WITTGENSTEIN'S CLASSES OF UTTERANCES AND PAULINE ETHICAL TEXTS

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It has long been recognized that there are numerous pressing problems in formulating an adequate Christian ethic. Several of these are the problems that pertain to any ethical theory: (1) whether an ethical theory should be teleological (concerned with the goals of actions) or deontological (concerned with what one ought to do regardless of its ends); (2) the relation between metaethical and normative ethical statements; (3) the number and nature and kind of absolutes, if the ethical theory holds that there are absolutes; (4) the method by which absolutes are formulated, whether through reason, nature, or intuition, if a subjectivist position is not advocated; and (5) for those ethical theories that maintain a minimum of two or more ethical absolutes, how one makes ethical decisions when these absolutes conflict (although some ethical positions advocate that at no time do ethical absolutes ever come into conflict).

Biblical ethics, however, has a pressing problem not present in other ethical formulations: determining the role of the Bible not only in formulating the set of ethical absolutes and regulating ethical decisions when these norms run into conflict but also in using the Biblical statements as an interpretive control on ethical decision-making.

Christians seem to recognize that the Bible stands as a functional control or authority over Christian ethical behavior and consequently that it ought to be included in some way in formulating a Christian ethic, that it provides a normative standard unlike any other standard accessible to the Christian, and that Biblical claims establish the degree of "Christianness" of any ethical formulation.[1]

Exploration of the issues, however, reveals several difficulties. For example, Edward Lory, in his survey of Christian ethics, states that there is a recognizable difference between "Love your neighbor as yourself" and "Give a cup of coffee to everyone who knocks on your door." The difference is that the first "sets forth a principle; the second specifies a type of expected behavior; the first invites deliberation about the means necessary to express love for the neighbor; the second states how the

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[1] P. D. Simmons, "The Bible and Christian Ethics," *Issues in Christian Ethics* (ed. P. D. Simmons; Nashville: Broadman, 1980) 21 ff.

neighbor is to be treated."[2] But this comparison is unfair, since the first example is from the Bible but the second is not. Can the same opposition be made between "Love your neighbor as yourself" and Paul's closing exhortation in 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26 to greet each other (or the brothers) with a holy kiss?

Some Biblical scholars are becoming increasingly aware of many of the hermeneutical issues involved in interpreting the Biblical text, though this has not always been the case in formulating a so-called Christian ethic. Hence Paul Lehmann criticizes several treatments such as that by Ramsey for ignoring the hermeneutical problems and consequently disregarding the basic question of what Christian ethics really is—in other words, what its relation is to the Bible, the basic document for Christianity.[3]

More recently, several ethicists have taken the hermeneutical task in ethics seriously and realized that any simple equation between text and ethical formulation is not possible. Paul Simmons singles out several of the areas where this discrepancy can be noted.[4] First is the nature of Biblical teaching. All the Biblical documents are context-bound, mostly concerned—in the NT at least—with early response to the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. Second, the Bible nowhere purports to speak directly to every issue. The nature of the documents dictates that many issues are not directly addressed, if for no other reason than that the issues involved could not be foreseen by their authors. Third, it is recognized that some Biblical material is irrelevant to modern ethical concerns. Fourth, many scholars find difficulty in reconciling what they see as variant perspectives in the Bible on various issues. Perhaps this is most easily seen in differences in the OT and NT regarding issues such as the law, obedience, and so forth. Fifth, scholars have moral objections to some of the Biblical practices (for example, Joshua's extermination of an entire family; Joshua 7).

Several recent attempts, of which I shall note three, have shown awareness of the importance of the Biblical witness in formulating a Christian perspective. The first is Norman Geisler's hierarchicalism,[5] which takes seriously the possible conflict of absolutes. But its support is essentially intuitionist, confirmed by several grantedly important Biblical texts. Many will not be happy with the use made of intuition in defense of the Biblical position, and Biblical scholars might be perplexed to know why and how the statements about love are given precedence over other Biblical statements that at least *prima facie* are linguistically similar and would appear to command the same sort of attention.

A second position is put forward by David Cook.[6] He states that any ethical formulation must be checked against three broad standards: crea-

[2] E. L. Lory, Jr., *A Survey of Christian Ethics* (New York: Oxford University, 1967) 73.

[3] P. L. Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context* (New York: Harper, 1963) 26-27 n. 1.

