text. In keeping with his approach to paradigm generally, his approach to eschatology tends towards specificity and concrete content in the moral images that the eschatological paradigm (particularly the reign of God) evokes. In addition, his application of the eschatological paradigm elicits sustained focus toward Scripture in the context of its application in moral theory.

It appears that the role and function of paradigm, for Mott, is primarily that of facilitating an abstract basic principle which then needs to be translated and applied towards new situations. However, he also gives evidence that paradigm facilitates the imprinting of an inner gripping image which shapes people ethically.2 It appears that his use of eschatology as paradigm is consistent with these conclusions. The eschatological paradigm facilitates abstract principles which need to be translated and applied towards our contemporary situation. Likewise, the eschatological paradigm has the motivational dynamic of imprinting an inner gripping image which shapes people ethically. This is further indication of Mott’s ability to nuance the eschatological paradigm through all levels of paradigm operation and ethical structure. The meso/underlying principles and micro/area rules levels of moral reflection are important aspects of Mott’s moral theory.


2See above discussion, 117-120.
Relation to Philosophical Ethics

In his writings, Mott appears unconcerned with relating either his moral theory or the eschatological paradigm to the categories of philosophical ethics. His interests lie squarely in the area of social ethics. The categories of thought he uses are biblical, social, economic, and political. He applies modern sociological and ethical categories to the material of the Bible to suggest new possibilities of meaning and to provide a means of assessing the applicability of the results of exegesis to contemporary discussion. Where normative Scriptural materials relate to the formal components of social ethics, Mott seeks to draw upon them in an authoritative manner. He does discuss the concept of *prima facie duties*, however, in his development of strategic noncooperation. Here he briefly refers to the principle of utility and the concept of the good.

Summary

This survey of Mott's application of the eschatological paradigm's ethical implications has included three important perspectives: (1) the theoretical level of moral reflection which the paradigm appears to elicit in Mott's thinking; (2) the meaning and function of paradigm in Mott's moral theory; and (3) Mott's correlation of the eschatological paradigm to philosophical ethics. With respect to the level of moral reflection, Mott nuances the eschatological paradigm through the full range of paradigm

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operation and ethical structure, i.e., macro/bases, meso/underlying principles, and micro/area rules. The role and function of paradigm for Mott are primarily that of facilitating an abstract principle which then needs to be translated and applied towards new situations. However, there is evidence that the paradigm has the motivational dynamic of shaping people ethically through an inner gripping moral image. Finally, Mott appears unconcerned, generally, with relating either his moral theory or the eschatological paradigm to the categories of philosophical ethics.

Chapter Summary

Mott's understanding of eschatology fits the general contours of the eschatological paradigm outlined in this study. He both views and articulates this paradigm within a realist perspective of human nature and the realities of history. While each of the components of the paradigm is evident in his thinking, the reign of God becomes his leitmotif for nuancing eschatology toward moral theory. By interpreting the reign of God primarily through the category of biblical justice, Mott's leitmotif for eschatology largely facilitates his leitmotif for social ethics, i.e., biblical justice. While Mott consciously perceives and nuances the paradigm from the standpoint of biblical theology and exegesis, the reign of God, as a basic theological affirmation of Scripture, becomes useful towards interpreting the social content and meaning of Scripture itself. And while the Christian community assumes a subordinate, yet vital source of authority in relation to that of Scripture, it is the primary field of moral operation for the ethics of the reign of God, and the primary structure through which the gospel works to change
other structures. Furthermore, the nature of the Church's social involvement in the larger society revolves around the character of biblical justice, which is always biased in favor of the poor and weak and includes a commitment to their defense.

A fundamental concern in Mott's hermeneutic is the place of concrete decision making within different aspects of ethical thought, and showing how principles and concrete injunctions relate in Scriptural thought. In this context, the diverse, but complementary, ways in which Scripture is authoritative for ethics are interpreted organically. The concrete injunctions must be interpreted with attention to God's mighty acts, theological affirmations, and prevailing ethical principles. Likewise, the specific teachings and propositions are needed to give concrete interpretation of the broad and general truths and actions. Functionally, this provides the way for responsibly opening up the ethical meaning of Scripture across different levels of moral reflection and application. The paradigmatic nature of specific commands further facilitates a close application of the biblical text toward area rules in corresponding contemporary social questions. The role and function of paradigm articulate how principles and concrete injunctions relate in Scriptural thought and application toward contemporary society. Paradigmatic injunctions elicit both principle and moral imagination. Throughout, the normative content lies primarily in the biblical text.

As a basic theological affirmation of Scripture, the reign of God is seen in the hermeneutical context of opening the ethical meaning of Scripture, and providing parameters for interpreting specific concrete injunctions of Scripture. The bridge between the two is the reality of their both yielding normative content of Scripture. In
addition, the *reign of God* receives concrete content through its organic relation to the concrete biblical injunction. The normative content for the eschatological paradigm thus lies primarily in the biblical text. In addition, because the *reign of God* is an expression of God's mighty act to restore creation, His paradigmatic actions facilitate moral reflection on the meso level of underlying principles and prevailing ethical values.

Mott is a theorist who works primarily on the levels of theological bases and underlying principles. But he does so with an eye toward concrete biblical injunctions and specific social needs of contemporary society. This pulls him inevitably toward "area rules" in moral theory. This tending toward "area rules" in moral theory exhibits how paradigm (and specifically the eschatological paradigm) for Mott ultimately includes the micro level of moral reflection. With this in view, it is appropriate to conclude that, for Mott, the eschatological paradigm facilitates moral reflection across the spectrum of macro, meso, and micro levels of paradigm operation. Because of its close proximity to the themes and values of the concrete biblical texts, the eschatological paradigm enables moral reflection that includes theological bases, underlying principles, and area rules.

Mott's use of the eschatological paradigm in moral theory is consistent with his overall hermeneutic, and the use of paradigm in particular. His *reign of God* leitmotif is a determinant ingredient in his hermeneutic.
CHAPTER 4

THOMAS W. OGLETREE'S USE OF ESCHATOLOGY
IN MORAL THEORY

For Thomas W. Ogletree, "the primary challenge to Christian ethics is to find suitable ways of articulating the import of eschatology which figures in the biblical materials." Ogletree is concerned with the "troublesome gap between biblical studies and Christian ethics." He aims to "set forth an approach and a set of hermeneutical understandings for utilizing biblical materials in Christian ethics." Because the biblical

1Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 177.
2Ibid., xi; 1-14.
materials are seen as opening up an “eschatological horizon of moral understanding”—a “larger horizon of meaning which . . . displays the significance and authority of moral notions”—Ogletree finds in eschatology an important hermeneutical guide that enables a “fusion of horizons” between biblical worlds of meaning and those which make up our sense of reality. And because “biblical ethics is not yet Christian social ethics,” Ogletree asserts that “understanding requires us to grasp in a new setting, one more complex, the force of eschatological promise for social organization of life.”

Ogletree’s project, however, is more than a mere outline of the contours of an eschatology-inspired “social organization of life.” His focus, rather, is on crucial, more fundamental themes which ethics must consider in relation to biblical materials and eschatology in particular, i.e., what he calls “the assumptions and critical principles which inform the reading of the biblical text.” These assumptions and critical principles include insights drawn from European phenomenology and traditional moral philosophy. With carefully structured precision, Ogletree lays out a path towards correlating phenomenology, moral philosophy, and biblical ethics toward contemporary Christian moral theory. Eschatology as a horizon of moral understanding provides an important ingredient for this dialogue between the biblical materials and the critical discourse of

1 Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 177-192.
2 Ibid., 177.
3 Ibid., 175.
4 Ogletree, Hospitality to the Stranger, 143.
5 Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, xiii.
modern society.¹

This chapter explores Ogletree’s use of eschatology in moral theory particularly as it concerns methodology toward application. It (1) describes the way in which Ogletree both perceives and nuances the eschatological paradigm (including his leitmotif); (2) outlines the methodological nuances that his application evokes/expresses with regard to our three principles of verification (Scripture, community, and nature of social involvement); and (3) surveys his application of the eschatological paradigm’s ethical implications with respect to level of moral reflection and social content (macro/bases, meso/underlying principles, and micro/area rules).

Because Ogletree comes to the question of eschatology and ethics from the direction of phenomenology and moral philosophy, the correlation of the eschatological paradigm to philosophical ethics is treated prior to that of “principles of verification” and separate from “implications for moral theory.” Placing the discussion of the correlation to philosophical ethics earlier facilitates understanding with regard to the other methodological concerns outlined by this study as important in the application of eschatology in moral theory.

Furthermore, because The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics and Hospitality to the Stranger represent Ogletree’s primary and most focused discussion with regard to the

¹According to Ogletree, “biblical eschatology presents a profound challenge to modern thought, a challenge that such thought will, if possible, ignore or dismiss. Yet if eschatology can become more intelligible within the critical discourse of modern society, then we will be in a better position to convey in that setting what Scripture has to teach us about ethics” (Thomas W. Ogletree, New Haven, CT, to Larry L. Lichtenwalter, September 26, 1996, 1).
use of eschatology in moral theory, and are viewed by him as methodologically
interdependent companion volumes,¹ this chapter will draw from them in a principal way
in relation to his other writings.²

¹Ogletree, Hospitality to the Stranger, xi-xii. Most of the essays in the 1985
volume (Hospitality to the Stranger) had been previously published and were written as
preparatory studies for the 1983 volume (The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics).

²Ogletree’s writings express a diversity of interest in relation to social moral
theory and the use of Scripture, e.g., (1) biblical materials, history, and historical thinking
(Thomas W. Ogletree, Christian Faith and History: A Critical Comparison of Ernst
Troeltsch and Karl Barth [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965]—edited publication of his
Vanderbilt Ph.D. diss, “Christology and History in the Theology of Karl Barth: A Critical
Exposition in Light of the Historicism of Ernst Troeltsch,” 1963; idem, “Ideology and
Ethical Reflection,” Working Paper, 1972—copy held at the School of Theology,
University of the South, Sewanee, TN; idem, “Of Time and History,” Soundings: An
Intersciplinary Journal 62, no. 1 [Spring 1979]: 1-8 ); (2) Marxist-Christian dialogue
(idem, “What May Man Really Hope For?” in From Hope to Liberation: Towards a New
Marxist-Christian Dialogue, ed. Nicholas Piediscalzi and Robert G. Thobaben
11-46); (3) the nature of God (idem, “A Christological Assessment of Dipolar Theism,”
in a Theology of Social Change,” in The Living God, ed. Dow Kirkpatrick [Nashville:
Abingdon Press, 1971], 174-206; idem, The Death of God Controversy [Nashville:
Abingdon Press, 1967]); (4) trends in theological reflection (idem, “Contemporary
Emphases in Christian Thought, or How to Be Fashionable in Your Theology,” The
Christian Ministry 1, no. 3 [March 1970]: 34-37; idem, “From Anxiety to Responsibility:
The Shifting Focus of Theological Reflection,” The Chicago Theological Seminary
Register 58, no. 3 [March 1968]: 1-23; (5) the nature and mission of the church (idem,
“The Church’s Mission to the World in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer” Encounter
25, no. 4 [Autumn 1964]: 457-469; idem, “Renewing Ecumenical Protestant Social
Teaching,” in Justice and the Holy, ed. Douglas A. Knight and Peter J. Paris [Atlanta,
in The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics, ed. Larry L. Rasmussen [Vancouver,
BC: Society of Christian Ethics, 1984], 1-17; (6) power (idem, “Power and Human
Fulfillment,” Pastoral Psychology 22, no. 216 [September 1971]: 42-53; (7) sexuality
Working Paper for Discussion in the Yale Divinity School Community March 18, 1994);
as well as (8) hermeneutics and methodology as per above, p. 188, n. 3. The import of
eschatology appears throughout these varied themes, but becomes significantly more

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Eschatological Paradigm and Ethics

The significance of eschatology in Ogletree’s moral theory can be seen in the prominence it is given in his companion volumes *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics* and *Hospitality to the Stranger*. Both volumes conclude with the horizon of meaning which eschatology brings to Christian moral theory, i.e., “The Eschatological Horizon of New Testament Social Thought” (chapter 5) and “The Eschatological Horizon of Moral Understanding” (chapter 6). In addition, the three chapters in *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics* which review the moral understandings of selected biblical literature each conclude with a statement of how contemporary moral understanding is thus challenged. The challenge can be summed up in one word: eschatology. The review of Synoptic materials is titled, “Synoptic Portrayals of Eschatological Existence.” The discussion of Pauline moral understanding begins with a focused in his *Hospitality to the Stranger* and *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics*.

1Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger*, 127-149.

2Ogletree, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics*, 177-205. This chapter actually begins two pages earlier with the title “Toward Common Grounds of Understanding.” “The Eschatological Horizon of Moral Understanding” is the first major section in this discussion. From this point on, eschatology dominates the thrust of the “fusion of horizons” that Ogletree seeks to delineate in his closing discussion of the use of the Bible in Christian moral theory.


5Ogletree, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics*, 87-134.
section titled, "The Primacy of Promise." Finally, the "Prologue" to Hospitality to the Stranger sets eschatology as the context in which the hospitality motif is developed. These are important observations for two reasons: they indicate (1) that Ogletree intentionally and methodologically incorporates eschatology into his moral theory, and (2) that when he reads the Bible, an intimate connection between ethics and eschatology emerges.

Perceiving the Paradigm

Ogletree's understanding of eschatology fits the general contours of the eschatological paradigm which this study has outlined. Each of the components of the

1Ibid., 138-146.

2Some have critiqued Ogletree for not making clearer how he thinks eschatology advances some of his constructive theses (L. Gregory Jones, review of Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding, by Thomas W. Ogletree, Journal of the American Academy of Religion 54, no. 4 [Winter 1986]: 192). Others speak of the abruptness with which eschatology is introduced into his description of phenomenology and moral philosophy, and how it eventually dominates interpretation so that in fact it becomes the primary category (Robin Scroggs, review of The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, by Thomas W. Ogletree, Chicago Theological Seminary Register 74, no. 3 [Fall 1984]: 44). The implication of these concerns is that eschatology is an adjunct theme rather than a ruling one, and that the materials under review do not express coherent methodology in using eschatology.

paradigm (already/not yet, reign of God, horizon of the future) are thus evident in his thinking. As with Mott, however, they are not so evident with equal explicit reference or precise terminology as this study has defined. In fact, the direction from which Ogletree comes toward eschatology, while a direct one, is considerably more subtle with regard to particular paradigm components and their implications for moral theory. Standing in a developing tradition of reflection on the importance of eschatology for ethics, Ogletree extends the discussion towards those issues that are of concern to him.¹ In the process, some of the components of the eschatological paradigm are more assumed than they are articulated.

**Already/Not Yet**

According to Ogletree, “the most salient feature of New Testament eschatology is the substantive presence of the new age in the midst of the old. It is existence ‘between the times,’ better, existence in the dialectical interpenetration of the times.”² This dialectical interplay between the two ages is the essence of what he terms “dialectical eschatologies” in contrast to that of “futurist eschatologies” (eschatologies marked by a fundamental duality).³ In describing “dialectical eschatologies,” Ogletree includes already/not yet imagery and refers to the “proleptic” fashion in which the new age is present:

¹Sedgwick, 397, 398.


³Ibid., 177-182.
They hold that the hoped-for age is already becoming a substantive reality in selected spheres of human life despite the general persistence of the present evil age. The coming new age is not yet fully actual, not even in limited regions of experience. It is present only in proleptic fashion. Thus, the coming reality shows itself in its incompleteness at the same time that it displays its genuine actuality. Dialectical eschatologies are comprised of opposing tendencies in constant interaction. They say at the one and the same time: yea and nay, already and not yet.¹

This dialectical interplay between the ages brings expression to the "indicative of the gospel" by setting forth some of the substantive content of the new age as it is taking form.² It expresses, too, the "imperative of the gospel" because "the new age is also a task and a demand."³ The gospel calls for works of ministry which give concrete social reality to its promises. The subtle interplay of the indicative and imperative in the presentation of the gospel reflects the fact that the eschatological tension which characterizes Christian existence cuts into, (1) the believer's own self-experience,⁴ (2) the interface between the church and the institutions of the larger society, as well as (3) the concrete reality of the church itself.⁵ Thus, there are interior,⁶ communal, and social dimensions of the tensions figuring in eschatological existence.⁷

¹Ibid., 179 (italics supplied).
²Ibid., 187.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., 147.
⁵Ibid., 147, 187.
⁶Ibid., 148. “As a person coming to life in Jesus Christ, I continue to be pulled at, assaulted, and disturbed by the power of my old self, even though that old self has now been consigned to death and is passing away” (ibid., 147, 148).
⁷Ibid., 182-187.
"The task," Ogletree states, "is to grasp the way in which the world and its claims present themselves to awareness when existence is determined by such an interplay. It is to discern how such an awareness impacts our presumptions about the authority of values which are constitutive of the present world order." Christians are being summoned to live for the new age in the midst of the old, "accepting structures which continue to embody the old as spheres of their activity on behalf of the new." The state and the economic order are seen as having provisional validity, but only insofar as they provide a certain order which for the present makes human life possible.

Reign of God

The concept of the reign of God as God’s dynamic rule or government is not explicit in Ogletree’s writings. At the most, and rather infrequently, he refers to the “kingdom of God,” “coming kingdom,” “coming kingdom of God,” “kingdom of heaven,” or “coming realm of God.” He does, however, refer to the “coming realm of God” as a “primal image” which provides “an encompassing vision” for the moral

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1Ibid., 130-131, n. 4.
2Ibid., 166, 167.
3Ibid., 129.

ordering of values and which specifies a pattern of life for Christian ethics.\(^1\) And as "the new world coming into being," the Kingdom of God operates by "a different set of ground rules."\(^2\) The presentness of the Kingdom of God includes both "promises" and "demands."\(^3\) There are consequences of not responding faithfully to the "claims" of the kingdom of God, consequences of disobedience.\(^4\) Discipleship emerges as the central category for setting forth the moral life in the Kingdom.\(^5\) Discipleship is eschatological existence. It is existence governed by the realities of the coming new age (the coming Kingdom of God), but lived out under the conditions of the old.\(^6\) Discipleship means being governed in activity and thinking by the presence of the coming kingdom.\(^7\) The substantive content of discipleship is radical obedience and steadfast loyalty.\(^8\) This radical obedience "concerns not merely behavioral correctness, but the total self: not simply purposive resolve, but affections, attitudes, feelings, and desires."\(^9\) Thus the

\(^{1}\) Ogletree, "Christian Social Ethics as a Theological Discipline," 121.

\(^{2}\) Ogletree, "Power and Human Fulfillment," 44.

\(^{3}\) Ogletree, "The Secular City as a Theological Norm," 213.

\(^{4}\) Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 131, n. 5.

\(^{5}\) Ibid., 92.

\(^{6}\) Ibid., 92-94.

\(^{7}\) Ibid., 93.

\(^{8}\) Ibid., 93, 95.

\(^{9}\) Ibid., 145 (see also, 90-91, 145-146, 168-169). These thoughts represent a synthesis of Ogletree's development of Synoptic and Pauline eschatological emphasis, i.e., their similarities of focus (deontological/perfectionist thinking where deontological thinking is subordinate to and dependent upon perfectionist motifs) and how Paul moves
concept of God’s rule or reign is present, but not with the explicit terminology, *reign of God*.

**Horizon of the Future**

While Ogletree does not use the terminology *horizon of the future*, the nuances of this paradigm component are nevertheless significant in his thinking. The concept of “horizon” is a recurring motif in his two companion volumes. He is searching for an “interpretive fusion of horizons” between the thinking of our contemporary world and that of the biblical world.¹ He posits the “eschatological horizon” as the crucial ingredient for this “fusion of horizons.”² This “eschatological horizon of moral understanding” includes a determinate future ingredient. Ogletree brings this future ingredient most clearly into focus under the rubric of “promise.” Promise is future-oriented.³ Promise is a category of the future.⁴ Promise “expresses the moral creativity and imagination elicited by the presence of the new age.”⁵ It is in full accord with Pauline the discussion of radical obedience to a more fundamental level (i.e., to deontological/perfectionist thinking founded on grace and centering in promise). The point here is that, while not mentioned, the *reign of God* finds expression in a life of radical obedience and loyalty that finds expression in the total self.

¹Ibid., 3, 39-41, 175.

²Ibid., 177-192; idem, *Hospitality to the Stranger*, 127-145.


⁵Ibid., 200.
dialectical eschatology\(^1\) which Ogletree selects as his "paradigm case" for articulating the full import of New Testament dialectical eschatology.\(^2\) In addition, as a "primal image," the "coming realm of God" provides an "encompassing vision" for a moral ordering of values which specifies a pattern of life for Christian ethics.\(^3\) Finally, as an eschatological community, "we are to work out new ways of being together as human beings in the presence of the unfolding purposes of God."\(^4\) This working out "new ways of being together" implies Christian thinking about ethics and presupposes a Christian frame of reference:

Yet an eschatological orientation is by no means closed, nor can it finally be described as circular. It is the orientation of a pilgrim people struggling in the midst of a hostile environment to enter into the reality of a new order of the world. Its logic is dialectical rather than syllogistic, which means it remains ever open to new discoveries and formations in the concrete interactions which are the stuff of history. Its basic structure is better represented by an open horizon than a circle.\(^5\)

This outline of Ogletree's use of eschatology reveals how each of the components

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\(^1\)Ibid. Ogletree includes a section titled "The Primacy of Promise" in his discussion of Pauline dialectical eschatology. It is a primacy of promise over law, but the promise dynamic facilitates an open view towards the future, where the reality of the future qualifies and motivates present moral life. In effect, the reality of the future—which is not—replaces the reality of God's law and post revelation—which is. Ogletree is not precise in indicating whether his view of the reality of the not yet is ontological or epistemological.

\(^2\)Scroggs, review of The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, by Thomas W. Ogletree, 45.

\(^3\)Ogletree, "Christian Social Ethics as a Theological Discipline," 212.


\(^5\)Ibid. (italics supplied).
of the eschatological paradigm are evident in his thinking, though not with equal explicit reference or precise terminology. His understanding of eschatology fits the general contours of the eschatological paradigm that this study has outlined. Like Mott, it is apparent that Ogletree works within the general assumptions of the eschatological paradigm and feels no need to re-articulate every aspect as he moves ahead in extending its implications with respect to his project.

Nuancing the Paradigm

Leitmotif

In The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, Ogletree highlights two basic types of eschatology: “futurist eschatologies” and “dialectical eschatologies.”¹ He finds these two basic types of eschatology apparent in the Old Testament and New Testament biblical materials, respectively.² Subvariants of these two types of eschatologies can be identified in each.³

Ogletree finds “futurist eschatologies” most apparent in exilic and postexilic literature of the Old Testament.⁴ Futurist eschatologies “call attention to the alien nature of the existing world, yet refuse to grant ultimacy to that world.”⁵ They “generate ethical

¹Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 177-182.
²Ibid., 177.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., 177, 69-71, 79-82.
⁵Ibid., 177.
perspectives marked by a fundamental duality,"¹ i.e., "an ethic of hope directed to a world which is not yet,² and an ethic of patient waiting and faithful enduring in the alien circumstances of the present."³ Both the hope and patient-waiting features of "futurist eschatologies" presuppose a faithful community which maintains standards and perceptions different from the dominant society.⁴

Ogletree finds "dialectical eschatologies" most apparent in Synoptic and Pauline literature of the New Testament.⁵ "Dialectical eschatologies," while reflecting most of the features of "futurist eschatologies," include one important modification. The hoped-for age is already becoming a substantive reality in selected spheres of human life despite the general persistence of the present evil age.⁶ There is a proleptic presence of the new age. While incomplete, the new age displays genuine actuality. Like "futurist eschatologies . . . dialectical eschatologies . . . depend for their social reality on faithful

¹Ibid.

