



IONA SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY

Charity and Prudence

Third Year

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STUDY GUIDE

Socrates: “How ought we live?” Jesus of Nazareth: “Take up your cross, and follow Me.”

Sedgwick, *The Christian Moral Life*

General considerations:

1. Living a distinctively Christian moral life can be seen as a daily sacramental act
2. True piety is a “contact sport.” We encounter God, others, and ourselves, and through experiencing each, we encounter all three
3. Faith is both enacted and embodied

Chapter 3: Incarnate Love

The practice of living a Christian life is necessarily relational. God created us to have and be with each other. (First Creation account: Gen 1.1-2.4a)

Family and sexuality: Sexuality is central to human existence and experience. It is a central facet and fact of our being.

All religions and all cultures have developed “Rules of Engagement,” as it were, for sexual activity and the proper-and improper-context for its expression.

It expresses both the cosmic and the personal. As a personal expression, it is connection and communication. It is both union and reunion. (Second Creation account: Gen 2.4b-25): Two people are not only joining together but also reclaiming their primordial oneness. It is through this union and reunion that we procreate (literally: ‘bring forth’) and also participate in Creation itself.

In ancient Judaism, there was an emphasis on producing young to ensure the survivability of the community, especially after the Exile (from 578 BC); this took priority over purely relational concerns. This can lead to “idolatry of the family:” Making the family itself the end (*telos*) of life itself; the needs of particular individuals were subordinate to the purpose of ensuring the survival of the tribe/community.

Jesus’ views are more nuanced. In his proclaiming the Kingdom of God manifest, the joining together of man and woman (e.g., Mk 10.6-9) as an expression of Creation itself through a reclaiming of our connectedness to each other and, in fulfillment of our creation and our call, to embrace each other for the sake of the other as Other.

Children are not merely the hope of continuing the community into the next generation but also as gifts from God. By taking on the duty to raise them, we are called into the **Covenant of Hospitality**. Just as sexual union is the celebration of eternity in the union of two people, children are the manifestation of that eternity. The procreative and the unitive.

Q: Jesus and celibacy (Lk 20.34-35): What do you think he was trying to say?

Q: How can sexuality become idolatry?

Context of marriage: The unconditional acceptance and embrace of the other, the promise of exclusivity to the other, and commitment to be responsible parents should children result. Sexual commitment is part of a larger commitment to form and live a life together, and can be seen as a consecration of the commitment. Each “household” is a school of the “Covenant of Hospitality.”

Chapter 4: Love and Justice

The “Covenant of Hospitality” extends to strangers.

In early Judaism, this was obligatory as the demonstration of worthiness to receive God’s blessing and protection. It was a means to an end, not the end itself. **Distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic goods.**

Later prophets extended idea of hospitality beyond the contractual, in toward the relational, especially through personal and community suffering.

The poor represent existence of long-term, endemic suffering, the (comparative) rich are not connected to them, even if they are part of the same larger community. The rich will “give” to the poor, but not out of recognition as shared relatedness, but as a sign of their own standing. Acts of “charity” are little more than public displays of *noblesse oblige*, not attempts actually to end poverty. It was held that the lot of the poor was God’s will; the rich were not expected to relieve this burden, for such was contrary to God’s will.

Q: How does Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10.30-35), and the parable of the Rich Young Ruler (Lk 18.18-30) show a shift to the “Covenant of Hospitality?”

Sacrifice: To make sacred

We can offer a sacrifice; Jesus IS the sacrifice.

Justice: Fair, not necessarily equal, consideration and treatment. (John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*)

In ancient Judaism, justice was a matter of acting in accordance with established norms of relating to members of one’s community. (See, e.g., Micah 6.6-8.)

Basic justice: Determination of basic rights and goods for individuals, and treatment according to rights resulting from understanding of intrinsic worth of individuals.

Distributive justice: Process of justifying and distributing those goods and securing those rights.

Procedural Justice: Determining who is competent and qualified to do the distributing.

Law is an expression of the requirements of justice, but is derivative, acting to guide proper acting (the pedagogical function) and to punish improper acting or the absence of acting properly (the juridical function).