[4] Simmons, "Bible" 21 ff. See also S. C. Mott, "The Use of the NT for Social Ethics," *JRE* 15 (1987) 225-260.

[5] N. Geisler, *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971) 114-136.

[6] D. Cook, *Moral Maze: A Way of Exploring Christian Ethics* (London: SPCK, 1983) 82-85.

tion, the OT, and the NT. Under creation are the subcategories of natural law, man being in the image of God, conscience, creation ordinances, and the influence of the fall; under the OT are covenant and law, wisdom literature, and prophets; under the NT are redemption, kingdom ethics, Paul's ethics, and pastoral epistles. Cook recognizes the important function of both Testaments and at least acknowledges the hermeneutical issues involved, but he introduces a whole host of new problems regarding individual Biblical statements and the possibility of conflict with other criteria.

A third recent attempt is by Stephen Charles Mott,[7] who rightly sets aside the first several chapters of his book for discussing the role and place of the Biblical material in formulating a social ethic. But he lacks an ordering principle for his accumulation of the Biblical data. It seems rather that the Biblical quotations are designed to support (and support they do) a preconceived notion about the rightness of justifying a Biblical social ethic.

The analysis of these three attempts is not so stringent as it might be, since I believe that each has much of value to offer. But I approach the question of Biblical ethics from the position of a student of the NT. Perhaps if I were to approach it from that of an ethicist I would not experience the same disquietude that I feel when I am told that the Christian thing to do is *a*, not *b*. Even if a broad and general principle were to be established—for example, the love principle is the one inviolable norm—this would only go part of the way in relieving my anxiety, which rests in two major areas: (1) I am not convinced that any Biblical ethical model that I have read has fully appreciated the hermeneutical issues involved in taking seriously the entire witness of Scripture as primary evidence in formulating a Biblical ethic; (2) I have found no convincing method by which to determine how individual statements in Scripture are to be taken in relation to the entire scope of Biblical ethics. In other words, why is it that we all would probably agree that loving our neighbor as ourselves is a good thing but that greeting each other with a holy kiss is not such a good thing but, in fact, is an embarrassing thing?

I. WITTGENSTEIN'S CLASSES OF UTTERANCES

Anthony Thiselton's *The Two Horizons* contains several highly provocative pages on classes of grammatical utterances in his stimulating discussion of Ludwig Wittgenstein.[8] This section has been noted by at least one reviewer as an important area for further discussion and thought.[9] (In a moment I will show why Thiselton has in personal conversation indicated that he has dismissed the central importance of this formulation.) Drawing mostly on Wittgenstein's later work, especially the

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[7] S. C. Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University, 1982).

[8] A. C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 357 ff., 386–407. References to this work are noted by page numbers in the body of the text.

[9] V. S. Poythress in *WTJ* 43 (1981) 179.

Philosophical Investigations, Thiselton notes how important are grammatical clarifications to Wittgenstein's work. He even holds out the possibility that all of the utterances in the NT could be classified according to the following criteria and hence appropriately analyzed.

1. *First-class utterances*. First-class grammatical utterances are neutral or universal grammatical utterances, similar to the analytical or *a priori* utterances of logical positivism and hence not culturally relative. As Wittgenstein says, they are the kinds of utterances that describe a situation that cannot be described as other than it is.[10]

A. J. Ayer expands on this definition:

> We have already explained how it is that these analytic propositions are necessary and certain. We saw that the reason why they cannot be confuted in experience is that they do not make any assertion about the empirical world. They simply record our determination to use words in a certain fashion. We cannot deny them without infringing the conventions which are presupposed by our very denial, and so falling into self-contradiction. And this is the sole ground of their necessity. As Wittgenstein puts it, our justification for holding that the world could not conceivably disobey the laws of logic is simply that we could not say of an unlogical world how it would look. And just as the validity of an analytic proposition is independent of the nature of the external world, so it is independent of the nature of our minds. It is perfectly conceivable that we should have employed different linguistic conventions from those which we actually do employ. But whatever these conventions might be, the tautologies in which we recorded them would always be necessary. For any denial of them would be self-stultifying.[11]