²The ethic of hope looks to a coming world where human well-being and fulfillment are genuine possibilities. It nurtures understandings and expectations which belong to that world, even though they are out of line with presently existing realities. It refuses to concede the final word to the taken-for-granted dictums of the present age. It is quite able and willing to expose and resist their oppressive features" (ibid.).

³"The ethic of patient waiting and faithful enduring concerns ways of coping with the alien realities of the present. For this ethic, the issue is fidelity to a manner of life capable of sustaining a people in hope in a world which contradicts hope" (ibid.).

⁴Ibid., 178.

⁵Ibid., 87-174.

⁶Ibid., 178-179.
communities which stand over against the world even as they are situated within it."¹

What is distinctive for "dialectical eschatologies," however, is that these communities attest the newness of the power at work in them to a degree not so clearly manifest in futurist eschatologies. The people are not simply enduring, no matter how faithfully: they are also participating in the transforming power of the age for which they hope. . . . They are working out new understandings and new ways of being together which challenge the institutional arrangements of the larger society. They are already an eschatological community. The ethic of dialectical eschatologies is itself dialectical in form.²

While acknowledging that the differences between these two eschatologies can be overstated, Ogletree asserts that the most salient differences concern the ways in which the two communities (those futurist or dialectically formed) place themselves in the total movement of history.³ "At issue is the degree of continuity perceived to hold between the past and present and between present and future."⁴ "Futurist eschatologies" tend to accent continuity with a sacral tradition where the redemption offered by the hoped-for future can be realized only by a qualitative break with present realities.⁵ For "dialectical eschatologies," a decisive break with the past has already occurred, sacral traditions are significantly modified by new realities coming into being, and an orientation to the

¹Ibid., 179.
²Ibid. The dialectical form which the ethic of "dialectical eschatologies" assumes, on the one hand, seeks appropriate ways of articulating the moral import of the present reality of the new age and, on the other hand, reflects the incompleteness of the new age and the ways its moral import can find articulation in the present.
³Ibid., 181.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
creation of the new exists. The substantive theological difference between these two types of eschatology is the coming of the Messiah and the inauguration of the new age, though its consummation remains outstanding.

The purpose of Ogletree’s contrasting “futurist eschatologies” with “dialectical eschatologies” is to highlight the larger horizon of meaning which New Testament eschatology brings for Christian moral reflection. In light of New Testament biblical materials, that larger-meaning horizon is seen as “dialectical” in nature. The “heart of eschatological existence” is “existence ‘between the times,’ better, existence in the dialectical interpenetration of the times.” It is “participating in a dialectic which presses toward a creative compromise.” Eschatology thus “generates understandings that are dialectical through and through.” While Ogletree works within the general contours of the eschatological paradigm, it is this already/not yet dialectical which dominates. Nearly

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1Ibid. For Ogletree, this orientation to the creation of the new has a universal reach and includes a readiness to rethink ancient legacies which permits a new kind of openness to the plurality of human cultures and the formation of community with persons from many nations and races.

2Ibid., 181.

3Ibid., 176-177. While “futurist eschatologies” reflect primarily an Old Testament perspective, Christian communities may function in ways that are essentially identical with characteristics of the Jewish heritage. When they do not display in their practical everyday affairs a strong sense of the inauguration of the messianic age with the openness to new understandings and associations which that implies, their eschatology assumes a largely futurist form (ibid., 182).

4Ibid., 130-131, n. 4.


6Ogletree to Lichtenwalter, March 31, 1993, 1.
every perspective of his eschatologically informed ethic falls within the context of this dialectical. The *already/not yet*, then, is Ogletree's leitmotif for nuancing the eschatological paradigm.

**Hermeneutical Nuances**

As Ogletree's leitmotif for nuancing the moral implications of the eschatological paradigm, the *already/not yet* dialectical yields significant hermeneutical value.

**Creative context for future orientation**

The *already/not yet* provides the creative context for a focused future orientation in ethical methodology. The import of Ogletree's contrasting “futurist eschatologies” with “dialectical eschatologies” is more than simply contrasting New Testament over that of Old Testament eschatologies, or in highlighting the most salient feature of New Testament eschatology as dialectical. It is in nuancing realities of the “future” in the context of this “dialectical.” The casual reader may rightly conclude that, for Christian ethics, “dialectical” is preferable over that of “futurist,” but the careful reader will sense the “consistently future movement” in Ogletree’s use of “dialectical” and in his ethical method as a whole.\(^1\) His contrasting terminology “futurist” and “dialectical” can be misleading. “Futurist” is used here primarily with reference to the fundamental duality some eschatologies imply, together with their orientation to past sacral traditions and an anticipated radical break between the ages somewhere in the future. Ogletree, however, is not discussing the reality of “future” within “dialectical eschatologies,” the horizon of

\(^{1}\)Burtness, 239.
the future component of the eschatological paradigm, or theologies of the future within twentieth-century re-interpreted eschatology.

In reviewing emphases in Christian theology through the 1960s (process theologies, political theologies, and theologies of the future), Ogletree noted common motifs of change, process, novelty, creativity, promise, and the future.1 His discussion of “theologies of the future” (or the “theologies of hope”) describes how such theologies “are carried out in openness to the future, in the presence of new possibility.”2 He further notes how “theologies of the future were developed in large measure in dialogue with contemporary Marxist philosophers, especially Ernst Bloch.”3 Moltmann and Pannenberg are named as principal architects of theologies of the future.

Ogletree is thus well versed with a very different kind of “future” emphasis with regard to understanding eschatology than the “futurist eschatologies” he discusses in The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics. Furthermore, his ethical method displays a “consistently future movement” in keeping with the broad contours of theologies of the future. In outlining his perspectives on the horizon of the future, it was noted that the “eschatological horizon of moral understanding” includes a determinate future ingredient.4 This future ingredient is most clearly focused under the rubric of “promise,”

1Ogletree, “Contemporary Emphases in Christian Thought, or How to Be Fashionable in Your Theology,” 34.

2Ibid., 37.

3Ibid.

4See above, 198-200.
which is said to be “future-oriented,” “a category of the future.” Furthermore, “promise” 
expresses the moral creativity and imagination elicited by the presence of the new age.”¹

The basic structure of the Christian frame of reference is “an open horizon,” a horizon 
that is “ever open to new discoveries and formations in the concrete interaction which are 
the stuff of history.”²

This “future” focus finds further expression in his participation in the Marxist-
Christian dialogue.³ In addressing the question “What May Man Really Hope For?” 
Ogletree asserts the need for two levels of hope in order to be realistic: the ultimate 
religious hope and concrete historical hope.⁴ “Christian hope involves (1) an ultimate 
religious hope of participation in the divine life, but it also involves (2) ever-new forms of 
concrete historical expression of that ultimate hope.”⁵ Christian hope must be continually 
understood as

a present reality qualifying our life in this world, sustaining us in our secular 
existence as we face everyday problems and struggle to overcome very specific 
and concrete wrongs by projecting and working to realize alternate historical 
futures.⁶

¹Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 200. One problem with 
promise as a category is that it becomes a general concept. In Scripture, however, 
promise is always concrete. It is the promise of something concrete in space and time 
that when fulfilled can be actually verified.


⁴Ibid., 51, 43.

⁵Ibid., 43.

⁶Ibid.
In other words, "ultimate religious hope can have some very important consequences for the way we engage in concrete, historical struggles." Ogletree suggests that Marxists have provided us with a model for giving social reality and substance to the concrete historical expression of Christian hope. The level of concrete historical hope, however, cannot abolish the human significance of a more ultimate level of hope:

Christian hope reminds us that man cannot find fulfillment in his total being by the creation of any conceivable society. Any society we are able to bring into being is going to have its own distortions, its own brokenness, its own ambiguity, its own pain, its own incompleteness.

Ogletree states that the treatment of eschatology he finds most congenial is probably that elaborated by Moltmann, though he would not describe his work as dependent upon Moltmann. His views of eschatology grew out of his own attempt to make sense of biblical materials in conjunction with a dialectical reading of historical

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1Ibid., 49.

2Ibid., 51, 43, 44, 47. Ogletree notes that the import of Marx's interpretation of ideology for ethical reflection includes eschatological, dialectical, and community themes (Ogletree, "Ideology and Ethical Reflection," 9, 10).

3Ibid., 51.

4Ibid., 43.

5Ogletree to Lichtenwalter, March 31, 1993, 2. Ogletree writes that, while his roots are Methodist and Wesleyan, he identifies his perspective with ecumenical Protestantism and claims rootage in the liberal commitment to the social gospel. He views the social gospel as a social and institutional articulation of evangelical Protestantism (ibid., 2; idem, "Renewing Ecumenical Protestant Social Teaching," 279-296; idem, "In Quest of a Common Faith: The Theological Task of United Methodists," 43-53; idem, "In Quest of Multi-Cultural Theological Education," Drew Gateway 59, no. 1 [Fall 1989]: 43-48).
development. In this context, Ernst Troeltch and Ernst Bloch have both been contributors.

The point here is that, while "eschatology generates understandings that are dialectical through and through," Ogletree's application of the eschatological paradigm essentially nuances toward the horizon of the future component. No doubt, the realities and import of "future" are nuanced in the context of the "dialectical." Yes, they are articulated through the "dialectical." Nevertheless, his ethical method expresses a consistently future movement in keeping with the broad contours of theologies of the future. Ogletree's dialectical horizon of moral understanding is essentially a horizon of the future where moral creativity and imagination are elicited in the context of the presence of the coming new age. While the already/not yet dialectical is the determinate context in which this future movement appears, "future" is, in fact, Ogletree's functional emphasis with respect to paradigm application and implications for moral theory. Though the already/not yet dialectical is the controlling and contextualizing component,

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1 Ogletree to Lichtenwalter, March 31, 1993, 2.


3 "One of my favorite Marxists is a man by the name of Ernst Bloch" (Thomas W. Ogletree, "Response" in From Hope To Liberation: Towards a New Marxist-Christian Dialogue, ed. Nicholas Piediscalzi and Robert G. Thobaben [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974], 61).

4 Ogletree to Lichtenwalter, March 31, 1993, 1.

5 Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 200.
functionally, the *horizon of the future* is Ogletree's determinate emphasis in nuancing the eschatological paradigm.\(^1\) By keeping the *horizon of the future* closely linked to and controlled by the *already/not yet* dialectical, however, he is able to avoid some of the imbalance (and often, extremes) found in most theologies of the future. Were it not for his repeated and strong emphasis on the "dialectical," one could easily posit Ogletree's methodology as that of a theology of the future. At the least, his is a strongly future-oriented subvariant of "dialectical eschatologies."\(^2\)

**Furnishing a meaning horizon**

The *already/not yet* dialectical furnishes a meaning horizon for Christian moral consciousness that encompasses the temporal horizon of human experience. According to Ogletree,

> to speak of eschatology is to characterize the larger horizon of meaning which in given traditions displays the significance and authority of moral notions. This meaning horizon does not directly generate specifically moral notions, but it profoundly qualifies them and substantially informs the manner in which they present themselves to consciousness.\(^3\)

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\(^1\)This point will become clearer as other issues under discussion in this chapter are developed, i.e., the role of Scripture, the nature of social involvement, level of moral reflection, and concrete content.

\(^2\)Of course, the notion of "dialectical" is apparent in nearly all theologies of the future, but some, by emphasizing the "ontological priority of future," or the "future of God as the future of history," functionally detach themselves from the biblical notions and cautions of that "dialectical." In so doing, they lose balance and in essence are no longer really "dialectical" but "futuristic." It appears that Ogletree is attempting throughout to maintain "dialectical" balance and avoid the extremes of distorted eschatologies.

\(^3\)Ogletree, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics*, 177.
Furthermore, "the discussion of eschatology represents one way of articulating the question of the meaning of being."1 According to Ogletree, the meaning of being "hovers before all facets of moral awareness."2 It is a question that "concerns the ultimate sense and significance of the human pilgrimage."3 It is the "wider matrix of meaning within which the moral life itself is situated."4 In fact, moral life is framed by the question of the meaning of being.5 It is the context in which we interpret and assess distinctively moral notions.6 Furthermore, "our way of apprehending the meaning of being will materially inform the moral meanings themselves."7

The meaning of being for Ogletree is linked to the temporal horizon of human experience and consciousness, i.e., historical contextualism.8 There is a concrete historicity to our moral notions, i.e., "all moral notions are relative to specific social and

1Ibid., 193.
2Ibid., 192.
3Ibid., 38.
4Ibid.
5Ibid., 41.
6Ibid., 35.
7Ibid., 38. "The larger meaning horizon which provides the matrix for our moral understandings is in no case neutral in its import for the latter" (ibid., 39).
8Ibid., 192, 34-41. "Historical contextualism accents the fact that the possibilities of moral understanding given with the constitutive structures of human being always appear in historically determinate forms" (ibid., 35).
cultural contexts. History gives concreteness to human understandings of moral life. According to Ogletree,

the strength of historical contextualism is that it directs us to concrete experience and to the meanings which form it. In so doing it serves a lively discourse about what is going on in our common world, and about the proper response to it.

Two important issues are apparent in the above discussion of meaning of being and historical contextualism. One has to do with worldview, metaphysics, and the ultimate whence. The other has to do with life in the world, concrete history, and the pertinent and timely. Describing twentieth-century work in Christian ethics as "by and large, marked by a strong historical consciousness," Ogletree states, "We no longer seek the absolute and the final; we search for the pertinent and timely." In other words, in the end, we seek that which is relevant and practical to temporal human experience. Only in this way can moral theory and the biblical materials become useful in contemporary life.

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1Ibid., 35, 192-193. Culture historicalizes the possibilities of moral understanding which belong to human being.

2Ibid. According to Ogletree, "moral understandings are always relative to a particular history, to the possibilities it has actualized, to the limits it sets to further developments, to the openings for movement and creative growth it has brought into being" (ibid.).

3Ibid., 38.

4Ogletree, Hospitality to the Stranger, 97.

5Ogletree's concern in this context is how often universalized moral principles are applied without critical awareness of the concrete meanings that should be associated with them. We are not able in practice to think about concrete moral problems in strictly universal terms. Critical scholarship and philosophical ethics have gone awry, often tending toward abstractness and the irrelevant, towards language and logic rather than concrete experience.
The already/not yet dialectical provides a meaning horizon for moral consciousness that includes this temporal horizon of human experience. The dialectical interplay between the two ages direct us to concrete experience and to the meanings which form concrete experience. That same dialectical interplay gives a sense of “what is going on in our common world” and what “proper response” there should be to it. The meaning horizon which the already/not yet dialectical furnishes is that Christian existence unfolds in the midst of concrete historical life. For Ogletree, the task of Christian ethics is to grasp the way in which the world and its claims present themselves to awareness when existence is determined by the interplay of existence “between the times.” “It is to discern how such an awareness impacts our presumptions about the authority of values which are constitutive of the present world order.” The already/not yet dialectical facilitates this kind of awareness and interaction with our world. While presenting a distinctive worldview, it relates to life in the world. While opening awareness to our ultimate whence, it is pertinent and timely. It provides a version of historical contextualism, a sense of history, and an understanding as to how one should place

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1 Ogletree’s project seeks to contribute to and carry out the style of thinking expressed in H. Richard Niebuhr’s proposal for an “ethics of responsibility” (Ogletree, Hospitality to the Stranger, 99, 100, 121; idem, “Interpretation,” 311). For an ethics of fitting, Niebuhr contends that “in our responsibility we attempt to answer the question: ‘What shall I do?’ by raising the prior question: ‘What is going on?’” (Niebuhr, The Responsible Self, 63).

2 Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 130-131, n. 4.

3 Ibid.
oneself in the total movement of history.¹

**Fusion of horizons**

The *already/not yet* enables a “fusion of horizons” between biblical worlds of meaning and those which make up our sense of reality. Ogletree asserts that there are larger meanings capable of binding together contemporary interpreter and ancient text,² e.g., meanings which provide a point of contact, meanings which initiate conversation, meanings that can be shared. These meanings relate to the question of the meaning of being and the realities of temporal human experience.³ They extend from a set of preunderstandings of the moral life which express certain taken-for-granted ideas at work in moral thought and experience,⁴ i.e., types of moral reasoning with corresponding structures of action.⁵ These meanings are present in the biblical text as well as in contemporary life.⁶ The historical situatedness of the biblical materials implies their presence. In addition, there is a surplus of meaning in the text beyond what is explicitly

¹Ibid., 181, 87-89.
²Ibid., 176.
³Ibid., 192-193.
⁴Ibid., 175.
⁵These include: (1) consequentialist thinking, which elicits goal-oriented actions and relate to the question of values and intentionality; (2) deontological views, which elicit communicative interactions and relate to the question of intersubjectivity and one’s obligations to others; and (3) perfectionism thinking, which elicits processes of self-formation and relate to the question of virtues (ibid., 16-18, 40, 176-177).
⁶Ibid.
uttered.1 “This surplus of meaning stems from that about which the texts speak,”2 i.e., the “concerns addressed by the biblical texts.”3 It is this subject matter which offers the possibility of common ground for understanding biblical worlds of meaning and those that make up our sense of reality.4

Because the already/not yet (1) furnishes a meaning horizon for moral consciousness that encompasses the temporal horizon of human experience, and (2) represents one way of articulating the question of the meaning of being, it provides a frame of reference which permits us to engage the biblical texts not simply as artifacts of an ancient culture but as utterances possibly saying something true about our own reality.5 In doing so it enables a “fusion of horizons” between biblical worlds of meaning and those which make up our sense of reality. In addition, it facilitates a synthesis toward integrating moral philosophy and biblical ethics into contemporary Christian ethical theory.

Dialectical nature of Christian ethics

The already/not yet elucidates the essential dialectical nature of Christian moral theory. This fact has already been implied by what has been outlined above. However, it

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1Ibid., 2.
2Ibid.
3Ibid., 7.
4Ibid.
5Ibid., 176.
is important to specifically note that "existence in the dialectical interpenetration of the
times" brings corresponding dialectical shape to Christian moral theory and methodology.
"The ethic of dialectical eschatologies is itself dialectical in form." This explicit
dialectical methodology and thinking is to find expression in moral reflection with regard
to the interior, communal, and social dimensions of the tensions figuring in eschatological
existence. In other words, it is to impact the believer's own self-experience, the concrete
reality of the church itself, and the interface between the church and the institutions of the
larger society. Insofar as this dialectic captures the moral structure of the eschatological
community, it opens the way towards understanding (1) the relation between law and
promise, (2) the moral import of the gospel's indicative and imperatives, and (3) the
realities of social alienation and communal commitment.

Summary

The import of eschatology in Ogletree's moral theory can be seen in the
prominence it is given in his companion volumes The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics

1Ibid., 179.
2See above, 195.
4Ibid., 202. Ogletree asserts that "law and promise are . . . dialectically related."
5Ibid., 187, 180.
6I.e., some degree of alienation from the institutional arrangements of the larger society, and deep involvement with a community which is engaged in developing qualitatively distinct alternatives to those arrangements (ibid., 182-187).
and Hospitality to the Stranger. The thesis he argues is that "the New Testament has eschatology to teach."¹ Like Mott, this eschatology fits the general contours of the eschatological paradigm that this study has outlined. While he works within the general contours of the eschatological paradigm, however, he clearly nuances the already/not yet component over that of the reign of God and the horizon of the future. The already/not yet thus becomes his leitmotif for nuancing the moral implications of the eschatological paradigm. These hermeneutical nuances include (1) providing the creative context for a focused-future orientation in ethical methodology; (2) furnishing a meaning horizon for Christian moral consciousness that encompasses the temporal horizon of human experience; (3) enabling a "fusion of horizons" between biblical worlds of meaning and those which make up our sense of reality; and (4) elucidating the essential "dialectical nature" of Christian moral theory and methodology. While "eschatology generates understandings that are dialectical through and through," application of this dialectical within the eschatological paradigm essentially nuances towards the horizon of the future. Ogletree's ethical method thus expresses a consistently future movement in keeping with the broad contours of theologies of the future.

**Relation to Moral Philosophy**

As we undertake a critical engagement with the Bible on the nature of moral experience, our first task is to gain greater self-awareness about our own taken-for-granted beliefs and convictions. In questioning the Bible about its moral understandings, or in seeking to uncover the questions to which it presents itself as an answer, what do we conceive the subject matter of the inquiry to be? What preunderstandings guide it? What presuppositions govern our angle of vision on

¹Ibid., 130, n. 4.
Ogletree’s goal “is to enhance our grasp of the moral life by way of critical engagement with the biblical texts.”\(^{1}\) If one takes the material of his companion volumes, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics and Hospitality to the Stranger, in the order in which they were written, looking at the latter volume first, it becomes clear that Ogletree is very indebted to moral philosophy, and phenomenology in particular, for his “assumptions and critical principles which inform the reading of the biblical texts.”\(^{1}\) In fact, the hermeneutical theory behind his methodology is Gadamer’s phenomenology and the interpretive fusion of horizons.\(^{4}\) So much is this so that the title for The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics can appear misleading. The book is really concerned with common ground between the Bible and accounts of the moral life developed in phenomenology.\(^{5}\) With carefully structured precision, Ogletree lays out a path towards correlating phenomenology, moral philosophy, and biblical ethics toward contemporary

\(^{1}\)Ibid., 15.

\(^{2}\)Ibid., xii.

\(^{3}\)Burtness, 239; Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, xiii.


\(^{5}\)Sedgwick, 404. Burtness, however, states that Ogletree’s books are not about phenomenology per se, but rather that he makes use of phenomenology because it helps him attend to method in his doing ethics (Burtness, 239).
Christian moral theory.

The "interpretive task" is the achievement of a common mind, a "fusion of horizons" between biblical worlds of meaning and those which make up our sense of reality.1 "It is to reach a shared understanding of the subject matter which provides the common ground between the texts and our own inquiries."2 According to Ogletree, "we move toward this fusion of horizons by making explicit our own preunderstandings of the subject matter of the texts."3 These preunderstandings are "preunderstandings of the moral life" and "express certain taken-for-granted ideas at work in moral thought and experience."4 They are the "plurality of views in our own intellectual context" and "contemporary culture."5 These preunderstandings include (1) moral philosophy, (2) phenomenology, and (3) historical contextualism. Ogletree asserts that his treatment of these "promising resources for preunderstandings which can equip us to engage the biblical texts in a discourse about the moral life" have not been "worked out in isolation from the biblical faith itself." In unfolding their meaning and significance, he already has in view "the distinctiveness of the world of the Bible."6 These three "promising resources

1Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 175, 2-4.
2Ibid., 3.
3Ibid.
4Ibid., 175, 16. According to Ogletree, "they represent fairly advanced stages of thinking about moral life" (ibid., 5).
5Ibid., 16.
6Ibid., 5. This is an important observation in light of the problem as to how the questions contemporary culture and experience ask or bring to the biblical text determine

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for preunderstanding” find correlation and biblical orientation through the New Testament dialectical of eschatology as a horizon of moral understanding.

Moral Philosophy and Phenomenology

Ogletree’s methodology outlines and analyzes three dominant perspectives of moral philosophy in Western thought: consequentialist, deontological, and perfectionist perspectives.¹ Because these three perspectives have all found strong philosophical statement and defense in modern thought, their significance is not simply philosophical. They have persistent “importance in treatments of ethics because of their relative success in articulating elemental facets of concrete moral experience.”² Neither of these perspectives, however, is adequate if taken separately. Rather, a synthesis is required for their effective import for Christian ethics in relation to the biblical materials.³

These three perspectives have persistence in human thought because they are rooted in fundamental structures which order our being in the world as human beings. Ogletree’s primary interest is “to display in the structures that make up the life world the interpretation (and reciprocally, how much the Bible determines interpretation). Ogletree asserts that, “given the role of the Bible in Western civilization, almost any of our moral notions will reflect its impact in some fashion. To its direct influence must be added the interpretive accomplishments of many predecessors, especially the great teachers of the church, and those who have contributed to the mediation of biblical faith in the practical ordering of human life” (ibid., 5).