Aquinas: Natural Law, Human Law, and Divine Law

Justice is the foundation of Law, but Love is the foundation of Justice. This is a present condition, not a future hope.

Law and Gospel in dialectical relationship.

Wright, *After You Believe*

General Considerations:

1. We were created in God's image, to reign, NOT rule, over Creation (Gen 1.28)
2. Humans reign, God rules.
3. Priority of Creation:
 - a. World/Cosmos created
 - b. Life created and blessed
 - c. Humans created, blessed, and TASKED
4. Faith as vocation
5. "New Jerusalem" as fulfillment of purpose of Garden of Eden

Chapter 3: Priests and Rulers

Our being tasked to "reign" over Creation in no way was intended to imply domination; rather, though we are placed above the rest of Creation, we are still a part of it. Creation is not to be mastered, but managed. "Dominion" does not entail nor require domination.

Our role is Stewardship: We are to tend, nurture, and enable God's Creation to unfold in its proper ways, reflecting the Mind and the Will of the Creator to and for Creation. We are to grow ourselves, as well, as we fulfill this task, and reflect to ourselves and each other the *imago Dei* of our own unique creation.

We botched the job.

This fact, though, does not mean we are released from the duty for which we were created; rather, we need to reclaim our place in Creation.

Jesus represents, among other things, a visible and active reminder of our purpose in Creation: To be obedient servants, to model the manner and role God intended--and still intends--for us in Creation. Christ calls us back for, and reconsecrates us to, our task, and calls us to tend as priests and rulers over a renewed Creation. As such, we stand between Creator and Creation, yet intimately connected to both.

The purpose and end of our existence is *eudaimonia* but to become the “royal priesthood” God intended from the beginning. To do this end we must reclaim our vocation by and through worship and service. God “dwells” in Creation, but is not confined exclusively to it; as a part of Creation, God “dwells” in us, but cannot remain only within us.

The Sacrifice of Christ can be seen as analogous to “cleansing” the “Temple:” The Human Temple.

Q: Are we being recalled back to our intended task, not to operate and manage the Temple, but to BE the Temple?

Contrast in Paul between Adam and Christ.

“Glory” as “God reflection.” Renewed humanity is to reign alongside Christ over a renewed Creation, reflecting that redemption as the “glory” through holiness and prayer. Holiness is replacing the habits of the flesh with the habits of the Spirit. (Paul’s Neoplatonic view of the body.) Prayer is the “language” of holiness.

Jesus assumed the roles of Priest and King to bring the Kingdom, and to be the Kingdom. We are rulers under Him, and “living stones” of the New Temple.

Chapter 4: The Kingdom Coming and the People Prepared

Be careful about textual criticism. Do not fall into seemingly enlightened and smug sophistry (here implying a kind of intentional distortion of the Gospels and minimization of the truth of the message of Christ by focusing on the language of the text and assumptions about the meaning and “agenda” of the Gospel writer). Focusing on the truth of this or that passage can make us miss the larger Truth of Christ: The Kingdom is now, the eschaton is realized in the present, and we are called to live in it.

Not *eudaimonia*, but *makarios*. (Not happiness, but blessedness.)
Not *telos*, but *teleios*. (Not end, but completedness.)

Q: What does Wright mean by “eschatological authenticity”

Q: Are you a “Gospels” person or an “Epistles” person?

(N.B.: Error on p. 113: There was no such thing as “first-century Palestine.” The proper and historically accurate phrase would be “first-century Judaea.”)

“*Force majeure*”: An unforeseen and unavoidable event or circumstance which prevents the fulfillment of some duty, voids a legal contract, or brings about change by overwhelming force. This is manifestly NOT who and what Christ is. The Kingdom is manifest and realized by Christ’s sacrifice of total, self-giving love.

The Way of the Cross is the way of self-giving suffering toward beatitude.

Q: What does it mean to be “unclean?”

We cannot “be” like Christ, nor does Christ ever call us to be so; we are called to learn the language of life in the Kingdom and speak it to Creation.