Thiselton gives the following examples from the Pauline literature:[12] "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace" (Rom 11:6). This example works by mutual exclusion, Thiselton says. "When a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation" (4:4). As Thiselton explains: "Just as the idea of 'due' is implied in the grammar of the concept of 'wages,' so it is excluded from the grammar of 'grace'" (p. 389). "Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?" (8:24). "When perfection comes, the imperfect disappears" (1 Cor 13:10). If "perfection" is seen to mean "totality," the statement may then be seen as analytical. "A mediator . . . does not represent just one party" (Gal 3:20). Thiselton cites E. D. W. Burton, who says that this sentence is "a general statement deduced from the very definition of a mediator" (p. 390). "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (5:1). Objecting to contentions that this is a linguistic pleonasm, Thiselton says, "If this freedom does not entail their release from bondage and subsequent status as freemen," then it does not "make sense to speak of having been 'freed' by Christ" (p. 391). "Love

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[10] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974) par. 251.
[11] A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (2d ed.; New York: Dover, 1946) 84.
[12] All translations are from the *NIV*.

does no harm to its neighbor" (Rom 13:10). "If . . . I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me" (1 Cor 14:11).

From Thiselton's definition and the examples cited above, especially Rom 13:10, it would appear that ethics should be based upon first-class utterances in that they are necessary and certain—a profitable place from which to being formulating ethical stance.

This class of utterance, however, is not free from several trenchant criticisms. At this point it is not necessary to invoke the standard criticism of logical positivism—that is, that the verifiability principle itself is unverified.[13] But several other comments are worth making.

First, the question must be asked concerning what constitutes a self-evident or tautological statement. To the mathematician $1 + 1 = 2$ appears to be self-evident, as does the addition function. But, Ayer's caveats aside,[14] is this the case for the elementary-school child learning how to add? And what of multiplication? $1 \times 1 = 1$ and $2 \times 2 = 4$ may be self-evident to the mathematician, but to the child learning the multiplication tables it is not. And is 11×12 self-evident to anyone? The same kind of analogy might be drawn in the theological realm. "God is love" is not a self-evident statement to the logical positivist, but there are many Christians who would argue that this is the most self-evident statement of all, a statement for which a contrary situation cannot even be imagined.

Second, the functional and descriptive powers of such an analysis are open to serious question if it makes no assertion whatever about the empirical world. This is especially true in the area of ethics, which is supposed to be concerned with determining what is right and how to do it in the world of human experience. But there in fact may be a hidden assumption here. For example, roundness is part of what it means to be a circle. But this is only true in a world where the plane is the area of description. And a straight line is the shortest distance between two points only in a Euclidean world. In a world of doughnut geometry the shortest distance may in fact be a curved line. There must be some relation between the self-evident assertion and the world itself. In fact if the world were constituted differently, it is conceivable that the rules would be greatly different. Thus tautologies do have a world- and mind-dependent element in their formulation.

Third, most of the examples that Thiselton cites may be questioned according to his own method of classification. For example, in Rom 11:6 does the law of exclusion apply to the grace/works distinction? A similar opposition is often cited between faith and works, an exclusion that James flatly denies: "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, 'You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by

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[13] See e.g. W. T. Jones, *The Twentieth Century to Wittgenstein and Sartre* (2d ed.; New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975) 243–248.

[14] Ayer, *Language* 85–86.

my works.' You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. but are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?" (Jas 2:17–20). Regarding Rom 4:4, virtually anyone who teaches at a Christian institution will find it less than self-evident that one's payment is not counted according to grace but according to obligation, especially at a time when wages are being cut for various economic reasons. And is it obvious that one cannot hope for what one "sees" (8:24)? Or is it more self-evident that often humans do not begin to hope for that for which they have no incentive? It seems to be the case with presents at Christmas time—or why is so much money spent on advertising? Regarding 1 Cor 13:10, does it mean that the perfect in some way fills up what is lacking in the partial, or is it that the partial is eliminated in order to make way for the perfect? Thiselton himself shows that Rom 13:10 ("Love does no harm to its neighbor") is problematic, since there are examples in everyday experience that would seem to undercut this supposedly self-evident statement. The result may well be a vacuous category even if the analysis is correct.

Fourth, Wittgenstein states that "it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics. Propositions can express nothing that is higher. It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.)"[15] It would appear that any attempt to formulate an ethical statement in terms of a first-class utterance is usually only an application of a nonethical proposition. For example, when I say that "it is always right to do the right thing" this is an application of the law of noncontradiction ($a = a$). There is also the subsequent problem, which again Wittgenstein notes, of the relation between "ought" and "is." First-class utterances may depict what "is" self-evidently, but the line of connection to "ought" requires a further step that leads beyond the utterance itself and into designation of the world.