¹Ibid., 4.
²Ibid., 4, 5.
³Ibid., 17.
experiential bases of these three ethical perspectives."¹ In other words, he is concerned with the "underlying structures" on which they are founded.² To accomplish this, he is guided by phenomenological descriptions of constitutive features of our worldly being, i.e., intentionality, intersubjectivity, and the implications of the self.³ Moral philosophy, then, is viewed and nuanced via phenomenology. Consequentialist, deontological, and perfectionist perspectives are viewed and nuanced via intentionality, intersubjectivity, and the implications of the self, respectively.

It should be noted here that Ogletree sees the task of phenomenology as describing "the constitutive features of the life-world in terms of intentional structure of consciousness."⁴ This perspective entails "making explicit the acts of consciousness which correspond to the various modalities of sense that present themselves to the awareness in the life-world."⁵ In other words, it deals with the ways of being and acting in the world. It facilitates a life-world perspective. It puts us in touch with the way the world actually reveals itself to consciousness, i.e., concrete experience and the meanings which form it.

¹Ibid., 5.
²Ibid., 18.
³Ibid., 18.
⁴Ogletree, Hospitality to the Stranger, 15. (Ogletree refers to a "life world" and to a "life-world." While there may be a bit of inconsistency here, the former appears to assert the reality that there is a "life world," while the latter is his technical term for what that "life-world" constitutes in terms of ethical perspectives and constituent features.
⁵Ibid.
Viewing and nuancing moral philosophy via phenomenology yields, then, significant insight into the ideas at work in moral thought and experience.

1. Consequentialist theories of the moral life are seen as presupposing and articulating the intentional structure of human action.\(^1\) They express values and goal-oriented actions which in turn express the overall meaning of our worldly being.\(^2\) In addition, they articulate what is morally at stake in the intentional structure of action.\(^3\)

2. Deontological theories are viewed as deriving their force from the intersubjective structure of action. They focus on the constraints and imperatives of action which are generated by the presence of other persons in our field of action.\(^4\) The special significance of deontological perspectives on the moral life is their “ability to articulate the basic requisites of human life and dignity.”\(^5\)

3. Perfectionist theories are seen as highlighting “the personhood of the moral actor.”\(^6\) They elicit processes of self-formation and relate to the question of virtues.\(^7\) They point to those aspects of our being that we can most readily subject to explicit moral

\(^1\)Ogletree, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics*, 18.

\(^2\)I.e., values specify what we have come to acknowledge as desirable, as worthy of the investment of our energies and devotion (ibid., 19, 21).

\(^3\)Ibid., 20-22.

\(^4\)Ibid., 23-24.

\(^5\)Ibid., 28.

\(^6\)Ibid.

\(^7\)Ibid., 28-31. “For perfectionist theories, it is the fullest realization of virtue by concrete human persons which is the primary substance of the ethical” (ibid., 32, 33).
and ethical reflection. Furthermore, "the being of the self as body is crucial to self-identity." My body locates me in the world, hence, self-identity above all involves temporality.

Historical Contextualism

In seeking a theory which encompasses consequentialist/intentionality, deontological/intersubjectivity, and perfectionist/self-formation perspectives, Ogletree articulates a framework of thought which grants preeminence to human historicity. In other words, his desired synthesis between the dominant models of moral philosophy is determined by the temporal horizon of human experience. He labels this view "historical contextualism." The account of temporality highlights the larger-meaning horizon which gives unity and significance to these three basic structures and the modes of understandings they bear. In essence, Ogletree's hermeneutic is one that is governed by a life-world perspective.

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1Ibid., 30.
2Ibid.
3Ibid.
4Ibid., 5.
5Ibid., 17. "It is chiefly the temporal structure of experience which leads us to seek a synthesis of the dominant models of moral understanding on the basis of historical contextualism" (ibid., 18).
6Ibid., 5.
7Ibid., 18.
8Ibid., 7, 17.
Phenomenology, then, leads ultimately to the question of the temporal horizon of human existence and the meaning of being.\textsuperscript{1} As quoted earlier:

The strength of historical contextualism is that it directs us to concrete experience and to the meanings which form it. In doing so it serves a lively discourse about what is going on in our common world, and about the proper response to it.\textsuperscript{2}

The temporal horizon of human experience together with the meaning of being express two important issues in fundamental ethics: worldview and life in the world. In other words, it has to do with that which is relevant and practical to temporal human experience. To sum up,

we have goal-oriented actions, communicative interactions, and processes of self-formation. To these three aspects of our practical worldly engagements correspond three modalities of meaning: values, obligations, and virtues. These types of meanings in their historialized forms make up the substantive content of the moral life. The moral life in turn is framed by the question of the meaning of being. It is the latter question which directs us to the totality of understanding within which we are able to establish and confirm the significance of the more discrete meanings which belong to moral awareness.\textsuperscript{3}

Scripture and Eschatology

The above correlation—of moral philosophy and phenomenology—provides a "paradigm" that Ogletree believes will help elucidate the moral import of biblical materials.\textsuperscript{4} It encompasses a "set of preunderstandings of moral life" which guide the

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 34-41.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., 41.
interpreter in a presentation of biblical notions and engages the biblical texts in a
discourse about the moral life.\(^1\) He attempts, then, "a reconstruction of pivotal themes of
biblical faith, ordered with reference to those preunderstandings."\(^2\)

A key presupposition here is that what is being asked by these preunderstandings
and what the biblical texts are actually saying will intersect productively in some fashion,
though perhaps not exactly as one initially supposes.\(^3\) This presupposition assumes that
the world of the Bible fundamentally shares the human ways of being and acting in the
world, i.e., the temporal horizon of human experience and the meaning of being. The
biblical world has a "historical situatedness."\(^4\) "Life situations" shaped the production,
development, and transformation of materials found in the biblical texts, as well as
provided the context for those concerns addressed by that data.\(^5\)

It is precisely here, at the temporal horizon of human experience and the meaning
of being, that the possibility exists for the biblical world of meaning and our world of
meaning to intersect. Because eschatology (1) furnishes a meaning horizon for moral
consciousness that encompasses the temporal horizon of human experience, and (2)
represents one way of articulating the question of meaning of being, it opens this

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\(^1\) Ogletree, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics*, 175, 5.

\(^2\) Ibid., 4.

\(^3\) Ibid., 15.

\(^4\) Ibid., 2.

\(^5\) Ibid., 6, 7.
possibility up to actuality. The eschatological dimension becomes just what is needed if we are to move from the philosophical models (Ogletree’s preunderstandings based on moral philosophy and phenomenology) to the meaning horizon of the biblical materials, and then, on to a Christian moral theory for today. Because eschatology takes seriously the “question of being,” that is, the challenge of human existence as rooted in a particular time and place, it provides the means whereby concerns of phenomenology can be integrated with traditional moral philosophy and biblical ethics into Christian moral theory.

Testing the biblical material against this scheme, Ogletree shows that the Old Testament is predominantly deontological in character, though with a significant element of perfectionism in later books. He finds the New Testament, however, primarily perfectionist in character. In particular, “eschatology is the basis for the predominance

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1See above discussion, 209-215.


3Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 47, 48, 76-82, 193. His analysis of Old Testament material concentrates on the Pentateuch, especially its legal traditions, and on the eighth- and seventh-century literary prophets. Ogletree states that his selection of Old Testament and New Testament biblical materials for his study was not arbitrary, but rather reflects the brief nature of his study and a judgment concerning what is most distinctive and interesting in the Bible so far as contemporary Christian ethics is concerned (ibid., 10, 11).

4Ibid., 89, 90, 194. His analysis of the New Testament material concentrates on the Synoptic Gospels and the Pauline corpus (ibid., 11). It is interesting that Ogletree does not include any of the biblical apocalyptic materials from either testaments.
of perfectionist themes in the New Testament."¹ Deontological thinking, however, is not
absent in the New Testament. Rather, it is subordinated to and dependent upon
perfectionist motifs.² Laws and commandments function not simply as statements of
what we are to do, but predominantly as specifications of who we are to become.³ Where
deontological themes are present, they are so without the benefit of the category of law;⁴
and are expressed within the context of ordering the eschatological community where
perfectionist themes predominate with relational emphases.⁵ Eschatology is seen as
providing the dialectic between law and promise which enables deontological thinking to
work within the purview of perfectionism.⁶ Neither testament contains more than the
merest hint of consequentialism.⁷

Summary

Unlike Mott, the categories of moral philosophy factor largely in Ogletree’s
eschatologically oriented moral theory. In fact, it is striking to find such a readiness to
see analogies with classical moral theories in the Bible. It is very rare to find any
sustained attempt to relate biblical and philosophical ethics at all, let alone in such a

¹Ibid., 90.
²Ibid., 91.
³Ibid., 90.
⁴Ibid., 199. This notion expresses Pauline views of law and promise.
⁵Ibid., 194, 199-202.
⁶Ibid., 199-202.
⁷Ibid., 204, 48, 91.
creative way, and one which includes the concerns of phenomenology as well as that of biblical eschatology. Ogletree’s style makes it hard to see, at times, where all this theoretical discussion is going. Nevertheless, it represents his understanding of the “interpretive task.” And that is to achieve a common mind, a “fusion of horizons” between biblical worlds of meaning and those which make up our sense of reality. To do so he focuses on what he considers crucial, more fundamental themes which ethics must consider in relation to the biblical materials. By (1) viewing and nuancing the dominant conceptualizations of moral life (consequentialist/vale, deontological/law, and perfectionist/virtue) via their corresponding constituents of our worldly being (intentionality, intersubjectivity, and the implications of self, respectively), and (2) setting this synthesis within the temporal structure of human experience (historical contextualism), Ogletree finds a promising resource of preunderstanding with which to engage the biblical materials in a discourse about the moral life. Because eschatology is both central to these biblical materials and provides a larger horizon of moral understanding which takes serious the temporal horizon of human experience and the question of the meaning of being, it becomes just what is needed to bring an overall correlation towards contemporary Christian moral theory.²

¹Barton, 245, 246.

²My phrase “just what is needed” is not intended here as pejorative as if to convey a sense of a fortuitous circumstance or a convenient discovery on the part of Ogletree. Ogletree is concerned with facilitating dialogue between the biblical materials and the critical and often abstract notions of modern philosophical ethics. For him, biblical eschatology provides the best bridge in that dialogue, one which both conveys what the Scriptures has to teach us about ethics and which presents a profound challenge to modern thought.
As we have seen, Ogletree's work as a whole is guided by a methodology based on phenomenological investigations. It is a methodology governed by a life-world perspective which serves to develop the connections between moral philosophy, biblical studies, and Christian ethics. In this context eschatology plays a hermeneutical role toward the overall synthesis. The methodological nuances which this application of the eschatological paradigm to moral theory evokes/expresses with regard to our three principles of verification (Scripture, community, and the nature of social involvement) are significant.

Role of Scripture

The important role which Scripture plays in Ogletree's moral theory is seen in the fact that he undertakes the task of "setting forth an approach and a set of hermeneutical understandings for utilizing biblical materials in Christian ethics." "Christian ethics soon loses its distinctive power if it cuts itself off from its biblical foundations," he asserts. Therefore, I want to "venture formulations of the moral life which are congruent with central features of biblical faith." Furthermore

2 Ibid., 7.
3 Ibid., 11.
4 Ibid., xii.
5 Ibid., 4.
if we turn to the Bible in our ethical inquiries, it is because we believe that it can disclose something important about moral experience. The interest in the Bible is not simply historical, the attempt to re-present moral notions which are characteristic of an ancient cultural totality, for the sake, let us say, of an enlarged consciousness of the origins of our own culture. It is existential, the concern to make sense of the moral life in relation to possibilities opening up in our own setting. It is for the sake of truth and goodness that we turn to the Bible. In directing our attention to the Bible in this fashion, we presume that it has something to say to us that we do not already know.1

Like Mott, Ogletree is very deliberate in explaining his approach to Scripture.2 And with Mott, he shares a fourfold methodology in keeping with his Wesleyan and Methodist heritage. In discussing the place of Scripture among the sources and criteria of theology in United Methodism, he articulates Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason as interacting reciprocally, so that each illumines and is illumined by the others.3 The issue he has in view is the question of the “primacy of Scripture” in relation to the other constituent features of this methodology. “The primacy of Scripture is a reality for us not apart from the other three resources, but only in and by means of their full operation.”4 He further asserts:

It has been suggested that the emphasis on the primacy of Scripture establishes as

1Ibid., 1.


4Ibid.
normative one particular theological option: namely, 'biblical theology.' I would contend instead that any approach to theology is permitted, even encouraged, which clearly acknowledges the primacy of Scripture and recognizes at the same time the indispensable role of tradition, experience and reason in appropriating the biblical witness into our total understanding of reality. Where United Methodists disagree, is not over the primacy of Scripture, but over the way Scripture is received and interpreted.¹

The issue, then, for Ogletree is not the "primacy of Scripture" per se, which he steadfastly affirms, but rather the way in which Scripture is actually "received and interpreted." Tradition, experience, and reason are indispensable in appropriating the biblical witness into our total understanding of reality. They play an obviously crucial role in how Scripture is both received and interpreted. In light of his hermeneutic based on phenomenological investigations, it is clear how important moral philosophy, phenomenology, and historical contextualism are in this receiving and interpreting process. They provide the clear assumptions and critical principles which inform the reading of the biblical text.² Furthermore, Ogletree's methodology shows dependence upon and an openness toward historical-critical methodology which includes tradition criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, and literary criticism in the study of the biblical texts.³ Because tradition criticism attends to the life situations underlying the transmission of traditions, it provides data of particular interest to a hermeneutic governed by a life-world perspective.⁴ The account of life-world structures, which the

¹Ibid., 48.
²Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, xiii.
³Ibid., xi, 6.
⁴Ibid., 7.
traditio-historical school brings, enables one to thematize the religious dimensions of moral awareness in a fashion that puts them in critical contact with concerns addressed by the biblical texts.¹

In the context of these observations, three further observations can be made with regard to Scripture in Ogletree’s moral theory.

1. Ogletree’s view of the nature of Scripture largely follows that of existential and quasi-encounter theology.² As literature, the Bible is made up of human documents written in the past against a backdrop of quite different social and cultural milieus.³ Its fundamental meaning is historical and existential.⁴ While we must keep its historical situatedness clearly in view,

   its meaning is not reducible to the conscious intentions of its authors in the original situations of production, nor to the senses it had for its initial readers. . . .

   There is a surplus of meaning in texts beyond what is explicitly uttered. This surplus stems from that about which the texts speak. It is this subject matter which offers the possibility of common ground for understanding between authors and interpreters. . . .

¹Ibid.

²Ogletree states that his re-presentation of classical biblical themes draws largely upon biblical scholarship embodying or depending upon form and tradition criticism. “In regard to Old Testament texts, the accomplishments of Martin Noth and Gerhard von Rad will be the central resource. For the New Testament, the studies that presuppose and build upon the work of Rudolf Bultmann, moving to and including the more recent redaction criticism, will occupy an analogous position” (ibid., 6, 13, n. 6). Ogletree is largely dependent upon others for those chapters where he presents textual analysis (Kenneth R. Himes, “Scripture and Ethics: A Review Essay,” Biblical Theology Bulletin 15 [April 1985]: 66).

³Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 10, 2.

⁴Ibid., 1, 10.
Interpretation . . . does not consist simply in the exposition of the original meanings. It finally involves an enlargement of the understanding of the interpreter concerning that about which the texts speak as a result of an encounter with the texts . . . 

a work of the productive imagination of the interpreter . . . will raise what the texts are saying to a higher level of generality, one capable of expressing the interpreter’s own sense of the truth. To capture what the texts are saying, we cannot simply repeat or paraphrase their explicit utterances . . . We must rather generate new utterances, new accounts of the subject matter of the texts, which also make sense to us. Here we come up against a basic paradox, to say the same thing as the texts, we must say something different.1

While we presume that the Bible has something to say that we do not already know, and on this presumption we dare to place our own convictions at risk in our reading of the biblical texts,

such receptivity to the world of the Bible does not in itself imply any dogma of biblical authority. It requires no more than the recognition of a phenomenon: that the biblical texts have in the course of our history been able to prove themselves over and over as saying something true.2

Furthermore, the biblical materials participate formatively in constructing ethical theory that is intentionally only provisionally held by the believing community. Ongoing dialogue may alter it further.3 And while an essential thematic unity of the biblical witness exists, that unity “resides more in the unfolding identity of a people, and of a

1Ibid., 2, 3.

2Ibid., 1, 2. One can rightly ask Ogletree, “What is the real meaning of the primacy of Scripture if it does not in itself imply any dogma of biblical authority?” Ogletree undoubtedly is reacting here to a fundamentalist, literalistic biblicism. Nevertheless, his statement does seem to imply that the biblical materials are authoritative only because they have proven themselves to be so, rather than having any inherent authority in themselves as God’s inspired revelation to man.

3Ibid., 200-203.
church arising in relation to that people, than in particular themes, beliefs, or ways of thinking as such.

Ogletree’s stated purpose, however, is to “venture formulations of the moral life which are congruent with central features of biblical faith.” He is concerned with the “retrieval of biblical convictions” about the moral life. In conversation with the text, our preunderstandings themselves are subject to questioning in terms of what the texts say.

We must be prepared to modify them [our preunderstandings] in light of this questioning, until we are able to give them a form which links us to the meanings uttered in the texts. In the process we grant the texts the power to open up and transform our understanding of the matter under inquiry.

In his thinking, he already has in view the distinctiveness of the world of the Bible when he formulates and begins to apply his preunderstandings of the moral life. He works them out in the context of biblical faith itself. There is the sense that, in the final analysis, Scripture alone provides direction for Christian moral theory, and that modern

\[\text{References:}\]

1Ibid., 12.

2Ibid., 4.

3Ibid., 5.

4Ibid., 4. While our preunderstandings will themselves be placed in question, and be transformed through encounter with the texts, this “transformation does not entail total surrender to the texts. It does not require us to give up all independent judgment, all personal responsibility for apprehending and articulating what is true and good. . . . The paradox of interpreting is that we are able to say the same thing as the text only by saying something different” (ibid., 176).

5Ibid., 5.
and classical moral theory gives only a few analytical tools towards interpretation.¹

Still, while Ogletree insists that Scripture is uniquely authoritative for Christian ethics, it is not because it reveals timeless truths or proposes unchanging ethical principles. The enduring value of Scripture is not to provide concrete guidance about current moral issues but to present a horizon of understanding within which very diverse peoples can identify themselves.

2. Interpretation is a dialogical process in which we encounter the biblical texts as pointers to elements of human experience that may illumine our own historical experience.² Interpretation involves three distinct and interrelated processes:³ (a) exegesis, reading the biblical materials in their own social and cultural settings, aided by the tools of historical and literary criticism;⁴ (b) critical engagement, reading the biblical

¹It would be a mistake to suppose, as some do, that Ogletree has first accepted philosophical moral theory, phenomenology, and historical contextualism and has then interpreted Scripture in such a way that it will conform to this secular philosophy. Rather, Ogletree sees in these categories the very tools which are needed for his own hermeneutical approach to the use of the Bible in Christian ethics. He begins with the premise of the primacy of Scripture and the anticipation that Scripture will adjust the interpreter’s thinking and preunderstandings of the moral life.

²Hays, 23.

³Ogletree, “Interpretation,” 311.

⁴The task of exegesis “is not to understand what the texts of the Bible are saying, but to understand with the help of the biblical texts the reality which presently concerns us. Defining the exegetical task in this way does not imply a search for texts which have something specific to say to situations that parallel more or less exactly those faced by contemporary man. ... Instead it indicates the necessity of exploring the richness and variety of the biblical materials in relation to the issues which pose most acutely the challenge to Christian existence in a given situation” (Ogletree, “The Secular City as a Theological Norm,” 213).
materials as speaking to questions which are also our questions, and therefore, as possibly saying something to us;¹ and (c) constructive appropriation, unfolding a coherent, contemporary account of the moral life which contains a reformulation of biblical notions. In the context of his *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics*, interpretation includes:² (a) an explicit account of salient preunderstandings of the moral life; (b) a reconstruction of pivotal themes of biblical faith, ordered with reference to those preunderstandings; and (c) constructive suggestions towards a “fusion” in contemporary life and thought of these to worlds of meaning.

3. There is the practical role which Scripture actually assumes in Ogletree’s methodology.

a. His reconstruction of pivotal themes of biblical faith are ordered with reference to his proposed preunderstandings of the moral life.³ Because of this, classical and modern philosophical modes of thinking, rather than Scripture, provide the conceptual categories for dialogue with Scripture.

b. He asserts that we begin our discourse with Scripture from within our own

¹“The successful appropriation of biblical faith in a new situation implies the emergence of new meanings and understandings, meanings which do not in the strict sense embody the intentions of the biblical writers. In the frame of reference a biblically grounded theology is not one that is restricted to explicit biblical ideas and concerns. It consists of understandings which appropriately extend or, better, transform the original message of the Bible so as to disclose its meaning in relation to the struggles and challenges of contemporary ... existence” (ibid., 213, 214). In this context, Ogletree acknowledges the clear danger of violating the integrity of biblical faith that this approach brings.


³Ibid., 4.
life situations, venturing reconstructions of the questions to which the texts under study can be read as answers to our preunderstandings.\(^1\) Because of this, our world of meaning and our questions, rather than the biblical world of meaning and the questions Scripture might ask us, assume the lead toward finding common ground and a fusion of horizons.

c. The biblical materials are viewed as participating formatively in constructing ethical theory that is intentionally only provisionally held by the believing community. Ongoing dialogue may alter it further.\(^2\) Because of this, Scripture functions primarily in a "mentoring" role in relation to the believing community.

While the stated role of Scripture in Ogletree's moral theory is thus clear and forceful, the concern here for this study relates to whether (or how) the eschatological paradigm either influences or is influenced by Ogletree's presuppositions or methodology with regard to Scripture. The following points can be noted from Ogletree's use of the eschatological paradigm in relation to Scripture:\(^3\)

\(^{1}\)Ibid., 3; idem, "Interpretation," 311.


\(^{3}\)These observations reflect some conclusions drawn from discussions above on "Eschatological Paradigm and Ethics" (192-216) and "Relation to Moral Philosophy" (216-227). Because they represent here summaries viewed from the standpoint of Scripture there is no need for sustained extended development.
Eschatology to Teach Us

Eschatology is articulated as fundamentally central to the biblical materials and witness. Ogletree's thesis is that Scripture, especially the New Testament, has eschatology to teach us.\(^1\) He consciously attempts, then, to conceive and articulate the eschatological paradigm from the standpoint of biblical theology and exegesis. The fact that (1) he intentionally and methodologically incorporates eschatology into his moral theory, and (2) that when he reads the Bible, an intimate connection between ethics and eschatology emerges,\(^2\) both reflect the priority Scripture has with respect to his broad presuppositions and methodology. Furthermore, the dialectical character which Ogletree understands New Testament eschatology as having (i.e., his *already/not yet* leitmotif) likewise expresses scriptural influence and the essential meaning of the biblical witness.

Unique Contribution

Eschatology provides the one unique and determinate scriptural contribution to the equation of conceptual categories in the dialogue between biblical worlds of meaning and our own sense of reality. The one feature that gives Scripture a quite different flavor from the various philosophical notions is its concern for history and time in the context of dialectical eschatology. This is important for Ogletree in light of twentieth-century style moral and ethical thinking which has a distinctly historical orientation.\(^3\) His proposed

\(^1\)Ibid., 131, n. 4.
\(^2\)See above, 188-193.
\(^3\)Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger*, 97, 121; idem, “Christian Social Ethics as a Theological Discipline,” 216, 217.
methodology implies that our preunderstandings of the moral life cannot remain unchallenged,\(^1\) and that when taking up conversation with the text, we must subject the preunderstandings themselves to questioning in terms of what the texts say. “In the process we grant the texts the power to open up and transform our understanding of the matter under inquiry.”\(^2\) The three chapters in *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics*, which review the moral understandings of selected biblical literature, each conclude with a statement of how contemporary moral understanding is thus challenged.\(^3\) The challenge can be summed up in one word: biblical eschatology.

**Horizon of Meaning**

Eschatology elucidates the larger-meaning context of biblical moral thought by providing a biblical horizon of meaning which profoundly qualifies and substantially informs the manner in which moral notions present themselves to consciousness.\(^4\) This biblical horizon of meaning is essentially dialectical in character and calls for a corresponding dialectical in moral thinking. The *already/not yet* tensions of eschatological existence are seen as impacting on the believer’s own self-experience, the concrete reality of the church itself, and the interface between the church and institutions.

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\(^1\)Ogletree, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics*, 4.

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)See discussion above, 192, n. 3.

of the larger society. Furthermore, because this meaning horizon encompasses the
temporal horizon of human experience, and represents one way of articulating the
question of the meaning of being, eschatology enables a “fusion of horizons” between
biblical worlds of meaning and those that make up our sense of reality.

In each of the above—the focus of the biblical witness, the unique contribution of
Scripture to the equation of conceptual categories, and the biblical horizon of meaning—
there is indication that Ogletree consciously attempts to conceive and articulate the
eschatological paradigm from the standpoint of biblical theology and exegesis.

Furthermore, his presuppositions regarding the nature of Scripture appear to flavor his
understanding of the eschatological paradigm: (1) because the fundamental meaning of
Scripture is understood as historical and existential, the important categories for
nuancing the meaning of the eschatological paradigm are, likewise, historical and
existential (i.e., temporal horizon of human experience, and the meaning of being); (2)
because historical-critical methodology is embraced as providing appropriate tools for
opening up the fundamental meaning of the Scripture, the eschatological paradigm,
likewise, becomes explicated within the purview of the presuppositions of this
methodology; (3) because the enduring value of Scripture is found in the surplus of

1See above discussion, 214-216.

2Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 1, 10.

3Ibid., 192, 193.

4Ibid., xi, 7.
meaning beyond what is uttered in the biblical texts,\textsuperscript{1} and which is in need of higher levels of generality in order to find common ground with contemporary society;\textsuperscript{2} the value of the eschatological paradigm, likewise, is found in broad, generalizing horizontal meanings rather than in generating specifically moral notions.\textsuperscript{3}

On the other hand, Ogletree’s application of the eschatological paradigm appears to influence his interpretation and use of Scripture. Since the \textit{already/not yet} dialectical of eschatological existence brings a level of ambiguity, relativity, and contingency to moral notions,\textsuperscript{4} the New Testament materials are viewed and articulated from this perspective. Promise becomes more fundamental than law.\textsuperscript{5} Cultural pluralism becomes an informing principle in Christian moral thought.\textsuperscript{6} Persons of faith remain subject to the law in a provisional and qualified sense.\textsuperscript{7} Moral understandings must themselves remain open to fresh interpretation, even continual renegotiation, in the ongoing life of the people of God.\textsuperscript{8} Deontological themes are articulated without the benefit of the category of law.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 3, 12.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., 177.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 166, 167.
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., 144, 168, 199-203.
\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., 152-159, 171.
\textsuperscript{7}Ibid., 200.
\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., 203.
\textsuperscript{9}Ibid., 199.
Ethical theory drawn from the biblical materials is seen as only provisionally held by the believing community, and can be altered through ongoing dialogue. Thus, as already noted above, Scripture functions practically in a “mentoring” role in relation to the believing community.

Furthermore, because Ogletree’s ethical method expresses a consistently future movement in keeping with the broad contours of theologies of the future, Scripture is viewed and articulated from the standpoint of promise, possibilities, openness, and creativity with respect to their moral resource. The enduring value of Scripture is found in its surplus of meaning which is a broad, generalizing, horizontal meaning rather than specific moral notions or concrete content. The fact that this meaning horizon which Scripture provides is one of “meaning” rather than “content,” the fusion of horizons with contemporary life will tend toward what is relative, subjective, and existential. There is existential encounter rather than timeless truths or unchanging ethical principles. Finally, the eschatological paradigm is viewed as creating the context for the eschatological community to both understand and use biblical materials in its moral reflection. Scripture is to be interpreted and nuanced in an ecclesial context. This observation is discussed more fully below in “Role of Community.”

Summary

While the “primacy of Scripture” is a firmly established principle in Ogletree’s

1Ibid., 200-203.

thinking, the practical role Scripture actually assumes in his methodology reflects the “primacy” of philosophical categories of thinking and the existential questions of our contemporary life world. Scripture functions primarily in a “mentoring” role in relation to the believing community. Nevertheless there is indication that Ogletree consciously attempts to conceive and articulate the eschatological paradigm from the standpoint of biblical theology and exegesis. Furthermore, his presuppositions regarding the nature of Scripture flavor his understanding of the eschatological paradigm, and there are indications that his application of the eschatological paradigm influences both his interpretation and application of Scripture. The enduring value of Scripture is found in its surplus of meaning which is a broad, generalizing, horizontal meaning rather than specific moral notions or concrete moral content.

The Role of Community

As outlined in chapter 2, the role which the Christian community assumes in eschatological ethics has revolved around three fundamental issues: (1) as a source of moral authority; (2) the field of moral operation; and (3) its linkage with the ethical needs/agenda of the larger human society. The role of community in Ogletree’s application of the eschatological paradigm in these three areas is for the most part clear and deliberate.

Interpretive Source of Authority

The Christian community is a vital interpretive source of moral authority in relation to that of Scripture. As outlined above, the “primacy of Scripture” is a firmly
established principle in Ogletree's thinking. However, the authoritative role of the community in both interpreting and applying Scripture is pivotal, almost complementary and correlative. The dialogical process of interpretation—where Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience interact reciprocally so that each illumines and is illumined by the other—is to take place within the context of the believing community. "Christian thinking about the moral life requires for its integrity and power an ecclesial context," Ogletree argues. Furthermore, he suggests an ecclesial premise for successful dialogue between ethics and Scripture. This "ecclesial context for Christian ethics" is no less than the "eschatological community," for "the way into a Christian critique of ethos . . . is through eschatology," and "a distinctively Christian ethic has its social location in eschatological community." In other words, it is difficult to practice Christian ethics while being immersed in non-Christian communities. And in particular, only eschatologically oriented communities can foster a fusion of horizons with the eschatological perspective of the biblical era. The church, then, is a practical necessity if the methodological question of eschatology is to be properly dealt with in the dialogue on

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1Ogletree, "The Ecclesial Context of Christian Ethics," 2. According to Ogletree, "Christian ethical thinking cut off from a lively involvement with ecclesial existence is abstract and impotent." He is writing in the context of how Christian moral reflection has often been determined by non-Christian materials, secular social and philosophical categories, issues, and agendas whereby Christian ethics in effect ceases to be Christian at all.

2Himes, 67.


4Ibid., 13.
Scripture and ethics. If the fusion of horizons between the biblical world and the modern world is to occur, there must be faith communities in the present who are engaged in an eschatological praxis of gospel living:¹

From the standpoint of concrete experience, two things would seem to be crucial: some degree of alienation from the institutional arrangements of the larger society, and deep involvement with a community which is engaged in developing qualitatively distinct alternatives to those arrangements. The alienation and the involvement provide points of contact for comprehending what the biblical texts are saying.²

The interpretive authority of the believing community in relation to Scripture finds further practical expression in the law/promise dialectic which eschatology is seen as creating and which captures the moral structure of the eschatological community:

Law is provisional and relative; yet once its provisional status is recognized and appreciated, it has genuine authority to regulate human activity. Still, the provisional and relative standing of law cannot itself become a fixed principle, or it would effectively block out the negotiation of new possibilities in the community of faith. Law can serve only to express what is relatively settled, what is for the present to be taken for granted. It permits the concentration of the moral imagination on issues in eschatological existence which are most in need of attention at a given moment. Yet even previously settled matters remain open in principle to renegotiation. They can once more become objects of special attention, to be worked out anew with full sensitivity to the concrete understandings and meanings at play within the community. This account

¹Himes, 67.
²Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 182 (italics supplied). Ogletree writes, “An eschatological orientation requires eschatological communities. . . . A Christian ethic attentive to the eschatological horizon . . . is an ethic closely linked to the church and its ministry. It finds central expression in the practice of ministry. If Christian ethics is to incorporate the eschatological impulses of the New Testament, it must give far more attention than is presently customary to the life of the church and its ministry. Here the transfer of the New Testament themes to contemporary social realities can be strong indeed” (ibid., 185).
subjects law to promise.¹

Moral understandings, stated as law and commandment, must themselves be open to fresh interpretation, even continual renegotiation, in the ongoing life of the people of God.²

The eschatological paradigm is viewed as creating the context for the eschatological community to both understand and use biblical materials in its moral reflection. Scripture is to be interpreted and nuanced in an ecclesial context. It provides horizontal meaning more than concrete content. The believing community extends this horizontal meaning toward contemporary ethical exigencies in determining the possibilities of new concrete explication. Finally, the unity of the Bible resides more in the unfolding identity of a people, and of a church arising in relation to that people, than in particular themes, beliefs, or ways of thinking.³

Eschatological Community

Eschatological existence is expressed fundamentally within eschatological community.⁴ Ogletree’s basic thesis is that “the radicalism and creativity of New Testament social thought relate chiefly to the internal dynamics of the community of faith. They stem from attempts to devise forms of communal life appropriate to

¹Ibid., 202. In essence this subjects law to the community and to culture.
²Ibid., 203.
³Ibid., 11, 12.
⁴Ogletree, Hospitality to the Stranger, 128-130, 141-142; idem, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 116, 119, 164, 169, 179.
eschatological existence." More specifically,

an eschatologically determined ethic gives primary weight to the issues involved in building up and sustaining eschatological communities, communities bearing authentic alternatives to the cultural norms and institutional arrangements of the larger society.2

Because Christian existence is viewed as essentially ecclesial existence,3 the church furnishes the social location that defines Christian participation in the life of the world.4 It is a new community, oriented to and based upon the new age, which takes form in the midst of institutions which remain under the sway of the old.5 It is self-consciously oriented to the coming Kingdom of God. It is the fundamental field of moral operation for the already/not yet dialectic of New Testament thought.6 “Our primary vocation,” then, “is to become eschatological community and to attest its promise for the world.”7

Relates Indirectly to Larger Society

The Christian community relates to the ethical needs/agenda of the larger human society in a way that is primarily indirect and by extension and analogy. While the

1Ogletree, Hospitality to the Stranger, 128, 142; idem, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 116126, 152, 180-186.


3Ogletree to Lichtenwalter, March 31, 1993, 2; idem, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 90.

4Ibid.

5Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 89.

6Ibid., 179-180.

Christian community supports public order, the affairs of the state lie outside of substantive Christian concern.\(^1\) However, insofar as existing social and cultural forms function to maintain space for human life, they can be provisionally accepted as spheres of Christian existence.\(^2\) Because eschatological existence is essentially evangelistic and has a promise to deliver the nations, the possibility is always present that the dynamics of eschatological existence will set in motion transformative social processes in spheres of life which previously were almost wholly independent of its central impulses.\(^3\) If a Christian ethic is to make an original contribution to political and economic thought, it will not be by way of explicit biblical commentary on the state and its place in human life. Rather, it will be by elaborating and developing, by analogy, the political and economic implications of insights present in the biblical materials’ attention to the internal affairs of the eschatological community.\(^4\)

A distinctively Christian social ethic which reaches beyond concerns internal to self-conscious communities of faith pre-supposes situations in which the dynamics of eschatological existence are beginning to work themselves out in wider spheres of social life. Once these dynamics are underway, we are in a


\(^2\) Ibid., 184.

\(^3\) Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger*, 142.

position to consider the broader social ramifications of elemental discoveries in the community of faith itself.¹

Summary

Ogletree thus stresses the essential ecclesial nature of an eschatologically informed Christian ethics.² The role which the believing community assumes in his application of the eschatological paradigm is a leading one, providing the context in which the “preunderstandings of moral life” are to be viewed in relation to the biblical materials and the reality of the already/not yet. The believing community is a vital interpretive, almost complementary, source of moral authority in relation to Scripture. It is the fundamental field of moral operation for expressing the ethic of dialectical eschatology. And it relates to the wider social world indirectly, by extension and by analogy from its own moral reflection and experience.

Nature of Social Involvement

For Ogletree, the nature of social involvement is fundamentally linked with the nature and experience of eschatological communities. The New Testament materials basically provide an ecclesiology, rather than a comprehensive social ethic in the sense of twentieth-century Christian ethics.³ Furthermore, “the radicalism and creativity of New Testament social thought relate chiefly to the internal dynamics of the community of

¹Ogletree, Hospitality to the Stranger, 142.

²Ogletree is viewed, along with Pannenberg and Braaten, as developing the ecclesiological implications of eschatological ethics (Sedgwick, 398, 402-405).

³Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 117.
faith. They stem from attempts to devise forms of communal life appropriate to eschatological existence." As noted earlier, the affairs of the state basically lie outside substantive Christian concern. It is only indirectly, by extension, and by analogy that the believing community reaches toward the wider social world.

The first task of the church, then, is to be the church. As an essentially religious community, it can never be a mere instrument of social change. Rather, its social witness must be a piece with its spirituality, with its activities in nurturing faith, and with the character of its internal fellowship. In short, Christian social ethics requires a discrete social-communal base which inescapably involves congregational development. It is within the context of this development and participation within the community that Christians orient themselves to the wider social world. A distinctively Christian social vision presupposes the possibility of awakening moral commitments which go beyond interests associated with their own social location.

"While the first task of the church is to be the church, being the church includes public responsibility—at least where Christians have the means to exercise it." This

4 Ibid., 289, 290.
7 Ibid.
public responsibility has to do with the genuine power and influence which the believing community has within society.\(^1\) In particular, the task of Christian social ethics is viewed as twofold: (1) it is to help Christian people reflect on their social roles and their realistic possibilities for influencing the direction of social evolution; and (2) it is to discover ways in which Christians can collaborate with persons of different religious and moral orientations in working toward a shared vision of the common good.\(^2\) With respect to these two tasks, Ogletree asserts that the believing community’s “public witness” or “explicit public vocation” requires critical engagement with the moral ethos of the larger secular community, including its diverse religious communities.\(^3\) Here he follows broadly Troeltsch’s concept of “civilization ethic,” where, in order to address the major social questions of contemporary society, the believing community must join its teachings to the reigning civilizational ethic of society.\(^4\)

In secular, pluralistic societies, the church’s social teachings are normally able to make their way into the public arena only in conjunction with religious and moral ideas that undergird a normative social order, that is, what Troeltsch called the “civilizational ethic.”... Any effective synthesis of Christian ideas and civilizational ethic constitutes a ‘compromise,’ that is, an adjustment of Christian teaching to the reigning norms of society. However, such a compromise gives distinctively Christian social thought a share in the authority of the civilizational ethic. It is by way of its participation in a civilization ethic, Troeltsch contends, that Christian teaching has been able to influence social processes and policies.\(^5\)

\(^1\)Ibid.


\(^3\)Ogletree, “Renewing Ecumenical Protestant Social Teaching,” 293-295.


Because the "civilizational ethic" furnishes the moral notions that make possible a public discourse about the common good, an effective public witness is possible only as the believing community comes to grips with this ethic, criticizing it, extending and developing it, and, insofar as possible, articulating its (believing community) distinctive vision in ways that connect with its (civilizational ethic) central tendencies. To renounce this undertaking is to set aside an explicit public vocation. The "compromise" spoken of here is one of creative synthesis of social and cultural ideas with a Christian social vision. It is the adjustment of Christian teachings to social exigencies. Such compromise is not seen as a dilution of moral seriousness, but rather as a fitting moral response to situations of substantial moral conflict. Following Troeltsch, Ogletree contends that the believing community cannot continue to play a role in social evolution unless it can maintain and renew such compromises.

In short, Christians have to develop their social vision in at least two frames of reference: (1) they must become clear about their own witness and its grounding in fundamental faith convictions and internal relational dynamics; and (2) they must find ways of articulating their distinctive witness that are suited to a public discourse. It is

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1Ibid., 295.
2Ibid.
3Ibid.
4Ibid.
6Ibid., 232.
the reality that the moral conflicts of society are replicated within its own internal life that enables the believing community toward sensitive social vision.¹

What internal dynamics of communal life, though, does Ogletree see as possibly extending toward the wider social world? According to him, four themes merit attention with respect to the force of eschatological promise for the social organization of life.

1. The primacy of eschatological community over the family opens the way to communities and societies which are radically, ethnically, sexually, inclusive.²

2. The material basis of eschatological community expresses the reversal and obliteration of distinctions in existing patterns of privilege, power, and wealth in human community.³ This includes a critique of the individualism and acquisitiveness of modern society and the social understanding of property. It points to the social accountability and social use of property relations and in economic activity.

3. The mercy, mutual forbearance, and forgiving love of eschatological community transcends national, ethnic, and cultural bases of social order as conditions of a public life in communities and societies, as well as violence as the final court of appeal in the adjudication of human conflict.⁴

4. The common life among persons of diverse backgrounds and cultures within

¹Ibid.
²Ogletree, Hospitality to the Stranger, 143, 128-130; idem, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 181.
³Ogletree, Hospitality to the Stranger, 143-144.
⁴Ibid., 144.
the eschatological community brings recognition of the plurality and relativity of human cultures and social institutions, as well as the possibility of community among culturally diverse peoples. The relativity of social institutions permits us to accept them and function with them as spheres of our own activity without, at the same time, bestowing absolute and binding authority upon them. This cultural pluralism is founded on the primacy of promise over law as the constitutive basis of social existence and the reality that all human cultures are relative to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

These four themes for the social reorganization of life reflect a more perfectionist, rather than a deontological, orientation toward the personal moral development of individuals and the building up of the community. A highly relational dynamic exists in eschatological communal life. In addition, Ogletree posits “hospitality” as an overarching metaphor for his moral theory, i.e., “to be moral is to be hospitable to the stranger.” In the context of Christian eschatology, this hospitality motif is viewed as expressing at least two unique nuances in relation to the four themes for the social organization of life which we have just outlined above: (1) the moral import of intersubjectivity, and (2) the moral significance of pluralism at an elemental level of

1Ibid., 144, 145; idem, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 152-158.
2Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 171.
3Ibid., 152.
5Ogletree, Hospitality to the Stranger, 1.
6Ibid., 7, 8.
human experience.⁴ "To offer hospitality to a stranger is to welcome something new, unfamiliar, and unknown into our life world."¹ Furthermore, there are reciprocal acts of hospitality, i.e., "My readiness to welcome the other in to my world must be balanced by my readiness to enter the world of the other."² The importance of this overarching metaphor speaks towards an openness to both people and ideas which may be different to us.

In the context of these four themes for the social organization of life, Ogletree proposes the following pattern of social responsibility for eschatological communities.⁴

1. Modern societies are sufficiently alien to the central promises of the Christian gospel that the believing community will, in important measure, have to be a community apart.⁵ Being a community apart includes two crucial perspectives for the believing community: some degree of social alienation from the institutional arrangements of the

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¹Ibid., 35-59.
²Ibid., 2.
³Ibid., 4.
⁴This proposal follows his review of some examples of social responsibility which he asserts have some plausibility as contemporary appropriations of biblical eschatology, i.e., (1) eschewing direct involvement in the oversight of the basic economic, political, and cultural structures of society, with evangelism as direct witness to larger society, and moral modeling as indirect influence; (2) individual members taking responsibility for the whole range of social positions open in society; (3) the church concerning itself with the possibility of encompassing the whole society in the impulses of the coming new age, venturing a Christian transformation of social existence; (4) finding in powerful social and political movements secular equivalents to the eschatological impulses of Christian faith (ibid., 188, 189).
⁵Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 189, 190.
larger society, and deep involvement within the community as it is engaged in developing qualitatively distinct alternatives of those arrangements.¹

2. The task of the believing community is to bring effective criticism of the basic institutions of the larger society lest their alien and oppressive features become obscured in human consciousness. Such criticism, though guided by distinctive Christian understandings, will make appropriate use of pertinent social theory.²

3. Christians are free to participate selectively in the basic institutions of modern society insofar as they recognize the provisional and ambiguous nature of these institutions and maintain their primary allegiance to the realities taking form in eschatological community. The participation must, however, be both selective and qualified.³

4. In many societies, though not all, Christians actually have an opportunity to help shape policy in basic social institutions. Similarly, or alternatively, they may be able to relate actively to movements working to bring about morally significant social change, influencing the determination of goals and objectives, and also decisions about strategy and tactics.⁴

Finally, there is the question of the believing community’s relation to the

¹Ibid., 182-187.
²Ibid., 190.
³Ibid. “A task of Christian ethics is to assist the community of faith in its deliberations on appropriate forms of participation in the life of the larger society” (ibid.).
⁴Ibid.
needs/agenda of the larger social world in the setting of world processes and the horizon of the future. According to Ogletree,

the reach of eschatological community is toward the whole inhabited world. Its aim is not the conversion of all peoples to an established point of view, but the negotiation of shared understandings capable of giving rise to a common world among women and men from a multiplicity of backgrounds and cultures. Its summons is to be a people in freedom and community, not apart from but precisely in relation to our social and cultural origins.¹

And because Christian hope involves ever new forms of concrete historical expression of our ultimate religious hope of participation in the divine life,

if I am going to take seriously the hope of liberation promised to me in faith, then I have got to be engaged in concrete liberation struggles in this world. As a matter of fact, I do not think I can know what the liberation of men in the Kingdom of God means if I have not been involved in struggling with very specific chains that enslave people in my own society.²

Summary

For Ogletree, the nature of social involvement is fundamentally linked with the nature and experience of eschatological communities. The radicalism and creativity of New Testament social thought are focused primarily through the internal dynamics of the believing community. It is only indirectly, by extension, and by analogy that the believing community reaches toward the wider social world. Even then its social witness must be a piece with its spirituality, faith, and internal fellowship. Public responsibility is assumed where individual Christians or the believing community have means to exercise it, and where it expresses appropriate forms of participation in the larger society.

²Ogletree, "What May Man Really Hope For?" 43, 44.
Evangelism, individual social responsibility and influence, moral protest and personal influence in the sociopolitical arena, developing social policy, as well as social struggle, are each viewed as appropriate forms of public responsibility, though with some qualifications. The nature of social involvement is further viewed from the perspective of intersubjectivity, relativity and contingency, pluralism as a basic element of human experience, and deontologically qualified perfectionist motifs. At bottom, it is a radical relational vision which encompasses the creation of the new in a universal reach toward the larger society.

Implications for Moral Theory

The broad outline of Ogletree's application of the eschatological paradigm to moral theory is clear. The question now is his application of the paradigm's ethical implications with respect to the level of moral reflection and its potential for concrete social content. By way of review, the issues here deal primarily with questions of specificity and consistency with respect to the eschatological paradigm's application. They bring into focus where normative content and guidance lie in the application process, and the carefulness with which it is used towards concrete ethical exigencies. This section's survey includes: (1) the theoretical level of moral reflection which the paradigm appears to elicit in Ogletree's thinking; and (2) the meaning and function of paradigm in Ogletree's moral theory. Ogletree's correlation of the eschatological paradigm to moral philosophy has already been examined in a separate section.
Level of Moral Reflection

By way of reminder again, this study proposes a correspondence between the appropriate levels on which paradigms operate and the ingredients in the structure of ethics, i.e., macro/bases, meso/underlying principles, and micro/area rules. The question of "theoretical level," which this correspondence facilitates, enables one to clarify how concretely the eschatological paradigm might legitimately speak to modern ethical concerns.