2. *Second-class utterances.* Second-class utterances are described this way by Thiselton:

> Wittgenstein considers a special class of statement about which the speaker would, as it were, "like to say: 'If I am wrong about *this*, I have no guarantee that anything I say is true.'" . . . in this case, he would be expressing the attitude of a particular tradition. The opposite would be inconceivable within a given cultural or perhaps religious tradition. . . . In Wittgenstein's words, they amount to "hinges" on which other statement [*sic*] or inquiries turn. They articulate "the scaffolding of our thoughts."
> Wittgenstein compares this type of utterance with propositions which have the status or function of the words "It is written. . . ." Within particular communities they have become virtually unquestioned or even unquestionable axioms; they function "as a *foundation* for research and action," but are often simply "isolated from doubt, though not according to any explicit rule." Wittgenstein seems to suggest that in any culture, including our own,

"all enquiry . . . is set so as to exempt certain propositions from doubt. . . . They lie apart from the route travelled by enquiry." . . . "Now it gives our way of looking at things, and our researches, their form" (pp. 392-393).[16]
   . . . class-two grammatical utterances regularly occur in the context of an appeal which presupposes a given religious or ethical "common understanding" (p. 395).

Examples that Thiselton cites include Rom 3:4, 5b-6: "Let God be true, and every man a liar. . . . that God is unjust in bringing his wrath upon us? (I am using a human argument.) Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world?" As Thiselton says, "Both for Paul and for most, if not all, of his readers, the justice and truthfulness of God constitutes an unshakable axiom which cannot be questioned without, among other things, calling in question the very tradition of life and thought to which they belong. It has itself become a fixed hinge on which further statements or inquiries turn." Citing C. H. Dodd, who says Paul's statement is not an argument, Thiselton admits that "it would be very difficult to see what might 'count as a test' of the truth-or-falsity of the axiom within the primitive Christian tradition" (p. 393). In 9:14-24 "Paul is drawing on a tradition of thought, familiar in first-century Judaism, within which part of what is entailed in God's being God is that his verdicts cannot be challenged by guilty men" (p. 394). Concerning 8:8, "Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God," Thiselton, noting comments by C. K. Barrett, calls use of "cannot" not an empirical limitation but a grammatical one: It is contradictory to say that flesh is obedient to God, since by definition God is excluded from the flesh. "But since this understanding of [flesh] remains relative to a particular theological tradition or frame, this would hardly amount to a topic-neutral grammatical utterance." As for 1 Cor 12:3, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit," again the grammatical and not empirical sense of "cannot" is used. "Paul is not inviting his readers to imagine that someone tries hard to make such a confession, but fails to bring it off, in the event, without the aid of the Spirit. Paul's concern, rather, is with the grammar of Christian 'spirituality'" (p. 395).
   This classification too is open to question.
   First, it is not entirely clear that these examples are best seen as second-class utterances. Thiselton notes that second-class utterances are part of a theological tradition, and several of the examples are concerned with statements about God. Whereas one might question several of the assumptions of Christians regarding the nature of God, can it be said that every view of God qualifies as a second-class utterance—that is, that one's view of God is merely theologically conditioned and outside the parameters of investigation? This points up possible difficulties in distinguishing the definition of first- and second-class utterances. A plausible case might be made that in every society and culture, or at least in every religious tradition, there is some concept of God, and he would be defined

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[16] Thiselton cites Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969) sects. 69, 216, 87, 88, 211.

in such a way that a common assumption about his knowledge or power or being would run consistently through these definitions (the way language is used would entail a certain definition of God). Discounting an atheistic view, since it is for the most part self-contradictory, even an agnostic view of God would have some concept which would appear to be surprisingly similar to theism at several points.

Second, Thiselton puts this analysis forward in partial reaction to D. E. Nineham's claim that second-class utterances constitute presuppositions behind the outlook of a given culture: "The propositions that express them so take their truth for granted that within a given tradition their denial is inconceivable" (p. 395). But if they are so fundamental it is interesting that so many of them have been called into question in this century alone, especially in regard to the nature of God. For example, a process-theological view of God would question the consistent divine nature that is truthful or knowledgeable in comparison to deceptive and limited man, since God himself is defined by nature as limited and subject to experience.