With Ogletree, the questions of "theoretical level" and "concreteness" are quite straightforward ones. He essentially announces where he is coming from on the former, and, in the process, tells us what to expect with regard to the latter. Both companion volumes—which represent his primary and most focused discussion with regard to the use of eschatology in moral theory, and which this chapter has drawn from in a principal way—are concerned with methodology and elemental aspects of human moral experience. They are intentionally only preparatory to a more comprehensive treatment of Christian ethics.\(^1\) The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics relates to methodology in linking biblical scholarship and Christian ethics.\(^2\) Hospitality to the Stranger relates to methodology in the context of fundamental ethics, i.e., the central constituents of the moral life and the manner of their appearing in concrete human experience.\(^3\) It is within

\(^1\)Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, xii-xiii, 4, 7, 11, 12, 176, 205; idem, Hospitality to the Stranger, xi, 29.


\(^3\)Ogletree, Hospitality to the Stranger, xi, 10-34.
this larger framework of moral theory and ethical methodology that the “theoretical level” of the eschatological paradigm comes into view.

Macro/Bases

The field of Christian ethics, as Ogletree views it, has three main divisions: fundamental ethics, symbolic ethics, and practical ethics.¹ Fundamental ethics describes the elements of the moral life and then constructs a theory based on the description.² It is concerned primarily with the elemental constituents of worldly being. Symbolic ethics critically interprets, appropriates, and mediates the traditions which give character to our moral understanding.³ It is concerned primarily with particular historically relative configurations of shared meanings which mold, express, and bestow significance on the moral life of communities and societies to which we belong. Practical ethics examines the organic, psychic, social, and cultural dynamics that channel and constrain the moral life. Here, ethical reflection is in critical conversation with the human sciences (behavioral and social). The underlying basis for these three distinct inquiries and for their interconnections is concrete experience itself: the everyday life-world as it presents itself to awareness. Even if all this gets done, however, according to Ogletree, we still haven not yet reached applied ethics or concrete moral guidance.⁴

¹Ibid., 10.
²Ibid., 10, 11.
³Ibid., 11.
⁴Ibid., 11.
In the context of fundamental ethics, Ogletree provides an exposition of some of the basic features of phenomenology and moral philosophy in terms of how they explicate constitutive elemental structures of the life world. These features have already been outlined in this chapter. Here we want to be reminded that the synthesis of the concerns of phenomenology and moral philosophy is to realize preunderstandings of the moral life in relation to the horizon of meaning which is opened up by the question of the meaning of being.\(^1\) His proposed structures of moral thought (preunderstandings) are more elemental than social, economic, and political arrangements of our life world. Because they are more elemental, they can enable discourse and an interpretive fusion of horizons with the biblical materials.

Ogletree is clearly working from the bases level of the structure of ethics. He is abstract, philosophical, and theoretical in his outline of the constituent features of moral reality in temporal human experience. It is within the purview of this level of theoretical reflection that Ogletree primarily discusses the contribution of the eschatological paradigm to Christian moral theory. In doing so, he is nuancing and applying the eschatology from the bases level of the structure of ethics, and correspondingly, from the macro level of paradigm operation. According to Ogletree,

\[ \text{to speak of eschatology is to characterize the larger horizon of meaning which in given traditions displays the significance and authority of moral notions. This meaning horizon does not directly generate specifically moral notions, but it profoundly qualifies them and substantially informs the manner in which they present themselves to consciousness.}^{2} \]

\(^1\)Ibid., 24; Ogletree, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics*, 15-45.

In addition, Ogletree asserts that "the discussion of eschatology represents one way of articulating the question of the meaning of being." His focus is toward that which is general, elemental, and fundamental. With respect to the biblical materials he is concerned with raising what the texts are saying to a higher level of generality, one capable of addressing our own sense of reality via a fusion of meaning horizons. Correspondingly, the import of eschatology is found in its ability to qualify and inform moral notions in our consciousness rather than generate specific moral notions. As outlined in an earlier section of this chapter, the hermeneutical nuances of the eschatological paradigm are found in how the already/not yet dialectic: (1) provides the creative context for a focused future orientation in ethical methodology; (2) furnishes a meaning horizon for Christian moral consciousness that encompasses the temporal horizon of human experience; (3) enables a "fusion of horizons" between biblical worlds of meaning and those which make up our sense of reality; and (4) elucidates the essential dialectical nature of Christian moral theory. These observations affirm that Ogletree's primary application of the eschatological paradigm is from the macro/bases level of moral reflection.

**Meso/Underlying Principles**

There is evidence, however, that Ogletree articulates moral reflection from the "meso" level of paradigm application as well. In the structure of ethics, this would mean

1. Ibid., 193.
2. Ibid., 3, 12.
articulating underlying principles that can be applied in a universal way to various areas of moral activity.

According to Ogletree, symbolic ethics critically interprets, appropriates, and mediates the traditions which give character to our moral understandings. ¹ It elucidates the historically relative configurations of shared meanings which mold, express, and bestow significance on the moral life of communities and societies to which we belong. In other words, it explores the meaning horizon found in the historical situatedness of others in relation to our own sense of reality, i.e., enduring universal principles that transcend culture and time. In the context of Ogletree’s pursuit of the use of the Bible in Christian ethics, symbolic ethics explores, interprets, appropriates, and mediates the biblical worlds of meaning, i.e., biblical moral notions and principles. Note what he has to say with regard to eschatology and symbolic ethics:

Only chapter 5 of this volume, “The Eschatological Horizon of New Testament Social Thought,” embodies the inquiries which belong to symbolic ethics. Here I do not move fully into the systematic task of symbolic ethics. This is preparatory work to such an undertaking, the first attempt at a retrieval of New Testament traditions. Yet I do take into account the central challenge for a constructive Christian ethics, namely, interpreting the import of New Testament eschatology for moral understanding. In this respect, chapter 5 may have suggestiveness beyond its own accomplishments.²

The point here is that Ogletree’s observations from the New Testament materials with respect to the role of community and the nature of social involvement encompasses symbolic ethics. The exploring, interpreting, appropriating, and mediating the biblical

¹Ogletree, Hospitality to the Stranger, 11.

²Ibid., 29, 30.
worlds of meaning with respect to the role of community and the nature of social involvement, in effect, are expressions of enduring universal principles. The eschatological horizon of New Testament social thought is fundamental to this overall picture. Ogletree thus articulates moral reflection from the “meso” level of paradigm application.

**Micro/Area Rules**

Given the overall force of Ogletree’s approach and his own stated limits in the purpose of his two companion volumes, the micro/area rules level of paradigm application is the least observable, if not altogether absent. However, since Ogletree insists on dealing with what he calls “the historical context” of his issues, practical ethics is always in the picture, even though it is on the periphery.¹ In Ogletree’s view, practical ethics is not yet applied ethics, nor is it the locus of concrete moral guidance.² The terms “applied ethics” and “practical ethics” are often used interchangeably to indicate the application of ethics to special arenas of human activity, such as business, politics, medicine, economics, etc.³ In other words, for many, “applied ethics” and “practical ethics” relate to area rules in the structure of ethics, which would be our micro level of paradigm operation. While Ogletree obviously sees a distinction between “practical

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ethics” and “applied ethics,” he nonetheless does have areas of human activity or area rules in mind as he develops his moral theory. These concerns, while on the periphery, are always in the picture. The full explication of these issues and concerns await his systematic treatment of Christian ethics. Ogletree relates the eschatological paradigm broadly towards area rules and micro application throughout his inquiries of symbolic ethics in the context of the biblical worlds of meaning as they relate to our own sense of reality.

Summary

With the above analysis in view, it is appropriate to conclude that, for Ogletree, the eschatological paradigm facilitates moral reflection primarily across the spectrum of macro and meso paradigm operation. This conclusion reflects, however, what he has written to date. One could rightly conclude from what has been written thus far, that the eschatological paradigm could/would appropriately be articulated on the micro/area rule level in any subsequent systematic treatment of Christian ethics. Ogletree’s style and focus in both theology and ethics have predominantly been toward the theoretical, dealing with broad sweeping issues, principles, fundamentals, and methodology, rather than focusing on specific themes or areas of moral concern. This can be observed throughout his projects through the years. The reality, then, is that specificity and concrete application in his writings are usually remote and peripheral. This is true with regards to application of the eschatological paradigm to moral theory as well.

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Paradigm Role and Function

While the term “paradigm”¹ is used only occasionally in Ogletree’s projects, it is nevertheless an integral part of his moral theory particularly as it relates to an interpretive framework for elucidating the meaning of Scripture for Christian ethics or issues of theology and methodology. The reality of paradigm, whether explicit or implicit in his thought, factors largely in his overall hermeneutic. While he has not stated it as such, his proposed correlation of moral philosophy, phenomenology, and historical contextualism, as a structure with which to come to an understanding of ethics in the Bible, is viewed by others as providing “a paradigm that Ogletree believes will help elucidate the Biblical data.”² This observation is affirmed by how his proposed structure is implicitly used throughout his companion volumes on eschatology and Christian moral theory. Likewise, while not calling it such, the orientation which he perceives the already/not yet dialectical of New Testament eschatology as bringing to Christian moral thought is also viewed and applied paradigmatically.³ This can be extended to his use of eschatology as a whole, which he posits as providing an “horizon of moral understanding” which orients and motivates personal and communal moral life. More specifically, Ogletree refers to

¹While this study uses the concept of paradigm in conjunction with eschatology, paradigm is used more broadly and generally by both Mott and Ogletree. For the purposes of clarification, the term “eschatological paradigm” is used where this study is focusing principally on their application of eschatology, and “paradigm” where it is discussing paradigm generally in order to understand how eschatology as paradigm correspondingly would be viewed or applied.

²Giannini, 73.

³Scroggs, review of The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, by Thomas W. Ogletree, 45; Burtness, 240.
paradigm in the context of the meaning of reality which the Christ event brings and the moral understandings of specific biblical materials. Finally, Ogletree refers to the “coming realm of God” as a primal image which elicits an encompassing image for the moral ordering of values and a pattern of life for personal and communal existence.

The purpose here is to determine the role and function of the eschatological paradigm in Ogletree’s moral theory. Is it primarily that of facilitating an abstract basic principle which needs to be translated and applied toward new situations? Or does it facilitate the imprinting of an inner gripping image which shapes people ethically? Is it primarily conceptual or motivational? It is both! But Ogletree’s primary orientation is toward the inner gripping image which motivates and shapes people ethically.

According to Ogletree, paradigmatic roles or paradigmatic happenings provide “a controlling interpretive role in man’s understanding of himself and his world.” “We find ourselves claimed by the reality disclosed in a certain set of happenings . . . before we have begun to grasp all that it means or implies.” The role of reason is to unfold the

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3 Ogletree, “Christian Social Ethics as a Theological Discipline,” 212.


5 Ibid., 93. This discussion of the role and function of paradigm in Ogletree’s thinking refers to “paradigmatic happenings” or “paradigmatic events.” These are his conceptions. While they differ from the use of paradigm presented thus far in this study, including his view of the eschatological paradigm, they nevertheless provide insight into the role and function of paradigm in Ogletree’s thinking as a whole.

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basic understanding of reality expressed in a paradigmatic happening.\(^1\) Furthermore, the very logic of paradigmatic happening pushes us toward universality.\(^2\) And, "if a happening is genuinely paradigmatic, constituting the decisive point of reference for interpreting the totality of experience, the reality it discloses in some sense encompasses the reality of all things."\(^3\) Referring to the model of self-giving presented in the death and resurrection of Jesus, Ogletree states that "a single set of paradigmatic events discloses both the indicative and the imperative of the gospel."\(^4\) In other words, paradigm brings both a sense of identity and moral urgency. In the context of a discussion of value orientations, he refers to the eschatological import of the complex of events associated with Jesus as the decisive paradigm for theological understanding.\(^5\) In other words, paradigm brings value orientation. The moral ordering of values for a pattern of personal and communal life is likewise in view with the encompassing vision which the primal image of the coming realm of God brings.\(^6\)

This focus toward a broad moral orientation, rather than specific moral principles, can be seen in Ogletree's overall use of the eschatological paradigm in moral theory. Eschatology is seen as providing horizontal meaning which qualifies and informs the

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Ibid., 95.


\(^6\)Ogletree, "Christian Social Ethics as a Theological Discipline," 212.
manner in which moral notions present themselves to our consciousness, rather than generating specific moral notions.¹ The already/not yet dialectical presents the structure of eschatological existence and Christian moral reflection.²

Summary

This survey of Ogletree’s application of the eschatological paradigm’s ethical implications has included two important perspectives: (1) the theoretical level of moral reflection which the paradigm appears to elicit in Ogletree’s thinking; and (2) the meaning and function of paradigm in Ogletree’s moral theory. It has determined that, for Ogletree, the eschatological paradigm facilitates moral reflection primarily across the spectrum of macro and meso paradigm operation. While the micro/area rules level of paradigm application is the least observable and on the periphery, nevertheless, it is within Ogletree’s view of thought, and could/would appropriately be articulated in any subsequent systematic treatment of Christian ethics. Specificity and concrete application are usually remote and peripheral in his projects. With respect to paradigm role and function, Ogletree’s focus in the use of the eschatological paradigm in moral theory is toward broad moral orientation, rather than specific moral principles. This is in keeping with the overall horizontal sphere of reflection towards which he draws us and with which he is concerned in his writings.

¹Ogletree, The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 177.
²Ibid., 179, 181.
The import of eschatology in Ogletree’s moral theory can be seen in the prominence it is given in his writings. Like Mott, his understanding of eschatology fits the general contours of the eschatological paradigm that this study has outlined. While he works within the general contours of the eschatological paradigm, however, he clearly nuances the already/not yet component over that of the reign of God and the horizon of the future. The already/not yet becomes his leitmotif for nuancing the moral implications of the eschatological paradigm. These hermeneutical nuances include (1) providing the creative context for a focused future orientation in ethical methodology; (2) furnishing a meaning horizon for Christian moral consciousness that encompasses the temporal horizon of human experience; (3) enabling a “fusion of horizons” between biblical worlds of meaning and those which make up our sense of reality; and (4) elucidating the essential “dialectical nature” of Christian moral theory. Ogletree’s ethical method expresses a consistently future movement in keeping with the broad contours of theologies of the future.

Unlike Mott, the categories of moral philosophy factor largely in Ogletree’s eschatological-oriented moral theory. By viewing and nuancing moral philosophy via the concerns of European phenomenology, and setting this synthesis within the temporal structure of human experience, Ogletree finds a promising resource of preunderstandings with which to engage the biblical materials in a discourse about the moral life. Because eschatology is both central to these biblical materials and provides a larger horizon of moral understanding which takes seriously the temporal horizon of human experience and
the question of the meaning of being (according to his preunderstandings of moral life), it facilitates an overall correlation of ideation towards contemporary Christian moral theory. Ogletree’s work as a whole is guided by a hermeneutic based on phenomenological investigations. It is a hermeneutic governed by a life-world perspective. In his view, this life-world perspective brings a level of concreteness to the otherwise abstract and often remote critical biblical scholarship and philosophical ethics.1

While the “primacy of Scripture” is a firmly established principle in Ogletree’s thinking, his view of the nature of Scripture largely follows that of existential/encounter theology. In addition, the practical role Scripture actually assumes in his methodology reflects the “primacy” of philosophical categories of thinking and the existential questions of our contemporary life world. He does not clearly underscore the point that our “preunderstandings” must never be permitted to control our reading of Scripture. Nor does his methodology indicate clearly how they can be kept from doing so. While the ingredients of the dialogical process of interpretation are similar for Ogletree and Mott (Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience), the community plays a significantly more aggressive and determinative role for Ogletree than with Mott. Scripture functions

1Ogletree’s interest in phenomenology is as a useful tool to assist his efforts to read Scripture faithfully. Phenomenology facilitates his attempts to read Scripture in a manner that equips him to appropriate its truth in the context of the contemporary world. This includes giving an account of truth in a form that engages the best critical thinking of our age. Phenomenology is seen as important for two reasons. First, “it helps us display the essential abstractness of the empirical sciences so that we can more precisely specify the limits of empirical scientific study.” Second, it “helps recast the central notions of modern philosophical ethics so that the preoccupation with language and logic that characterizes those notions can be corrected by a richer account of concrete experience.” See Ogletree to Lichtenwalter, September 26, 1996, 2; idem, Hospitality to the Stranger, 97-126.
primarily in a “mentoring” role in relation to the believing community.

Nevertheless Scripture’s influence in perceiving and nuancing the eschatological paradigm can be seen in: (1) how eschatology is articulated as fundamentally central to the biblical materials and witness; (2) how eschatology provides the one unique and determinate scriptural contribution to the equation of conceptual categories in the dialogue between biblical worlds of meaning and our own sense of reality; and (3) how eschatology elucidates the larger-meaning context of biblical moral thought by providing a horizon of meaning which profoundly qualifies and substantially informs the manner in which moral notions present themselves to consciousness. On the other hand, there are indications that his application of the eschatological paradigm influences both his interpretation and application of Scripture.

Unlike Mott, who finds authority in the concrete meaning of the biblical text in themselves, Ogletree finds the enduring value of Scripture in its surplus of meaning which is a broad, generalizing, horizontal meaning, rather than specific moral notions or concrete moral content. It should be noted, though, that in his view, this “surplus of meaning” in the biblical text does not express a movement to a higher level of generality beyond the concreteness of the text.¹ His own application of the meaning of the text is viewed as “quite specific in its own way.”² While specific in its own way, however, it remains more toward the macro level than either of the other levels of critical reflection.

Ogletree stresses the essential ecclesial nature of eschatological ethics. The role

¹Ogletree to Lichtenwalter, September 26, 1996, 2.
²Ibid.
which the believing community assumes in his application of the eschatological paradigm is a leading one, providing the context in which the "preunderstandings of moral life" are to be viewed in relation to the biblical materials and the reality of the already/not yet. The believing community is a vital, interpretive, almost complementary source of moral authority in relation to Scripture. As an alternative community (as with Mott), the believing community is also the fundamental field of moral operation for expressing the ethic of dialectical eschatology. It relates indirectly to the wider social world, however, by extension and by analogy from its own moral reflection. While Mott would support this extension by analogy, he is more aggressive and direct than Ogletree with respect to the role of community as a change agent in relation to the needs of the wider social world. For Ogletree, the nature of social involvement is fundamentally linked with the nature and experience of eschatological communities. The radicalism and creativity of New Testament social thought are focused primarily through the internal dynamics of the believing community. Social witness and involvement need to be a piece with their spirituality, faith, and internal fellowship.

Like Mott, Ogletree is a theorist who works primarily on the levels of theological bases and underlying principles. However, he tends more towards the former than the latter, and is more philosophical and generalizing in his perspective. His style and focus in both theology and ethics have predominantly been toward the theoretical, dealing with broad sweeping issues, principles, fundamentals, and methodology, rather than focusing on specific themes or concrete areas of moral concern. Specificity and concrete application in his writings are usually remote and peripheral. This is true, as well, with
regard to his application of the eschatological paradigm and its implications for moral theory. In keeping with this broad horizontal perspective on which he tends to work, the function and role of paradigm for Ogletree are toward broad moral orientation, rather than specific moral principles, or more concrete area rules.¹

Ogletree's use of the eschatological paradigm in moral theory is consistent with his overall methodology and hermeneutic, his use of paradigm in particular, and his view of ecclesiology and the nature of Scripture. Eschatology is a significant and determinate ingredient in his hermeneutic.

¹It should be noted, however, that while Ogletree's application of the eschatological paradigm is predominantly on the macro level of critical reflection, his attempt to epitomize biblical eschatology is sincerely intended to be specific in its own way. Obviously, there can be differing levels of concreteness or specificity. There can be concreteness and specificity on the macro level as well as the level of area rules and underlying principles. To be able to effect a hermeneutical bridge or a fusion of horizons between the biblical world of meanings and that of our contemporary life world in itself could be viewed as a concrete application of the eschatological paradigm, albeit still quite abstract. Ogletree's phenomenology based hermeneutic is an attempt toward contemporary relevancy in light of the abstract nature of philosophical ethics in general. See Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger*, 97-126.
CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Orientation

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore and evaluate the implications of the methodological application of eschatology as paradigm for developing contemporary Christian moral theory. It focuses on the interplay of eschatology as a methodological tool and the ethical system that results from it. More specifically, it seeks to demonstrate that "this is what happens if you take the eschatological paradigm and apply it this way or that way." Mott and Ogletree were chosen as case studies for this endeavor because they clearly belong to the eschatological movement in contemporary Christian ethics. Having described and analyzed their use of eschatology in moral theory, this chapter evaluates and compares the impact that the eschatological paradigm has on their respective projects. In doing so, we are brought closer to answering the questions that have initiated this study—"Why does the eschatological paradigm function so differently among Christian ethicists and theologians? Does it still hold promise as the starting point for a

1Both Mott's and Ogletree's own assessment of this study's outline and analysis of their respective use of eschatology in moral theory have been positive and affirming as to its overall fairness and accuracy of description, as well as its being insightful and a discerning interpretation of their methodology, meaning, and purposes (Mott to Lichtenwalter, April 20, 1996; Ogletree to Lichtenwalter, September 26, 1996).

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comprehensive approach to moral theory?"

This chapter's evaluation and comparison of Mott's and Ogletree's use of eschatology in moral theory include their similarities and differences with respect to (1) their perceiving and nuancing the eschatological paradigm and its components, (2) the role which the principles of verification play for them in relation to the eschatological paradigm, and (3) the level of moral reflection and role that paradigm plays in their moral theory. This chapter also proposes what appears to be the strengths and contributions of their respective methodology in using eschatology in moral theory. This process enables us to ascertain how and why the eschatological paradigm can function differently. It enables us to appraise the problems and issues regarding the use of eschatology in Christian moral theory. It also enables us to propose the implications that exist for credibly using the eschatological paradigm in Christian moral theory. Mott's and Ogletree's similarities, differences, strengths, and weaknesses in each of the areas outlined above are evaluated together in a flowing discussion rather than being considered separately.

Before proceeding, however, it is important to orient ourselves by way of review of the context in which Mott and Ogletree are being evaluated and compared. As participants in the developing tradition of the eschatological movement in Christian ethics, they represent the latter, contemporary phase of twentieth-century re-interpreted eschatology and its application toward moral theory.

Following a checkered history of the eschatology/ethics relationship throughout Christian history—one which has often exhibited an "eschatology sans ethics" or an
"ethics sans eschatology" rather than the vivid biblical eschatology with its corresponding moral consciousness—the twentieth century has produced a radical renewed interest both in eschatology and the eschatology/ethics dialogue. Various shades of ethical-oriented eschatologies and eschatological-oriented ethics have been generated in the course of this renewed interest in eschatology. But the relationship between eschatology and ethics essentially remained problematic through the first half of the twentieth century. While solutions to the tensions and problems were emerging, no final clarification of their relationship could be given even by the 1970s. Yet, by the 1970s, a twofold pattern had emerged. First, eschatology was becoming increasingly recognized for its potential as a paradigm for Christian ethics. Second, eschatology was being viewed/articulated primarily through three significant models, i.e., the already/not yet, reign of God, and the horizon of the future. These three models were seen as elucidating the eschatological paradigm in relation to its biblical primary model, the Kingdom of God. This study has suggested that these models are like a three-stranded cord forming the components parts of a commonly accepted comprehensive eschatological paradigm for Christian ethics. They are the key theological images which the Kingdom of God together with its various supporting models projects within the eschatological paradigm.

But while a commonly accepted comprehensive eschatological paradigm had both emerged and crystallized through the 1970s, no final clarification of the relationship of eschatology and Christian ethics could yet be given. The eschatology/ethics question was

1See above, 33-54.

2See above, 70-78.
still problematic in the actual application of the paradigm toward moral theory. Each of
the paradigm's components generates forceful and specific ethical nuances which are rich
for application toward moral theory. However, determining how these moral nuances are
actually elicited or have themselves been cast with respect to moral theory remains a
challenge. This has become evident when viewed against my designated principles of
verification and the varied ways we have seen that ethicists have perceived them in
relation to the divergent moral nuances projected through the paradigm. The possible
combinations of implications for moral theory are both numerous and complex.¹

Furthermore, adequately applying eschatology as paradigm toward moral theory
demands an understanding of the subtle dynamics of paradigm in relation to its
supporting models, as well as principles and rules. In addition, there are the varied levels
in both the structure of moral thought (bases, principles, area rules) and paradigm
operation (macro, meso, and micro). Together, these several issues press questions of
consistency and concreteness of application toward moral theory.² Because of these
numerous and complex interrelated issues and problems, eschatology has remained, for
many, one of those "slippery words" with a "multiplicity of meanings" which at best is
"ambiguous and makes for looseness of expression and thought."³ The need has been
recognized for further refinement and development. Clearer principles need to be
outlined with respect to carefulness in the paradigm's use and consistency of application.

¹See above, 79-114.
²See above 114-121.
³Marshall, 264-269.
This study has suggested that this need for further refinement and development does not lay in the paradigm per se, but rather in its application for moral theory. How the application of the eschatological paradigm toward moral theory facilitates and is facilitated by the role of Scripture, the role of community, and the nature of social involvement remains open for clarification and resolution.

And so I turn to Mott and Ogletree. As ethicists working in the latter, contemporary phase of twentieth-century re-interpreted eschatology, they vividly express the impact that the application of the paradigm is having in contemporary Christian moral theory and ethical method. They open windows toward working one’s way through the complex and often subtle nuances expressed between the paradigm’s components in relation to my stated principles of verification and level of moral reflection. In addition, Mott and Ogletree highlight the obvious important role that Scripture has come to play as ethicists make the important transition from formulating the eschatological paradigm itself to that of its actual application for moral theory.

As stated earlier, this study looks developmentally up through the 1970s for the basic crystallized eschatological paradigm. It looks to the 1980s and 1990s for clearer methodological application of the paradigm for moral theory by ethicists. It assumes that Mott and Ogletree are consciously extending a discussion they consider incomplete and unfinished with respect to the use of eschatology in Christian moral theory.
Evaluation of Mott's and Ogletree's Use of Eschatology in Moral Theory

Perceiving and Nuancing the Paradigm

We have seen how both Mott's and Ogletree's understanding of eschatology fit the general contours of the eschatological paradigm outlined in this study. We have also seen that, while the paradigm and each of its components (already/not yet, reign of God, horizon of the future) are evident in their thinking, they clearly nuance the paradigm differently. Mott chooses the reign of God as his leitmotif for nuancing eschatology toward moral theory. For Ogletree, it is the already/not yet. These respective choices reflect not only the direction of their interests in moral theory, but how they read the eschatological paradigm in relation to moral theory and ethical method.

For Mott, the reign of God provides a context for God's universal ethical concerns. It furnishes a concept of history into which other New Testament themes can be placed. More specifically, the reign of God elucidates for him the centrality of biblical justice as an attribute of God and a major mandate of Scripture, and, in doing so, incorporates the imperative for social responsibility into God's goals in history. For Ogletree, the already/not yet provides the creative context for a focused future orientation in ethical methodology. It furnishes a "meaning horizon" for Christian moral consciousness that encompasses the temporal horizon of human experience. More specifically, it enables a "fusion of horizons" between biblical worlds of meaning and those which make up our sense of reality. Finally, the already/not yet elucidates the essential "dialectical nature" of Christian moral theory and methodology.
Both Mott and Ogletree have issues of universality and integration in view with respect to moral principles and ethical themes in relation to the biblical witness and history. And they both perceive eschatology as providing a larger-meaning context for placing the important issues in moral theory and for facilitating ethical method. Their differences lay in the fact that universality for Mott has to do with concrete biblical moral concerns, while, for Ogletree, universality has more to do with generalized “worlds of meaning” or “meaning horizons.” Likewise, integration for Mott has to do with specific biblical themes within the larger biblical moral witness and God’s purposes in history. For Ogletree, however, integration is viewed in terms of “fusion of horizons” between biblical worlds of meaning and our own.

Additionally, Ogletree’s interests are largely methodological. Because of this, the already/not yet becomes important as his leitmotif. He rightly affirms the already/not yet as elucidating the essential “dialogical nature” of Christian moral theory and methodology. This leitmotif, however, is nuanced to facilitate his affinity with theologies of the future.¹ Mott’s interests, on the other hand, are toward specific biblical themes and issues that he deems apropos for contemporary Christian ethics. These include biblical justice and the imperative of social involvement. By interpreting the reign of God primarily through the category of biblical justice, Mott facilitates his interest in the social justice dialogue. This rather tight focusing of his moral theory around one integrating theme tends to homogenize the biblical materials and narrow the scope of influence that

¹By doing so, Ogletree essentially undermines the very balance which he intends to bring to Christian moral theory. He also opens the way toward speculative nuancing of the eschatological paradigm.
the reign of God could have toward other issues in Christian moral theory.

Finally, eschatology for Ogletree brings an openness toward moral creativity and imagination elicited by the presence of the new age. There is an open horizon which enables ever new forms of concrete historical expression of our ultimate hope.

Eschatology for Mott is integrally linked with God and the reality of His righteous reign both in history and in contemporary Christian life. It focuses moral imagination toward specific biblically defined moral imagery.

These divergences do not necessarily suggest radical disagreement between Mott and Ogletree about the use of eschatology in moral theory. Nor do they imply that the biblical witness is unimportant to Ogletree or that Mott is not as interested in methodology. Surely Mott’s project reflects an understanding of the “dialectical nature” of Christian moral theory and methodology, and Ogletree provides some examples of how moral imagination can be stimulated by specific biblically defined imagery. Rather, these divergences reflect the direction of their interests in moral theory. They also reflect how they read the eschatological paradigm in relation to moral theory and ethical method. Mott’s interests lay in the movement from the concrete principles and themes of biblical ethics toward the imperative for contemporary social change. Ogletree’s interests lay in methodological structure that facilitates the use of Scripture in Christian ethics. Mott is primarily oriented to the nurture of believing communities that share, somewhat uncritically, common traditions of faith and practice. Ogletree is not so directly pastoral. In his scholarly writings, he critically distances himself provisionally from the pastoral calling in order to engage the best thinking of the age, to the degree that such engagement
Generally speaking, then, Mott reads the eschatological paradigm within more biblically defined parameters, while Ogletree correlates it with broader methodological issues of moral theory in general.

In keeping with the direction of these observations, it would be well to insert here this study’s discussion of Mott’s and Ogletree’s correlation of the eschatological paradigm to philosophical ethics. Mott, we have learned, appears generally unconcerned with directly relating either his moral theory or the eschatological paradigm to the categories or concerns of philosophical ethics. Rather, his interests lie squarely in the area of social ethics. The categories of thought he uses are primarily biblical categories. He does, however, consciously apply modern economic, sociological, and political categories of thinking to the materials of the Bible in order to suggest new possibilities of meaning and to provide a means of assessing the applicability of the results of exegesis to the formal components of social ethics.

Unlike Mott, the categories of moral philosophy factor largely in Ogletree’s perceptions, interests, and methodology. Ogletree, we have learned, comes to the question of eschatology and ethics from the direction of phenomenology and moral philosophy. By viewing and nuancing moral philosophy via the concerns of phenomenology, and setting this synthesis within the temporal structure of human experience, Ogletree finds a promising resource of preunderstandings with which to engage the biblical materials in a discourse about the moral life. Since eschatology is both central to these biblical materials and provides a larger horizon of moral

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1 Ogletree to Lichtenwalter, September 26, 1996, 3.
understanding in keeping with the temporal structure of human experience which phenomenology and moral philosophy delineate, it plays an important hermeneutical role in bringing an overall correlation of ideation towards contemporary Christian moral theory.¹

The question might be rightly asked, though, "Are they not really doing the same thing, only differently?" In other words, "Is Mott's application of modern economic, sociological, and political categories of thinking to the biblical materials in order to suggest new possibilities of meaning and provide a means of assessing the applicability of the results of exegesis really any different from Ogletree's readiness to see analogies with classical moral theories in the Bible or his attempts to use moral philosophy and phenomenology to engage the biblical materials in a discourse about the moral life?" Viewed broadly, there may not appear to be any substantive difference. In fact, for some, social, economic, and political categories of thinking could be viewed broadly as being concerns accessory to moral philosophy.

The difference, however, lay in the fact that, in principle,² the contemporary categories Mott facilitates in his project reflect concrete areas of life application which the biblical materials point toward and which exegesis outlines. There is movement from the biblical record towards the concrete areas of life application which Scripture is addressing. The categories Mott selects bring contemporary clarity to the issues and

¹See above, 216-227.

²I say "in principle" because it is possible to use these "areas of application categories" as "methodological structures" which could in fact restrict or misrepresent the real meaning of the biblical materials.
principles which Scripture elicits with respect to these concrete areas of moral life.

Ogletree's preunderstandings of the moral life, on the other hand, present structures of thought which lay outside the apparent purview of the biblical materials. Rather than concrete areas of life application they are an interpretive framework used to engage the Bible in a discourse about the moral life. In doing so, they essentially bring the biblical materials toward philosophical perceptions of reality and moral life rather than bringing philosophical perceptions of reality and moral life toward the biblical materials. The biblical materials are interpreted via these philosophical preunderstandings of moral life, hence the philosophical preunderstandings have implicit controlling qualities in the dialogue. This will be discussed again in more detail below. For now, however, it needs to be noted that Ogletree's work as a whole is guided by a hermeneutic based on phenomenological investigations. It is a hermeneutic governed by a life-world perspective. It differs fundamentally, then, from Mott's, whose starting point is biblical imagery, theology, and exegesis. Moral philosophy in reality assumes a more controlling role in Ogletree's interpretive task than what he may be consciously attempting to effect. Again, these divergences reflect directions, interests, and methodology with respect to application of the eschatological paradigm in moral theory. While their differences may appear subtle, the implications for answering the questions of this study are significant.¹

¹Referring to Mott's rather topical approach to the use of Scripture in Christian ethics, Verhey writes, "He is profoundly attentive to Scripture as a source of a genuinely Christian posture in society, and in attending to it he is careful to do justice to the sociological, historical, and literary contexts of the biblical materials. His brief but candid attention to methodological questions concerning the use of Scripture in ethics
This study has proposed that by comparing and evaluating Mott’s and Ogletree’s use of the eschatological paradigm in relation to our stated principles of verification, we can get a sense for how effectively the eschatological paradigm answers the long-standing crisis of “authority” and “relevance” in Christian ethics during this century. We can also observe whether or how the eschatological paradigm influences or is influenced by presuppositions regarding these significant issues (principles of verification) within contemporary Christian moral dialogue. In addition, we are able to answer questions of foundations and presuppositions. In other words, is their use of the eschatological paradigm rooted in philosophy, philosophical ethics, social moral agenda, biblical theology, the community (tradition), or some hybrid of these?

Role of Scripture

Both Mott and Ogletree are very deliberate in explaining their approach to Scripture. Together they share a fourfold methodology in keeping with their Wesleyan and Methodist tradition, i.e., the dialogical interplay of Scripture, reason, Christian tradition, and experience. Together they understand that Christian ethics is not synonymous with biblical ethics, nor is Scripture alone sufficient for Christian ethics. They share the common goal of building a responsible bridge between the biblical materials and contemporary Christian moral theory. And they both steadfastly affirm the

provides an important protection against possible rationalization in using it for this purpose” (Verhey, 25).

See above, 19-20.
"primacy of Scripture" in relation to the other constituent features of their methodology! There is divergence, however, in the way they view the nature of Scripture and the functional role it should have in relation to the other aspects of their methodology.

Mott's methodology reflects a fundamental commitment to the primacy and ultimate authority of Scripture.\(^1\) Practically, this means that the text itself is the revelation of God and that the authority of the Scriptures lies within the intentionality of the given passage. Scripture is the ultimate authority on the issues that it addresses as well as the crucial nature of those issues. Mott shows respect for the plenary inspiration of the biblical text, and he demonstrates thoughtful exegesis. He also affirms the essential theological and ethical unity of the Bible, and assumes that its primary orientation is historical.

Ogletree rightly notes that divergence with respect to the role of Scripture in ethical method is usually not over the issue of the "primacy of Scripture" per se, but "over the way Scripture is actually received and interpreted."\(^2\) Obviously, one can always assert the "primacy of Scripture." How one actually receives and interprets Scripture, however, determines the issue of primacy by default. Interestingly, this is what we find with

\(^1\)Curry notes Mott's explicit commitment to the primacy of Scripture, "One cannot but be struck by now consistently the author dares to deal with the primacy of the biblical text. This work presents the reader with an unmistakable integrity, both in its treatment of the scriptural text and in its fair presentation of the various issues illuminated by the text" (Michael S. Curry, "The Partiality of Justice," Sojourners 13, no. 3 [March 1984]: 36). See also F. Burton Nelson, review of Biblical Ethics and Social Change, by Stephen Charles Mott, TSF Bulletin 7, no. 2 (November-December 1983): 24; Hays, 25.

Ogletree. While asserting the "primacy of Scripture," Ogletree formulates a way of receiving and interpreting the biblical materials that functionally undercuts that very assertion. Moral philosophy, phenomenology, and historical-critical method blend together towards a view of the nature of Scripture that largely follows that of existential and encounter theology. In the process, Ogletree does not clearly underscore the point that our "preunderstandings" must never be permitted to control our reading of Scripture. Nor does his methodology indicate clearly how they can be kept from doing so. Furthermore, the uniquely authoritative role of Scripture is found in a horizon of understanding within which diverse peoples can identify themselves, rather than in revealing timeless truths or proposing unchanging ethical principles.

The implications of their respective presuppositions regarding the nature and authority of Scripture find forceful expression in their use of the eschatological paradigm in relation to the biblical materials. Mott’s application of the eschatological paradigm, for the most part, uses Scripture in a way in which the biblical materials maintain an authoritative, assertive role in the process of application. The primacy and ultimate authority of Scripture can be viewed through his reign of God leitmotif in such issues as the theological/ethical unity of Old and New Testament Scripture, the authoritative meaning and content of the biblical text and of the words themselves, as well as the theological affirmations of Scripture, acts of God, and prevailing ethical principles.

Ogletree’s application of the eschatological paradigm in relation to Scripture is

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more subtle and complex. On the one hand, eschatology is understood as expressing the essential meaning of the biblical witness. It is viewed as the unique contribution of Scripture to the equation of conceptual categories in his ethical method. And it provides the biblical horizon of meaning, which profoundly qualifies and substantially informs the manner in which moral notions present themselves to consciousness. Here the eschatological paradigm clearly expresses considerable Scriptural influence. Furthermore, Ogletree's *already/not yet* leitmotif rightly draws upon biblical exegesis and theology.

On the other hand, Ogletree's presuppositions regarding Scripture appear to color his use of the eschatological paradigm accordingly: (1) because the fundamental meaning of Scripture is understood as historical and existential,¹ the important categories for nuancing the meaning of the eschatological paradigm are, likewise, historical and existential (i.e., temporal horizon of human experience, and the meaning of being);² (2) because historical-critical methodology is embraced as providing appropriate tools for opening up the fundamental meaning of Scripture,³ the eschatological paradigm, likewise, becomes explicated within the purview of the presuppositions of this methodology; (3) because the enduring value of Scripture is found in the surplus of meaning beyond what is uttered in the biblical texts,⁴ and which is in need of higher levels of generality in order to

¹Ogletree, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics*, 1, 10.
²Ibid., 192, 193.
³Ibid., xi, 7.
⁴Ibid., 2.
find common ground with contemporary society,\(^1\) the value of the eschatological paradigm, likewise, is found in broad, generalizing horizontal meanings rather than in generating specifically moral notions.\(^2\)

**Role of Community**

As outlined in chapter 2, the role which the Christian community assumes in eschatological ethics has revolved around three fundamental issues: (1) as a source of moral authority; (2) the field of moral operation; and (3) its linkage with the ethical needs/agenda of the larger human society. As we have seen, the role of community in Mott's and Ogletree's application of the eschatological paradigm in these three areas is for the most part clear and deliberate.

For Mott, the Christian community constitutes primarily a subordinate, yet vital, source of moral authority in relation to that of Scripture. The believing community holds an obvious important and vital role in the interpretation and application process in relation to Scripture, but the primacy and ultimate authority of Scripture is an unbending given. Mott also presents the believing community as the primary, purposeful, and distinct new society which gives unique, empirical visibility to the *reign of God*. It is a concrete social context that is set apart from society as a kind of "counter society." It is the paradigmatic field of moral operation for the *reign of God*. Additionally, the believing community is viewed as the primary social structure through which the gospel

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\(^1\)Ibid., 3, 12.

\(^2\)Ibid., 177.
works to change other structures within the larger society. Since the demonstration of Christian community is only one facet of social change, it is inadequate as an expression of social justice toward the world. Faithfulness to the demands for justice necessitates, then, social programs and social struggle.

For Ogletree, the believing community is a vital interpretive, almost complementary, source of authority in relation to Scripture. The dialogical process of interpretation—where Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience interact reciprocally so that each is illumined by the other—is to take place within what Ogletree terms “an ecclesial context.” 

In particular, successful dialogue between ethics and Scripture is viewed as requiring an ecclesial premise. This “ecclesial context” is no less than the “eschatological community.” According to Ogletree, the “way into Christian critique of ethos . . . is through eschatology,” and “a distinctive Christian ethics has its social location in eschatological community.” 

In other words, it is difficult to practice Christian ethics while being immersed in non-Christian communities. And in particular, only eschatologically oriented communities can foster a genuine fusion of horizons with the eschatological perspective of the biblical era. The church, then, is a practical necessity if the methodological question of eschatology is to be properly dealt with in the dialogue on Scripture and ethics. 

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2Ibid., 12, 13.

3Himes, 67.
engaged in an eschatological praxis of gospel living.\(^1\) The eschatological paradigm is viewed as creating the context for eschatological community to both understand and use biblical materials in its (eschatological community) moral reflection. Because the biblical materials participate formatively in constructing ethical theory that is intentionally only provisionally held by the believing community, and because ongoing dialogue may alter it further,\(^2\) Scripture essentially functions in a “mentoring” role in relation to the believing community. Furthermore, Scripture provides horizontal meaning more than concrete content. It is the believing community, then, which extends this horizontal meaning toward contemporary ethical exigencies in determining the possibilities of concrete explication. Accordingly, the unity of the Bible is seen as residing more in the unfolding identity of a people, and a church arising in relation to that people, than in particular themes or beliefs.

Because Ogletree views Christian existence as essentially ecclesial existence (eschatological existence), the believing community furnishes the fundamental social location that defines Christian participation in the life of the world. The primary task is building up and sustaining eschatological communities. Eschatological ethics, then, is expressly directed toward the eschatological community. Accordingly, the Christian community relates to the ethical needs of the larger human society in a way that is

\(^1\)This contention of Ogletree’s shares some features of liberation theologies that stress that the locus of theologizing is the experience of basic Christian communities who self-consciously understand themselves to be critics of and alternatives to political and economic systems deemed oppressive (ibid.).

indirect. It relates to the larger world by extension and by analogy from its own moral reflection and experience.¹

The functional role which Scripture assumes in Mott’s and Ogletree’s eschatologically informed thinking thus finds some interesting parallels in their respective perceptions of the role of community. While they both affirm the important role of community in the dialogical process of ethical method, Mott is unbending in the primacy and the ultimate authority of Scripture over that of the community. Ogletree, however, places the believing community in a role that essentially qualifies the primacy and authority of Scripture in favor of the reflective community and its eschatological praxis of gospel living. Ogletree rightly argues for an “ecclesial context” for interpreting Scripture and doing Christian ethics. He correctly outlines this “ecclesial context” as being essentially one of “eschatological community.” He is right, too, in affirming that the eschatological praxis of gospel living provides points of contact for comprehending what the biblical texts are saying. In other words, only eschatologically oriented communities can really foster a fusion of horizons between the biblical world and our modern world.

¹But where are such communities of faith? It is unclear which community and/or tradition Ogletree, or Mott for that matter, has in mind here (Larry Rasmussen, “Bible and Ethics: A Creative Moment,” review The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, by Thomas W. Ogletree, Christianity and Crisis: A Christian Journal of Opinion 44 (March 19, 1984): 94; Jones, 192). Neither of their ecclesologies has been developed with sufficient clarity or precision for it to be clear what historically located community they are describing as church and how this community does or should relate to the world. While standing in a common Wesleyan/Methodist tradition, Mott and Ogletree both articulate the eschatology/ethics question in non-sectarian ways towards the larger theological ethical dialogue taking place in the Christian community as a whole. While they both write within the context of an evangelical perspective, Ogletree’s position is more that of “ecumenical” Protestant perspective (Ogletree, “Renewing Ecumenical Protestant Social Teaching”; idem, “In Quest of Multi-Cultural Theological Education”).

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However, Ogletree could affirm these important hermeneutical points in a way that better keeps the primacy and ultimate authority of Scripture fully in view, both in theory and function.

The relation between Scripture and community in Mott's and Ogletree's use of eschatology in moral theory suggests that a correspondence exists between the functional authority of the community and the level of concreteness or generality that the biblical materials are perceived as capable of engendering. If Scripture is seen as providing only broad horizontal imagery, then the importance of the reflective community in the interpretive process rises proportionally. In addition, the task of contemporary application would of necessity be predominately in the hands of the community. If, on the other hand, Scripture is viewed as providing substantial, concrete ethical injunctions or specific prevailing moral principles, then the biblical materials are much more likely to remain the controlling element in the interpretive process. Scripture would bring both structure and guidance to the task of application. It appears that Ogletree's presuppositions regarding Scripture largely influence his view of what the eschatological paradigm is actually capable of producing for the believing community. Because of this, the eschatological community competes with the very materials that declare and outline its own eschatological identity.

While Mott and Ogletree share similar convictions about the believing community being the fundamental field of moral operation for eschatological ethics, Ogletree's imagery of "eschatological communities" facilitates a sharper case for defining the meaning and content of eschatological ethics. It also points more precisely to
eschatological ethics as being expressly directed toward the eschatological community. Mott obviously perceives a more direct line from the ethics of the community toward the larger society than Ogletree does. The difference lies in the fact that Ogletree has Christian ethics more in view, while Mott has social change in mind. Ogletree’s principle that the Christian community relates to the social/political ethical needs of the larger human society in a way that is indirect seems to best reflect the general tenor of the New Testament eschatology. He is correct in affirming that the biblical materials basically provide an ethic directed toward the eschatological community.

Nature of Social Involvement

In keeping with his understanding that the affairs of the state lie basically outside substantive Christian concern, and that the believing community reaches only indirectly toward the wider social world, Ogletree, nevertheless, affirms that deliberate public responsibility is to be assumed. It is to be assumed where individual Christians or the believing community have means to exercise it. It is to be assumed, too, where it expresses appropriate forms of participation in the larger society. The church’s public responsibility has to do with the genuine spiritual/moral power and influence which it has within the larger society. According to Ogletree, the appropriate forms of this “public witness” include evangelism, individual social responsibility and influence, moral protest and personal influence in the sociopolitical arena, developing social policy, as well as social struggle. These are not without important qualification, however. Any so-called “public witness” must be expressed within the spirit of the spirituality, faith, and internal
fellowship of the eschatological community.