Third, Thiselton equates second-class utterances and their contextual appearance with Wittgenstein's language-games. Thus these utterances merely serve a function within a given language-game and have no ability to lead to understanding beyond the confines of the given game. Therefore their validity shifts as the validity of the language-game shifts. If ethical statements are bound to this class of utterance, then there is no sense in which an ethical statement has any universal value beyond the terms of this particular cultural or theological tradition or language-game. The ethical statement has no power to compel acceptance and has questionable descriptive capabilities, especially in relation to the common-sense view of the world.

3. *Third-class utterances.* Third-class utterances are those utterances that challenge the accepted means of thinking and result in a new and provocative view of the structures of thought. This class of utterance contains the new categories by which reality is described, replacing the second-class utterance. This entails three aspects:

> First, class-three grammatical utterances, since they concern the elucidation and the application of certain concepts, ... are not statements about the world. Secondly, class-three grammatical utterances often turn not simply on linguistic convention or habit, but on what John Searle calls "institutional facts." ... Thirdly, as Wittgenstein often stressed, how language is used affects how a thing is "seen." How something is pictured often determines its place in our wider system of concepts, and hence also our attitudes towards it (pp. 401–402).

Thiselton cites the following examples from Paul: "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:29); "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one

inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart" (Rom 2:28-29); "For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly?" (1 Cor 3:3).

In each of these, Paul is making a "linguistic recommendation"—that is, recommending a new way of viewing a state of affairs, whether or not this is based on the institutional facts of the time. Thus Paul is making a linguistic recommendation about who is the true heir of Abraham, who is the true Jew, and what is fleshly and spiritual, in each instance in order to lead to a "reappraisal of the theological situation of the readers" (p. 403). In Wittgenstein's terminology: Whereas one picture had been operative in the Romans', Galatians' or Corinthians' consciousness, Paul substitutes another, different picture.

This class of utterance as well may be criticized.

First, there is the question of what relation these pictures, or new ways of viewing, have to the state of affairs they replace. Is it that no state of affairs has any necessary relation to what is but only is a picture? If so, a picture of what? Is it merely a mental conception? If it is believed that one picture is better in some sense than another, it would seem incumbent upon these pictures to have some relation beyond themselves so that evaluation may be made. With no means of evaluation, one may as well substitute one picture as another or keep the picture the same. By Paul's use of third-class utterances, in his thinking at least, he was not simply painting a new picture or suggesting a new picture only to provoke discussion. He believed that in very important and vital ways the new picture was a more accurate depiction of the state of affairs. This certainly seems to be the case in each of the instances Thiselton cites.

Second, distinguishing the relation between third- and second-class utterances requires more contextual knowledge than Thiselton seems to realize. For example, let it be assumed that the Corinthian, Roman or Galatian readers did not have the same picture as Paul did. Is it possible that what for the audience was a third-class utterance was a second-class utterance in Paul's mind, such that his theological tradition had already been so altered (possibly on the Damascus road) that these statements did not constitute a linguistic recommendation but an expression of the scaffolding of his thought? How can it be evaluated when such a transition occurs, and is it worth it to attempt such an estimation? It is quite possible that the audience had already been told of such an estimation but had failed to act upon such knowledge. Does a reminder of what (at least from Paul's perspective) already is constitute a third-class utterance?

The above discussion has attempted to indicate several problems with the scheme that Thiselton describes concerning Wittgenstein's classes of utterances. The criticism is not intended to render the scheme entirely useless, but it does indicate several areas of potential difficulty in developing and articulating it. Perhaps a similar scheme can be made more functionally useful with further modification, but as it stands now there appear to be several significant difficulties.

II. GAL 3:28-29 IN RECENT DISCUSSION

One of the most important and widely-cited Pauline ethical texts in current discussion, especially in relation to the women's issue, is Gal 3:28-29. As Mary Hayter says:

> Galatians 3.28 presents a crux in the consideration of the use of Scripture in the debate about woman's status and ministry in the Church. On the one hand, it is the *locus classicus* of Biblical texts for those who believe that, ultimately, Scripture does not discriminate between male and female and that it is therefore wrong for the Church to perpetuate such discrimination in its ordination practice. On the other hand, this text is dismissed as insignificant by those who allege that it does not mean what feminists say it means or that even if it does have a "liberationist" tenor, it is outranked by "subordinationist" passages.[17]

In this section a brief investigation of several approaches to this text is chronicled. What emerges of interest is the various ways in which the passage is treated. Although none of the authors shows awareness of the classes of utterances cited above, all three of the categories are apparently drawn upon, often without explicit support or reasoning for such classification.[18]

Richard Longenecker appears to consider Gal 3:28-29 an application of a first-class utterance, although he does not develop his justification at length. In fact he introduces his justification as follows:

> The most forthright statement on social ethics in all the New Testament is found in Galatians 3:28.... The statement has been widely heralded as the "Magna Carta of the New Humanity," for it sets forth a relationship "in Christ Jesus" in which believers through baptism not only have been "united with Christ" and "clothed with Christ" (v. 27) but also have entered into a new relationship of oneness with one another.[19]

What he says could classify this statement as a third-class utterance. He also believes that this section could have been an already existent and generally used baptismal liturgy of the early Church,[20] which could classify this statement as a second-class utterance. But specifically concerning the so-called three pairings, he says that they "cover in embryonic fashion all the essential relationships of humanity."[21] In light of his statement that the NT's teachings are proclamations to be taken as "normative,"[22]

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[17] M. Hayter, *The New Eve in Christ: The Use and Abuse of the Bible in the Debate about Women in the Church* (London: SPCK, 1987) 134.

[18] See e.g. D. R. MacDonald, *There Is No Male and Female: The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism* (HDR 20; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 2-5, with extensive bibliography. It is noteworthy to observe which books do not spend much time discussing this passage; see e.g. G. W. Knight, III, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women: New Testament Teaching* (2d ed.; Chicago: Moody, 1985); L. Scanzoni and N. Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco: Word, 1974).

[19] R. N. Longenecker, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 30.

[20] Ibid. 31-33.

[21] Ibid. 34.

[22] Ibid. 27; cf. p. 84.

he implies that they constitute essential oppositions. And this foundation provides the basis for his subsequent discussion of social ethics. He seems to feel that once this groundwork has been established, there is no need to justify the egalitarian stance he advocates since it is founded upon an unimpeachable standard.

But what application of a context-neutral statement does this verse make? The closest one that comes to mind is the law of noncontradiction, in which the verse would be saying that "if *a*, then not non-*a*." But this is not correct, since the verse seems to say more. Whereas there may have been *a* and *b*, such that one would have to be one or the other, now there is neither *a* nor *b*. This would appear to be an endorsement of androgyny or some form of sexual negation, although most scholars distance themselves from this view.[23]

Several scholars endorse a view that sees Gal 3:28-29 as a second-class utterance. For example, Hayter cites many examples from Paul's ministry that she claims show that Paul worked side by side with women throughout his missionary ventures. Paul had already gone far beyond the restrictions of the Judaism of his time. And it is in light of his Judaism that Paul utters the statement of Gal 3:28-29. It is a statement that constitutes the scaffolding of thinking regarding Paul's view of women in light of the oppressive OT context. Thus, as Hayter says, "It is, then, male and female as the oppressive custody of the law ordered their relationship which is transcended in Christ."[24]

This view is stated more explicitly by Burton, who says that Paul presents

> an inspiring picture of the world under one universal religion. . . . It is only in the religion of Christ that Paul conceives that men can thus be brought together. That he is speaking of these distinctions from the point of view of religion is evident from the context in general, but especially from his inclusion of the ineradicable distinction of sex.[25]

Those commentators who see Paul's comments dependent upon an earlier baptismal formula accepted by and used in the Christian Church probably view the sentence as a second-class utterance, one that constitutes the scaffolding of their thought.[26] And several more conservative commentators, such as Mary Evans, place the passage in this category as well.[27]

But if these comments are of a purely religious nature, what sort of compelling or normative value do they have apart from the Christian theological tradition? The implication is that Christians have the obligation to ignore or even eliminate distinctions made on the basis of sex,

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[23] An apparent exception is W. Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," *HR* 13 (1974) 165-208, and his followers.

[24] Hayter, *New Eve* 138.

[25] E. D. W. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1920) 206.

[26] See e.g. H. D. Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 189-201.