Mott's broad view of the nature of social involvement would concur. His "paths to justice" include a variety of ways in which Christians can bring about social change. These include evangelism, individual social responsibility and influence, moral protest and personal influence in the sociopolitical arena, as well as social programs and social struggle. Like Ogletree, Mott would qualify any said expression of social involvement. It must be consistent with the vision of justice which he outlines as being expressed in the eschatological reign of God. Ogletree qualifies the nature of social involvement through the imagery of eschatological communal reality. Mott, however, does so via the imagery of biblical justice which reflects God’s reign. This diversity not only reflects their respective interests, but shows again how Mott envisions a more direct line from the moral focus of the biblical materials to the larger society than Ogletree does. Both, however, express balance and "realism" in terms of the extent to which Christian social involvement can reasonably bring change to the larger society while anticipating the not yet of the Kingdom of God.

Mott and Ogletree could both be characterized as articulating models of social responsibility which critically engage the social/moral reality of the larger society. In fact, this aspect of social involvement appears to be an important part of their thinking. But again, we see diversity. For Ogletree, an effective public witness is possible only as the eschatological community comes to grips with the contemporary "civilization ethic." It does so by criticizing it, extending and developing it, and, insofar as possible, articulating its (eschatological community) distinctive vision in ways that connect with

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the central tendencies of "civilization ethics." To do so, the eschatological community
must furnish moral notions that make possible a public discourse about the common
good. This includes creative synthesis of social and cultural ideas with a Christian social
vision. It means the adjustment of Christian teachings to social exigencies. Such
adjustments are not seen by Ogletree as a dilution of Christian moral seriousness. Rather,
it is a fitting moral response to situations of substantial moral conflict. The problem,
though, is that Ogletree does not spell out precisely what he has in mind here. Nor does
he say how this might actually work on a practical level. And he does not indicate, either,
how concrete such critical engagement can really become in complex or unpredictable
situations. He suggests only that we somehow adjust or focus Christian teaching toward
social exigencies.

Ogletree does, however, broadly outline four themes that merit attention with
respect to the force of eschatological promise for the social organization of life.1 He
outlines these four themes in the context of an overarching metaphor which he terms
"hospitality." This "hospitality" is seen as expressing two metaphoric nuances for moral
theory: (1) the moral import of intersubjectivity, and (2) the moral significance of
pluralism at an elemental level of human experience. Together they envision an openness
to both people and ideas which may be different to us. But even here there is no clear
outline of what he has in mind for engaging the "civilization ethic." The point here is that

1 I.e., (1) ethnic and gender inclusiveness, (2) reversal and obliteration of privilege,
power, and wealth distinctions, (3) mercy, mutual forbearance, and forgiving love
transcending national, ethnic, and cultural bases of social order, and (4) recognition
of the plurality and relativity of human cultures and social institutions and the possibility of
community among culturally diverse peoples. See above, 252-256.
Ogletree remains vague. One can rightly ask him, “In practice, how does the Christian social vision keep from getting absorbed into the ‘civilization ethic’?” “If eschatological promise is viewed as articulating openness to people and ideas, and encompassing plurality and relativity, where are the concrete anchor points?” One wishes for that other volume Ogletree himself says should come to bring clearer application to his fundamentals.

Mott is a theorist too, but he is decidedly more precise in what he has in mind with respect to moral protest and engaging the larger social world. Not only does he work within the parameters of a very developed concept of “biblical justice,” he has gone on to more fully elaborate the implications of these parameters of “biblical justice” toward contemporary social/political thought. While not a how-to manual, and still quite conceptual, Mott’s project presents a clearer image of the nature of social involvement.

He is more precise, too, in terms of what the issues should be in the context of such social

1Courtney rightly asks, “Is there anything that is not negotiable? And Is there something unique about Christian negotiating? Finally, what kind of time-bomb is set on the last page when the author envisages interfaith negotiations which presuppose the relativity of constitutive Christian themes?” (Courtney, 88).

2Hays notes that “in many respects, Mott’s argument is a restatement of Reinhold Niebuhr’s social ethic, bolstered by much more detailed biblical exegesis and modified by a slightly more optimistic assessment of human capacity to achieve justice through social institutions” (Hays, 26). In contrast, Ogletree’s arguments are a restatement of Ernst Troeltsch’s social theory—the distinctions and interconnections between social forces and civilizational values in relation to Christian ethos. Ogletree restates Troeltsch’s social theory in the context of the eschatological dialectic which he asserts can lead equally as well to renewed interest in the church as the ecclesial context of Christian ethics, rather than away from it as Troeltch ultimately moved in favor of a larger civilization ethic (see Ogletree, “The Ecclesial Context of Christian Ethics,” 11, 12; idem, “Christian Social Ethics as a Theological Discipline,” 226-233; idem, “Renewing Ecumenical Protestant Social Teaching,” 293-296).
moral protest. His writings reflect a corresponding realism to the issues he outlines with respect to such practical concerns like power, social status, economics, etc. By interpreting the reign of God largely through the notion of “biblical justice,” Mott works within an existing outline of thought and imagery which Scripture provides with respect to his subject matter. His specificity in critical engagement is naturally facilitated by the extent and specificity of the given biblical material. As a result, he also has a clearer picture of the non-negotiables in any said adjustments of Christian teaching to contemporary social exigencies. Ogletree would argue that, in principle, there are concrete non-negotiables. His methodology, however, and the categories he articulates in terms of public witness are less defining, potentially risky, and too fluid where complex, real life situations demand concrete, relevant application.

In this context, though, Ogletree does provide some very useful discussion relative to the way one would actually go about determining one’s social responsibility. He enunciates two basic principles. First, social responsibility is assumed where we have the means to exercise it. Second, it is assumed where it expresses appropriate forms of participation in the larger society. Social involvement, then, is selective and qualified. It is to be expressed where we actually have influence, opportunity, or power. Despite both its generality and implicit relativity, his discussion about the “civilization ethic” does accurately outline some of the issues involved in critically engaging the moral thinking of the larger society. He is right in asserting that we must find ways of articulating our

1Hays will note a possible hermeneutical weakness with the question, “Is the ‘Reign of God’ a symbol that we can appropriate as easily and directly as Mott supposes?” (Hays, 26).
distinctive witness in a manner that is suited to a public discourse. We must find common language and engage the world, initially at least, on the level of its own agenda. For Ogletree, the eschatological community is suited for just such a task.

On this matter, Mott's prevailing focus on "biblical justice" could be a limiting factor in effecting broad-based critical engagement with the larger society. The rich complexity of the ethics of biblical materials can easily become homogenized where a single motif structures one's ethic. Certainly our contemporary society's dialogue on social exigencies is broader than the one prevailing theme or interest of social justice.¹

Authority/Relevance

Mott's and Ogletree's use of eschatology in relation to our stated principles of verification relate ultimately to the questions of "authority" and "relevance" in Christian ethics. They have both explicitly addressed these two concerns in their projects and have contributed significantly towards their resolution, though in different ways and varying degree.

Broadly speaking, they can both be said to elevate the role that Scripture must play in eschatological ethics. This is, perhaps, their major contribution to the eschatology/ethics dialogue. Their respective projects have sharpened the issues around which the question of the authority of Scripture revolves. They have shown how eschatology can be useful in either solving problems of biblical authority or facilitating/obstructing the authority of Scripture in developing moral theory.

But while they both consciously seek to elevate the role of Scripture in Christian ethics via eschatology, Mott comes the closest to demonstrating how the eschatological paradigm actually does so. Mott’s application of the eschatological paradigm, for the most part, uses Scripture in a way in which the biblical materials maintain an authoritative, assertive, and defining role in the process of application. This happens because his presuppositions regarding the nature and authority of Scripture predispose him in that direction. The eschatological paradigm, then, reciprocates, so to speak, by eliciting methodology in keeping with those presuppositions. Thus, Scripture influences the perceptions, nuancing, and application of eschatology. Correspondingly, eschatology influences the functional role Scripture actually plays in that very application toward moral theory.

Ogletree, we have seen, leans largely on moral philosophy and phenomenology for his orientation to both eschatology and Scripture. While much of his view of eschatology finds correspondence with the biblical materials, it is much less precise with respect to the question of authority. Placing authority in the interpretive “ecclesial context” of eschatological praxis makes it too fluid for responsible Christian moral theory.

The question of “relevance” points us primarily to the nature of social involvement, but it includes the role of Scripture and community as well. Ultimately, Scripture must be seen as relevant to the contemporary situation. Likewise, the believing community need a sense of their part in social involvement. Mott and Ogletree have used the eschatological paradigm differently to effect similar views of social involvement.
They have used it differently, too, to facilitate the relevance of the biblical materials to contemporary moral exigencies and to help the church know its part in social involvement. But as noted above, Mott succeeds in being more precise in his moral theory. Because of this, he becomes more immediately relevant. Because he is working within parameters defined more closely by the biblical materials themselves, Mott is able to present a clearer picture of where he is going. He is closer to finishing, so to speak, what he has started. He does not have as large a leap to take from his understanding of eschatology to contemporary praxis. He is able to demonstrate both theoretically and practically (through his discussion of area rules) how the eschatological paradigm really looks in contemporary moral theory and social involvement.¹

Ogletree’s orientation in moral philosophy and phenomenology puts his beginning point further away from praxis and demands daunting precision in order to effect even theoretical relevance. He himself acknowledges that further steps are needed to move him from fundamentals to symbolic ethics to practical ethics, and then on to applied ethics. His project, then, is only relatively relevant.² A firm bridge from the biblical

¹"His style is lucid and his manner of relating theory to practice is both pertinent and convincing" (Ivy George, review of Biblical Ethics and Social Change, by Stephen Charles Mott, Christian Scholar’s Review 15, no. 1 (1985): 93.

²Ogletree does not write for the general reader. His project is particularly complex and concise with the level of reflection/study abstract and remote for those looking for concrete or practical solutions to moral or social problems (Paul D. Simmons, review of Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding, by Thomas W. Ogletree, Review and Expositor 85, no. 3 [Summer 1988]: 577; Giannini, 74).
materials to social involvement is not erected, \(^1\) except perhaps for the eschatological community itself. On this point, we find one of Ogletree’s strengths. His concept of the eschatological community—the ecclesial context for doing ethics and reaching toward the larger world—yields the promise of realizing that bridge. This assumes, of course, that the believing community is attentive to the biblical materials. Ogletree’s point here would be much stronger, however, if Scripture were given the same kind of primacy and authority found in Mott. Nevertheless, the things Ogletree expresses on this matter are relevant for the believing community in knowing, generally at least, how they should live together and then reach toward the larger world. There is no doubt that both Mott’s and Ogletree’s discussion about the need for and ways of effecting critical engagement with the moral thinking of the larger society demonstrates how the eschatological paradigm is relevant to the question of the nature of social involvement and how it facilitates such dialogue.

This comparison and evaluation of Mott’s and Ogletree’s use of eschatology in relation to our principles of verification gives us a fair sense for how effectively the eschatological paradigm has come to answer the long-standing crisis of “authority” and “relevance” in Christian ethics during this century. In some respects, their use of the eschatological paradigm reveals that the issue of “authority” and “relevance” still very much exists. The fact that Mott and Ogletree position the role of the believing community

\(^{1}\) Scroggs, review of The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics, 45; Jones, 192. Attwood suggests that some crucial steps in Ogletree’s arguments about eschatology have not been adequately demonstrated and that he “has failed to make certain links hold” (Attwood, 156).
community differently with reference to that of Scripture, and that both have differing approaches in nuancing and defining the nature of social involvement, suggests as much. Additionally, there is the reality that they both deal quite largely on theoretical levels. In other respects, though, their use of the eschatological paradigm exhibits refinements that make the eschatological paradigm more useful toward answering the concerns of "authority" and "relevance" in Christian ethics.

**Level of Reflection/Paradigm Function**

An integral part of this study's analysis and evaluation has been Mott's and Ogletree's application of the paradigm's ethical implications with respect to the level of moral reflection and its potential for concrete social content. This study proposes a correspondence between the appropriate level on which paradigms operate and the ingredients of ethics, i.e., macro/bases, meso/underlying principles, and micro/area rules. The question of "theoretical level," which this correspondence facilitates, enables one to clarify how concretely the eschatological paradigm might legitimately speak to modern ethical concerns. Closely related to the question of "theoretical level" is the meaning and function of paradigm. This study has outlined how paradigms serve either to facilitate an abstract principle which needs to be translated and applied towards new situations, or to imprint an inner gripping moral image which shapes people ethically. The issues here deal with questions of specificity and consistency with respect to the eschatological paradigm's application. They bring into practical focus where normative content and guidance lay in the application process. They reveal, too, the carefulness with which the
Level of Moral Reflection

This study's analysis has concluded that, for Mott, the eschatological paradigm substantially facilitates moral reflection across the full spectrum of paradigm operation. We observe Mott drawing moral imagery from each of the macro, meso, and micro levels. In addition, his use of the eschatological paradigm reflects application in the corresponding ingredients in the structure of ethics, i.e., philosophical/theological bases, underlying principles, and area rules.

For Ogletree, the eschatological paradigm primarily facilitates the macro and meso levels of paradigm operation. The micro level is somewhat in view on the periphery in terms of proposed subsequent systematic treatment of Christian ethics. In other words, the micro level is potentially there for Ogletree, although his current projects do not reflect it as such. Correspondingly, his use of the eschatological paradigm reflects application in the bases and underlying principles ingredients in the structure of ethics. Unlike Mott, Ogletree's style and focus in both theology and ethics have been predominately toward the theoretical. They primarily deal with broad sweeping issues, principles, fundamentals, and methodology, rather than focusing on specific themes or concrete areas of moral concern. The reality, then, is that specificity and concrete application in his writings are usually remote and peripheral. This is true with regard to his application of the eschatological paradigm to moral theory.

The questions of "theoretical level," specificity, and consistency come in the
context of the important question of how to credibly translate ethical reflection from one level to another. Obviously, this has to do with the comprehensiveness of a given paradigm and the nature of the imagery it provides. Not all paradigms are capable of operating across the full spectrum of the macro, meso, and micro. That the eschatological paradigm does so, raises two important questions, “Why?” and “How?” Part of the answer, as we have seen, lies in the fact that the eschatological paradigm’s component models (already/not yet, reign of God, and horizon of the future) as well as its primary model (kingdom of God) facilitate such movement. Because these components offer all three levels, they facilitate a comprehensive biblical paradigm that encompasses the macro/bases, meso/underlying principles, and micro/area rules.

In addition, there is the eschatological paradigm’s important relation to the biblical materials themselves, and, relatedly, one’s presuppositions with regard to the nature of Scripture. The reason “why” and “how” the eschatological paradigm operates across the spectrum of paradigm operation is found in the fact that the biblical materials relate the moral imagery of eschatology across the spectrum of what this study has outlined as paradigm operation and the corresponding ingredients in the structure of ethics. One can credibly translate ethical reflection from one level to another because the biblical materials themselves provide both the conceptual structure and the example to do so. Mott’s use of the eschatological paradigm exhibits this very point.

Mott is concerned with understanding the place of concrete decision making within different aspects of ethical thought. He is interested in showing how principles and concrete injunctions relate in Scriptural thought. In other words, he is concerned
with the question of how to credibly translate ethical reflection from one level to another. In this context, Mott interprets organically the diverse, but complementary, ways in which Scripture is authoritative for ethics. According to him, the concrete biblical injunctions must be interpreted with attention to God's mighty acts, theological affirmations, and prevailing ethical principles. Likewise, the specific teachings and propositions are needed to give concrete interpretation of the broad and general truths and actions. Functionally, this provides the way for responsibly opening up the ethical meaning of Scripture across different levels of moral reflection and application. We see Mott demonstrating this approach with his application of the eschatological paradigm in moral theory.\footnote{Middlemann worries, however, that Mott's search for paradigms is more important than textual accuracy and that his generalizations at times are so broad that important passages have to be abandoned in order to keep ideology alive. He rightly muses, "If the context of the present human situation becomes the text for our action, the Bible can only furnish us with paradigms, symbols, parallels or activism. I suggest we need more than that—namely, God's deliberate information. His text, not the human context, must inform us. Otherwise, anyone from whatsoever ideological background, will be free to find his or her paradigms about any current concern in various historical realities of the Bible" (Middlemann, 37). While Mott may be myopic at times with respect to his biblical justice leitmotif, he nevertheless demonstrates, for the most part, the close relation between paradigm and text that I am outlining here.} In fact, we see his use of the eschatological paradigm actually facilitating this hermeneutical principle, not just applying it. The eschatological paradigm is an integral part of his consistently translating ethical reflection from one level to another.

Ogletree's use of the eschatological paradigm exhibits similar movement from one level of ethical reflection to another. He does so somewhat differently, however, and not as precisely or coherently as Mott does. Mott translates ethical reflection from one
level to another because he sees Scripture as providing the structure and the example of
doing so. He is simply trying to organically interpret the biblical materials. Ogletree
makes this cross-level movement because moral philosophy calls for such (fundamental
ethics, symbolic ethics, and practical ethics), and because one can find corresponding
materials in Scripture to make the bridge. This may be a subtle difference that reflects
differing interests more than substantive differences, but the fact remains that
presuppositions about Scripture lie behind their respective approaches. Ogletree’s view
of the nature of Scripture places the movement between levels of moral reflection within
the organic structure of his philosophical methodology, while Mott’s view places this
movement within the context of the biblical materials and how they organically cohere
and interrelate. Because of this subtle difference, Ogletree’s movement, as far as the
biblical materials are concerned, will always appear arbitrary and open to question.¹ This
will be so even though the actual movement itself may correspond to what one actually
finds in Scripture. In the end, it comes back to the question, “Is it the biblical materials or
moral philosophy that determines why we are doing what we are doing with the
eschatological paradigm?”

Having said all this, we need to affirm the fact that Ogletree’s use of the
eschatological paradigm does in fact facilitate the movement of ethical reflection from
one level to another. Like Mott, the eschatological paradigm is an integral part of his

¹Attwood suggests that “the actual moves which Ogletree makes to apply and use
the Bible are not the decisive test of the book’s (The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics)
value” (Attwood, 156).
translating ethical reflection from one level to another. However, he is not as precise or consistent as Mott. The point here is that, if the conceptual structure and example for movement between levels of moral reflection are rooted in the biblical materials, then the question of consistency is gauged by one's use of the biblical materials themselves. If it is found somewhere beyond the biblical materials themselves, then consistency is gauged by that other point of reference. I would add that Mott's project suggests that the bridge between the differing levels of moral reflection is the reality of their each yielding normative content of Scripture.

Paradigm Role/Function

I now turn to the question of paradigm role and function. Paradigm, as we have seen, is an integral part of both Mott's and Ogletree's moral theory. This study began with the assumption that they embraced a paradigmatic approach to moral theory. This assumption implied that the eschatological paradigm (as with any paradigm that identifies, structures, and determines methodology) has become for Mott and Ogletree their ethical method. The ensuing analysis of their projects has affirmed the validity of this assumption.

For Mott, paradigm relates to an interpretive framework for concrete injunctions, finding values, overarching principles, and cross-cultural applicability. His discussion of paradigm comes primarily in those contexts where he is articulating how principles and concrete injunctions relate in Scriptural thought. Paradigm functions similarly with Ogletree. It is an interpretive framework for elucidating the meaning of Scripture for
Christian ethics, value formation, or issues of theology and methodology. They differ only in the fact that the role and function of paradigm for Mott are primarily that of facilitating specific moral principles which then need to be translated and applied towards new situations. For Ogletree, it is primarily toward broad moral orientation. However, paradigm facilitates broad moral orientation for Mott, too. This focus toward broad moral orientation or specific moral principles can be seen in their respective overall use of the eschatological paradigm in moral theory. The presence of both qualities of paradigm role and function in Mott's use of paradigm undoubtedly facilitates his ability to nuance the eschatological paradigm through all levels of paradigm operation and ethical structure.

This leads one to the question of the specificity and concreteness of interpretation and application. Because Mott discusses the role and function of paradigm primarily in the context of eliciting authoritative meaning from concrete biblical injunctions, he provides significant insight as to the how and why the eschatological paradigm can move from broad horizontal moral orientation to specific moral principles and even area rules for everyday life. For Mott, the importance of a paradigm is not the paradigm itself, but the authoritative nature of Scripture and the broad way in which it can be approached and interpreted. The normative content—whether in concrete injunctions, prevailing ethical principles, mighty acts of God, theological affirmations, or enduring values—is not in any paradigmatic reality itself, but in the text. While the text creates the paradigm, the paradigm opens back toward the text. It can never move away from the text and operate on its own.
These observations are significant for Mott's application of the eschatological paradigm in that the normative content of the eschatological paradigm likewise would lay primarily in the biblical text. We see this operating in his reign of God leitmotif. As a basic theological affirmation of Scripture, the reign of God is seen in the hermeneutical context of both opening the ethical meaning of Scripture and providing parameters for interpreting specific concrete injunctions of Scripture. The bridge between the two is the reality of their both yielding normative content of Scripture. In addition, the reign of God receives concrete content through its organic relation to the concrete biblical injunction. The normative content for the eschatological paradigm thus lies primarily in the biblical text. In addition, because the reign of God is an expression of God's mighty act to restore creation, His paradigmatic actions facilitate moral reflection on the meso level of underlying principles and prevailing ethical values.

Finally, one would expect that a paradigm created or composed of components will find its moral specificity or abstraction through or from the moral clarity of those components. By extension, the moral specificity or abstraction of a given component part is likewise determined by the moral clarity of the biblical witness with which it is defined. If the eschatological paradigm is seen as built on only broad principles or generalized abstractions from Scripture, it will not be able to either produce moral specificity or bring sustained focus toward Scripture in the context of its application in moral theory. On the other hand, if the eschatological paradigm is seen as reflecting comprehensive Scriptural/moral focus through the structuring of its components, it will tend toward greater specificity/content in the moral images it evokes. In addition, it will
elicit sustained focus toward Scripture in the context of its application in moral theory.

Obviously, the meaning and function of paradigm in the mind of the theologian or ethicist will significantly influence his perceptions of the potential application of the eschatological paradigm. We have seen this divergence in Mott's and Ogletree's use of the eschatological paradigm in moral theory. And we can understand better why Mott's project tends to be more specific and biblical oriented than Ogletree's.

Strengths and Contributions

This study has looked developmentally up through the 1970s for the basic crystallized eschatological paradigm that has emerged in Christian theology during this century. It has then looked to the 1980s and 1990s for clearer methodological application of the paradigm for moral theory by Christian ethicists. In this process, it has been noted that, because of numerous and complex interrelated issues and problems, no final clarification of the relationship between eschatology and Christian ethics could really be given through the 1970s. Clearer principles were needed with respect to the eschatological paradigm's application in moral theory. This study has suggested that Mott and Ogletree have consciously extended this discussion, which they have considered incomplete and unfinished with respect to the use of eschatology in Christian moral theory. It is appropriate, then, for us to consider their strengths and contributions in light of the comparison and evaluations we have just concluded. It is appropriate, too, for us to ask whether or not their projects suggest that the eschatological paradigm has become a more stable framework for doing Christian ethics.
Viewed together, Mott and Ogletree have both brought significant contributions to the eschatology/ethics dialogue and the question of applying the eschatological paradigm to Christian moral theory. Their major contribution lies in elevating the role that Scripture must play in eschatological ethics. Their respective projects have sharpened the issues around which the authority of Scripture revolves. They have shown how eschatology can be useful in either solving problems of biblical authority or facilitating/obstructing the authority of Scripture in developing eschatological moral theory. Similarly, their projects have proven useful in clarifying more precisely the role of community and the nature of social involvement in Christian moral theory. Together they have extended the eschatological paradigm toward more useful and defining issues in ethics, i.e., justice, moral protest, ecclesial context, etc.. Finally, they provide significant contemporary examples of what happens if you take the eschatological paradigm and apply it this way or apply it that way. Their respective interests and methodologies present graphic windows though which one can observe how presuppositions and agendas determine the way the eschatological paradigm is approached and practically applied.

Mott’s contributions in applying the eschatological paradigm emerge in the way he successfully works to bring the relevancy and clarity of Scripture towards ethics. One does not read Mott long without sensing a positive love for Scripture and a profound sense of its authority and primacy. This contrasts sharply with Ogletree’s apparent detachment (although not intentional) from Scripture. In particular, Mott’s contribution, here, lays in the way he demonstrates how the normative content of the eschatological
paradigm lies in the biblical texts themselves, and how the bridge between the differing levels of moral reflection (paradigm operation and ingredients in ethical structure) is the reality of their each yielding normative content of Scripture. He also demonstrates why and how one can credibly and consistently translate ethical reflection from one level to another. It is possible because the biblical materials themselves provide both the conceptual structure and the example to do so. Additionally, Mott gives examples of how the eschatological paradigm, if seen as reflecting a comprehensive Scriptural/moral focus through the structuring of its components, will tend toward greater specificity/content in

1This is not suggesting that Mott necessarily does it right every time or that his conclusions or directions in the nature of his social involvement are necessarily always valid. Atkinson rightly notes that Mott exhibits “a tendency to over generalization without rigorous analysis. In places there is too rapid a move from the OT to the NT. And there are some places that are just weak” (David Atkinson, “Biblical Social Ethics,” Expository Times 94, no. 7 [April 1983]: 214). Verhey will agree, noting that “appeals to Scripture are somewhat less convincing” where questions of strategy for implementation are in view than where questions of the basis for social involvement are being developed (Verhey, 26). Topel will add that, while Mott is well read across the spectrum of exegetical literature, and judicious in its use, “still, an exegete will notice many lacunae or even errors” (L. John Topel, review of Biblical Ethics and Social Change, by Stephen Charles Mott, The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 46 [January 1984]: 173). And Sundberg writes that “his tendency is to make of the Bible an answer book for contemporary questions while ignoring the original contexts faced in biblical epochs” (Walter Sundberg, review of A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, by Stephen Charles Mott, Word & World 14, no. 1 [Winter 1994]: 103). And one can be rightly troubled by the particular direction Mott takes in his A Christian Perspective on Political Thought—non-Communist socialism is that form of common life that most closely approximates the Christian vision. It has communal, democratic elements, very much like the kibbutz, about which he has written with considerable conviction. According to Mott, “the hidden elements of Christianity in Marxism make many of its concepts appropriate for an overtly Christian social philosophy” (Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 197). See Mott’s extended positive assessment of Marxist socialism and socialism in general: Mott, A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 183-218; Stackhouse, review of A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 149; and Attwood, review of A Christian Perspective on Political Thought, 253.
the moral images it evokes. It will accordingly elicit sustained focus toward Scripture in
the context of its application in moral theory. Because of these hermeneutical insights,
Mott is able to elicit a higher degree of concreteness and specificity in his moral theory.
And he can do so with a corresponding degree of credibility and consistency. As a result,
Mott becomes more immediately relevant.

Because he is working within parameters defined more closely by the biblical
materials, Mott is able to present a clearer picture of where he is going. Furthermore, he
can demonstrate both theoretically and practically how the eschatological paradigm really
looks in contemporary moral theory and social involvement. In other words, Mott’s
methodological use of the eschatological paradigm in moral theory shows strong potential
to work. The only cloud in all this is the risk Mott takes in harmonizing and
homogenizing the rich complexity of the ethics of biblical materials under the rubric of
“biblical justice,” and how his hermeneutic is governed by his purpose in finding
mandates for social change in the texts.1 Any correction on Mott’s part here, though,
would only strengthen the contributions I have just described.

Ogletree’s contributions in applying the eschatological paradigm emerge in his
monumental attempt to bridge, via moral philosophy and phenomenology, the moral
nuances of the biblical materials and contemporary Christian ethics. It is striking to find
such a readiness to see analogies with classical moral theories and the Bible. It is very
rare to find any sustained attempt to relate biblical and philosophical ethics at all.2 While

1Goldsmith, 520; Verhey, 26; Middleman, 39.
2Barton, 245, 246.
this study has been critical of both his process and the degree of his success in all this, nevertheless, his very attempt to do so serves to sharpen, and actually demonstrate, the issues around which the application of the eschatological paradigm have revolved in this century. On the one hand, Ogletree shows how eschatology can provide a conceptual ingredient for merging what appears to be contrasting and diverse views of reality and ways of approaching moral thinking. On the other hand, he shows how eschatology can bring some important critical distance needed for engaging what he terms as the contemporary "civilization ethic." In fact, one could call his *The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics* an example of what he means by critically engaging the reigning "civilization ethic." Through moral philosophy and phenomenology, he articulates contemporary notions of reality, and then structures biblical notions within the same kind of conceptual language, though with a different view of reality.

Ogletree is right in asserting that moral philosophy revolves largely around consequentialist/value, deontological/rule, and perfectionist/virtue conceptual frameworks, and that issues of intentionality, intersubjectivity, and self-formation are key concepts as well. His attempts to show the relevancy of the biblical materials through these categories are useful, though not necessarily accurate in terms of exegesis or theology.\(^1\) One only wonders how much different some of his conclusions might be if he tried to find analogies with classical moral theories and the Bible against a markedly different backdrop of presuppositions regarding the nature and authority of Scripture.

Would he still argue that eschatology presents deontological themes without the category of law? Or for the predominance of freedom, open future, and relativity in moral thinking? Because philosophy, rather than Scripture, is his framework for developing theological ethics, Ogletree's methodology presents a problem of distance and detachment from the message of the biblical materials. It expresses a degree of speculation and irresponsibility by way of relative relevance and abstraction. It is a risk that anyone dealing in philosophical categories opens oneself to.

Ogletree's main contributions, however, are found (1) in the forceful way he articulates the eschatological paradigm as presenting the essential dialectical nature of Christian moral theory and method, and (2) in the strong way he essentially argues that there is no straight line between the ethics of the eschatological community and the social/moral agenda of the larger society. His imagery of "eschatological communities" facilitates a sharp case for defining the meaning and content of eschatological ethics. It also points to eschatological ethics as being expressly directed toward the eschatological community.¹ His notion of an "ecclesial context" for approaching the moral witness of Scripture presents forceful argumentation for (1) the practical role the believing community actually plays in interpreting Scripture, (2) how the eschatological praxis of gospel living provides experiential points of contact for comprehending what the biblical materials are saying, and (3) that only eschatologically oriented communities can really foster a fusion of horizons between the biblical world and our own modern world. These

¹Some would argue, however, that Ogletree does not adequately demonstrate why and in precisely what sense a contemporary Christian ethic must be eschatological (Attwood, 156).
three points would be undoubtedly stronger if presented within the context of a higher view of the nature and authority of Scripture.

**Why Diverse Applications of Eschatological Paradigm**

The foregoing process of (1) outlining this century's re-interpretation of eschatology as paradigm for Christian ethics, (2) describing and analyzing Mott's and Ogletree's use of this eschatological paradigm in their moral theory, and (3) this chapter's comparison and evaluation of their respective application of the paradigm enable us now to better ascertain how and why the eschatological paradigm creates such diverse and often contradictory imagery for moral reflection. They also enable us to appraise the problems and issues so as to propose the implications that exist for using the eschatological paradigm more credibly and consistently in contemporary Christian moral theory.

This study's outline of the principal characteristics of twentieth-century re-interpreted eschatology has provided the profile of a comprehensive paradigm for Christian moral theory. The contours of this comprehensive paradigm include three conceptually interwoven and complementary component models (*already/not yet, reign of God, and horizon of the future*). Together they embrace the range of possible theological and moral conceptions of the Kingdom of God. It has been shown that each of the paradigm's components generates forceful and specific ethical nuances which are rich for

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1 As indicated in the introduction, the "eschatological paradigm" is understood as being the overall integrating worldview generated by the New Testament Kingdom of God.
application toward moral theory. It has been shown, too, that a challenge remains in
determining just how these moral nuances are actually elicited and/or have themselves
been cast with respect to moral theory. This has become evident when viewed against
this study's designated principles of verification and the varied ways we have seen that
ethicists have perceived them in relation to the divergent moral nuances projected through
the eschatological paradigm. The possible combinations of implications for moral theory
are subtle, numerous, and complex. It was further noted that adequately applying
eschatology as paradigm toward moral theory demands an understanding of the subtle
dynamics of paradigm in relation to models, principles and laws, levels of operation, and
the ingredients of ethical structure. In short, we have a very complex situation with subtle
nuances that demands thoughtful balance and a clear understanding of one's own
presuppositions and theological/moral agenda.

The fact of the matter is that the eschatological paradigm can be taken in any
number of possible directions. If you nuance the horizon of the future with philosophical
presuppositions and an existential view of the nature of Scripture, you will likely express
affinities with theologies of the future. If you nuance the reign of God where the
Christian community is viewed as only the initial field of moral operation, you will likely
envision some form of Christianized society. And so on! The point here is that one
needs to be aware of the complex and often subtle interplay that exists between these
various ingredients, as well as one's own presuppositions and agendas, if the

1See above discussion on the "Implications for Moral Theory," 78-121; Snyder,
Models of the Kingdom.
eschatological paradigm is to operate effectively and truly reflect the biblical materials.

Mott and Ogletree have served to more clearly define the nature of the complex and often subtle interplay that exists between the various ingredients involved in the question of the use of eschatology as paradigm in Christian ethics and the ever-present presuppositions or agendas we might have as we seek to apply the eschatological paradigm. Their very diversity suggests that the question of the use of eschatology in Christian moral theory remains an open one, even as the twentieth century draws to its close. They have, however, served to highlight the important role that Scripture ultimately plays in the whole equation. They graphically illustrate how the role of Scripture continues to be the most critical issue in the eschatology/ethics discussion. After all, the role of Scripture was at the very core of their own question as to the use of eschatology in Christian moral theory. As we have observed, Mott’s and Ogletree’s contrasting orientation to this important question of the nature and authority of Scripture has resulted in marked contrasts with respect to consistency, specificity, and relevancy of eschatological paradigm application. Their projects suggest that the question of the role of Scripture alone gives promise of eventually bringing some degree of stability to the use of the eschatological paradigm in Christian moral theory.

**Perspectives for Using Eschatology as Paradigm**

In view of these observations, I would propose the following when applying the eschatological paradigm toward moral theory.

1. One must come to the eschatological paradigm with a view of the nature and
authority of Scripture that allows for its primacy and authority to be functionally
operative as normative content throughout the various ways the biblical materials present
themselves (concrete injunctions, prevailing principles, mighty acts of God, theological
affirmations, stories, etc.).

2. One needs to identify and nuance the eschatological paradigm exclusively
within the purview of the conceptual imagery that Scripture provides with respect to it.

3. The three component models of the eschatological paradigm (already/not yet,
reign of God, and horizon of the future) need to be kept within their proper biblically
defined dynamic interplay in order for their combined imagery to bring the balancing
control that is needed for credible, consistent biblical application toward moral theory.

4. One needs to be candid about one's own presuppositions and theological/moral
agenda (especially with regard to the role of Scripture, community, and the nature of
social involvement) and how their biases might materially influence their effective use of
the eschatological paradigm.

5. There needs to be sensitivity to the differing levels of moral reflection that
paradigms elicit, and clearly defined principles for consistent, credible, and biblically
congruous movement from one level to the other.

6. It needs to work! The end product must be successful in bringing Scripture
functionally, concretely, and practically toward Christian ethics, and, in the end, keep
eschatology what it is expected to be—an integrating worldview that brings gripping
spiritual/moral formation, and provides sufficient concrete guidance to adequately meet
the demands of particular contemporary moral exigencies.
Relation to Other Paradigms

The twentieth century has seen eschatology emerge as a “new paradigm” in contemporary Christian moral thought. And, not surprisingly, it has been indicating new directions for Christian ethics. But how does it relate to other paradigms being used in Christian moral theory? Is it complementary? Is it more comprehensive? Can it become, as some would suggest, the sole integrating paradigm through which all other paradigms find their meaning and ultimate contribution to Christian moral theory? Or does it make other paradigms obsolete? Now that I have identified the principal characteristics of the eschatological paradigm and have evaluated its effectiveness and usefulness for Christian moral theory, these kinds of questions seem appropriate and press us for answers. Here lie, no doubt, some considerations for further research into the viability of the eschatological paradigm for Christian moral theory. A further study could evaluate the eschatological paradigm against other paradigms being used in contemporary Christian ethics. One could compare their respective effectiveness and usefulness in developing Christian moral theory. One could also indicate and compare what possible aspects of moral theory may be articulated by each paradigm. Because not all paradigms may operate comprehensively across the full spectrum of paradigm operation, one could assess the possibility of prioritizing, complementing, and/or integrating paradigms. Likewise, because not all paradigms may correspond fully or directly with the different levels of moral reflection which the biblical materials communicate, one could assess which paradigms open up the biblical materials more completely. Certainly, such comparison and evaluation of the eschatological paradigm against other paradigms assume that these
other paradigms have, likewise, been clearly identified and evaluated.

For purposes of illustration, let us broadly lay the eschatological paradigm against just two other twentieth-century paradigms in Christian moral theory, i.e., "divine command" and "love." The divine command paradigm would posit that we live worthwhile lives by following the divine will. What pleases God, what God commands—that is the definition of right. What displeases God, what He forbids—that is the definition of wrong. What God wills and what is right coincide. These commands may be in keeping with the moral laws discovered by reason or they may appear unreasonable and arbitrary. Whatever the case might be, Christian faith and moral responsibility require trusting obedience.

The divine command paradigm highlights several important issues for Christian ethics, i.e., the authority of God, the nature and authority of Scripture, the frame of reference in which we reflect morally, where the source of moral norms is located, the dynamic and importance of faith obedience, the nature and work of God, as well as motivation for moral action. It seems to me that this paradigm—while affirming the authority of Scripture, concrete commands, and an overarching frame of reference for moral reflection across the full spectrum of paradigm operation, etc.—operates primarily on a vertical level and does not adequately address horizontal questions of time and history as clearly as the eschatological paradigm does. Nor does it articulate clearly a

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vision of the future or the responsibility of the moral agent in complex moral dilemmas in a fallen world. In the context of a trusting relationship with God and a vision of His good action, it could, however, provide a motivating dynamic that grips the inner self with moral vision and purpose. It could thus answer issues of intentionality and motive, something which the eschatological paradigm does not address directly. The notion of divine command fits logically, it would appear, under the eschatological paradigm’s reign of God component model.

Love in Christian ethics remains a pervasive subject in recent writing. As a paradigm for ethics it indicates both internal and external elements of Christian morality. It indicates a particular kind of feeling. It is also a verb which emphasizes how we should behave. The internal aspect focuses on emotion, disposition, and motive. The external aspect focuses on volition, choices, action, and a way of life. The two must be present for biblical love to be complete. In Scripture, love is defined by description and by demonstration. The objects of love include God, others, one’s self, and things. The importance of love is highlighted in the character of God, God’s image in man, and as the source and summary of all virtue. It is God’s revelation of what He wills us to be and do.

It would seem to me that, as a paradigm, love could function across the full spectrum of paradigm operation and the ingredients in the structure of ethics. In fact,


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Scripture provides a broad spectrum of intersection on this subject with each of these levels. But love is not so much a worldview as it is a way of living within a worldview where love is integral to the total reality. While love expresses a reciprocal vertical dimension of the divine/human relationship, it deals primarily with the horizontal level of personal and social relationships. And like divine command, it does not deal so directly with horizontal flow in terms of time and history as the eschatological paradigm does. Like divine command, it seems to fit logically under the reign of God component of the eschatological paradigm, although the "conflicts of love" present in this present age would serve to elucidate the moral dilemmas implied by the already not yet. Love also provides a vision of the future in keeping with the moral direction of the eschatological paradigm.

These are the kind of comparisons that could be made between the eschatological paradigm and the other paradigms current in contemporary Christian moral theory. My observations here are only cursory, and yet the possibilities are significant for more in-depth study. Just these two brief comparisons highlight the significant role the eschatological paradigm plays in overall moral theory. But they enumerate, as well, the reality that moral theory is complex and that a lot of issues need consideration and balance. A balanced comprehensive view of biblically informed Christian moral life reflects, no doubt, the moral imagery from several such paradigms. This is so, even if one, like eschatology, appears to be able to integrate and cohere the imagery of many others.

Besides comparing the eschatological paradigm against other moral paradigms,
further useful studies could include (1) how the moral implications of the eschatological paradigm fits with, obstructs, or is adjusted by unique sectarian eschatologies, and (2) how the eschatological paradigm is nuanced by or nuances the moral implications of biblical apocalyptic literature.¹

Conclusion

This study has been about ethical method. Its purpose has been to explore and evaluate the implications of the methodological application of eschatology as paradigm for developing contemporary moral theory. It has focused on the interplay of eschatology as a methodological tool and the ethical system that results from it. More specifically, it has sought to demonstrate that “this is what happens if you take the eschatological paradigm and apply it this way or that way.” These concerns were set in the context of the ongoing problem of significant and often contradictory divergence among Christian ethicists in the way the application of the eschatological paradigm influences moral theory and nuances ethical method. These considerable divergences imply that the issue of its methodological application still needs exploring. Mott and Ogletree were chosen as case studies for this endeavor because they belong to the eschatological movement in contemporary Christian ethics. They represent the latter, contemporary phase of twentieth-century re-interpreted eschatology and its application toward moral theory. The ultimate purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the eschatological paradigm, in spite of the various ways in which it has been understood, still held promise

¹It is significant that neither Mott nor Ogletree draw much from apocalyptic literature in their projects (a fact that Verhey notes about Ogletree [Verhey, 26]).
as the starting point for a comprehensive approach to moral theory. Could the
eschatological paradigm produce a methodological integration? Is it focused and
coherent enough to produce an ethical system? Is it broad enough to include the
significant contemporary issues in Christian moral life?

To explore these concerns and propose answers to these questions, I proposed a
helpful set of analytical distinctions that encompassed the significant issues that the
application of the eschatological paradigm revolves around. These issues include: (1) the
role and function of paradigm, (2) the levels of paradigm operation (macro, meso, and
micro), and (3) the levels in the ingredients in the structure of ethics (philosophical/
thological bases, underlying principles, and area rules). In addition, there are (4) the
three components of the eschatological paradigm (already/not yet, reign of God, and
horizon of the future),¹ and (5) three principles of verification (role of Scripture, role of
community, and the nature of social involvement). I proposed that these three principles
of verification would enable us to relate to issues of authority and relevance which have
been in considerable question in Christian ethics during this century.

A significant feature of my procedure was the suggestion that a correspondence
exists between the levels of paradigm operation and the levels of ingredients in the
structure of ethics. Another aspect of this procedure was the suggestion that there is a
complex interplay and nuancing between the paradigm’s components and the principles
of verification which highlight the methodological nuances that the paradigm

¹As seen in relation to the eschatological paradigm’s primary model—the
Kingdom of God.
evokes/expresses with regard to the principles of verification. The methodology I outlined thus proposed the presence of a complex set of interacting variables in the application of the eschatological paradigm toward Christian moral theory. A diagrammatic overview of these interacting variables in figure 1 provide a visual and conceptual grasp of the subtle interplay that this study suggests exists between the eschatological paradigm and each of the areas impacting the question of its application to moral theory. Together, this set of analytical distinctions and procedural suggestions provided an extensive framework where we could see in a comparative fashion where an ethicist begins, where he moves, and where he ends in terms of using eschatology as paradigm in Christian moral theory. At the same time, we could observe where the real issues lie in trying to bring credible structure for applying the eschatological paradigm in Christian ethics.

This study has demonstrated the validity of this set of analytical distinctions by the concrete and insightful ways it has allowed us to focus on the question of eschatology and ethics.¹ I believe it also contributes to the larger ethical method dialogue by outlining and demonstrating the correspondence that exists between the levels of paradigm operation and the ingredients in the structure of ethics. It contributes, too, in outlining how the biblical materials can provide both the structure and example for credibly and consistently translating moral reflection between these differing levels of paradigm

¹Mott notes that these categories of analysis “produce a significant discussion” (Mott to Lichtenwalter, April 20, 1996, 1). While not addressing them directly, Ogletree nevertheless speaks of “seeing the whole of my writings in ways that surprised me” (Ogletree to Lichtenwalter, September 26, 1996, 1).
operation and their corresponding ingredients in ethical structure. Furthermore, it has contributed to the dialogue by suggesting how a paradigm created or composed of components will find its moral specificity or abstraction through or from the moral clarity of its components—and by extension, how the moral specificity or abstraction of a given component part is likewise determined by the moral clarity of the biblical witness with which it is defined.

There are other paradigms that will come under consideration in moral theory. This study has produced a useful tool towards exploring their validity as well as methodological procedures and presuppositions with respect to them. In the context of most paradigms focused toward Christian moral theory, there will be in view, at the least, (1) the three principles of verification, (2) the levels of paradigm operation, and (3) the ingredients in the structure of ethics. New elements in the equation would be the conceptual imagery stemming from the paradigm’s supporting and primary models, and any other concerns pertinent to the subject at hand.

In conclusion, there is the question toward which this study has been moving. Do either Mott’s or Ogletree’s eschatologically defined moral theory suggest that the eschatological paradigm has become a more stable framework for doing Christian ethics? Given this study’s analysis and evaluation, I would say “yes!” I would say “yes!” if we have Mott’s application of eschatology as paradigm in view, but I would qualify my “yes” for Ogletree. Mott’s example of the prevailing role that Scripture must play in the application of eschatology as paradigm in moral theory demonstrates where that stability is to be found. On the other hand, Ogletree’s example of the prevailing role that moral
philosophy, phenomenology, and critical method can play in its application highlights where instability still resides.

This study would indicate that the eschatological paradigm functions well or best if it expresses biblical ethics. It becomes elusive, however, and open to speculation if it expresses philosophical ethics. Mott's more direct link between the eschatological paradigm and the moral witness of the biblical materials provides a moral theory that is more "user friendly," relevant, clear, concrete, and more immediately applicable. It also provides a responsible framework for credibly translating moral reflection across the differing levels of paradigm operation and the corresponding ingredients in ethical structure. Mott's example of the use of eschatology provides a basis for measuring consistency in its application across the levels of critical reflection because it highlights how the biblical materials present both the structure and example of doing so. He also delineates how the bridge between the differing levels of moral reflection (paradigm operation and ingredients in ethical structure) is the reality of their each yielding normative content of Scripture. In short, the eschatological paradigm becomes a stable framework for doing ethics in proportion to its correlation with the biblical witness and its affinity with the structure and examples within the biblical materials themselves. To step outside the realm of this clearly defined biblical framework is to render the eschatological paradigm a slippery tool open to any kind of nuancing which, in fact, we have seen throughout this century.

Ogletree's use of the eschatological paradigm, while providing several positive and important contributions, nonetheless, merely reduplicates many of the weaknesses
that rendered the eschatological paradigm fluid and unstable through the 1970s.

Mott’s use of the eschatological paradigm, while not the full answer and still open to considerable, valid criticism in several areas, nevertheless suggests the way towards assuring that the eschatological paradigm becomes more stable for Christian moral theory in the twenty-first century.


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