[27] M. J. Evans, *Woman in the Bible: An Overview of All the Crucial Passages on Women's Roles* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983) 62-64.

social status, and race, but they have no jurisdiction for imposing such an obligation upon any other theological (or sociological) tradition. These guidelines merely provide a basis for Christian thought. Most would find this ethic very dissatisfying, because it endorses a relativistic ethic that makes Christianity in no way significantly different from any other religious tradition, and it eliminates any desire or need for evangelism or missions. There is also the problem that the second-class utterance appears to endorse the status quo, possibly awaiting a readjustment in perspective such as the third-class utterance makes.

And a third group of scholars seems to argue that Gal 3:28-29 constitutes a third-class utterance, one that makes a "linguistic recommendation." For example, F. F. Bruce, who denies that the verses originated in any sort of pre-Pauline context, sees Paul as running contrary to the kind of prayer that a Jewish man would make, thanking God that he was not a Gentile, slave or woman.[28] Or as Don Williams says, "Here is Paul's radical step beyond the old order."[29]

I believe that this third view is essentially correct, although a few of the scholars cited give full credence to a number of issues that must be discussed at greater length.[30] First is the context. Paul's discussion is the "nature of justification or, more specifically, the conditions of full inclusion in the Abrahamic covenant."[31] Several commentators have agreed that this is what accounts for Paul's abbreviated treatment of the first pair on slave and free and the third pair on men and women, since his focus at this point is the relation of Jew and Gentile. Second is the specific contextual feature of being "in Christ Jesus." This factor must be calculated into the analysis, although most authors neglect its important function. Third is the fact that the grammatical structure of the paired items is not identical. The third uses different negation, possibly reflecting the imitated language of the LXX (Gen 2:7) but possibly calling attention to itself because the statement made is so startling. Fourth, Paul seems to suggest two simple alternatives by his statement that there is neither male nor female. Either he is advocating an adrogynous society, or there is some way in which the "in Christ Jesus" context disambiguates such an obviously problematic interpretation, both for the ancient and the modern. In light of the OT, as well as the rest of the NT, the latter is surely correct. Paul has stepped into a theological context ripe for discussion of several fundamentals, including what it means to be justified apart from the law. This he attributes to the work of Christ. It is therefore in the "in Christ Jesus" context that these statements are made. He is insisting that "in

[28] F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 187.

[29] D. Williams, *The Apostle Paul and Women in the Church* (Ventura: Gospel Light, 1977) 82. See also P. K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975) 144.

[30] See e.g. S. B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1980) 137 ff.

[31] J. J. Davis, "Some Reflections on Gal 3:28, Sexual Roles, and Biblical Hermeneutics," *JETS* 19 (1976) 201.

Christ Jesus" there is a whole new perspective or "linguistic recommenda-tion," one that in this instance at least has some basis in the world as it is. In some ways D. E. H. Whiteley shows the most scholarly integrity, admitting the meaning of the passage even though he does not agree or find it convincing.[32]

III. CONCLUSION

The following conclusions emerge from the above discussion:

(1) Classification of utterances is not an easy task, primarily because the categories themselves are problematic. This does not, however, in-validate the legitimacy of further attempts to define, refine and apply similar classificatory schemes.

(2) It would appear that only class-one utterances can provide the necessary sure basis for formulating an ethical theory, but it does not appear possible to show that any ethical statement can be included within class-one utterances. That is, it is doubted by most scholars that an analytic statement that describes the world can be formulated (similar to Kant's synthetic *a priori*, which tells us about the world before experience of it). Even a widespread or nearly universal generalization does not necessarily qualify as analytic.

(3) Failing to find this basis, one must realize that the formulation of any ethical theory is an extrapolation, at least some distance removed from analytic statements. Whereas it may be realized that this is a logical necessity, it also must constitute a call to humility concerning the status of one's ethical formulations.

(4) There is much confusion among scholars in attempting to formulate an ethical position regarding the "role of women" in church and family, much of it revolving around use of Gal 3:28-29. Some scholars assume that Gal 3:28-29 is a class-one utterance, others that it is a class-two utterance, and still others that it is a class-three utterance. Once one realizes how the passage is classified, it becomes clear what assumptions are being made and how the passage will influence understanding of the women's issue.

(5) Those who argue for a second-class utterance use of Gal 3:28-29 must be content to realize that their view may simply perpetuate the standard and agreed-upon structure of thought. Those who argue for a third-class utterance use of it must realize that they are calling for a radical shift in the approach one is taking toward an issue, with all of its concomitant risks in relation to other agreed-upon categories of thought.

[32] D. E. H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul* (2d ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1974) 222-223.