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See also Antinomianism; Body; 1 Corinthians; Dualism, Anthropological; Freedom; Romans; Sex and Sexuality

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Charles H. Cosgrove

Life, Sanctity of See Sanctity of Human Life

Life Support See Bioethics

Liturgy and Ethics

The academy has seen a renewed interest in the connections between liturgy/worship and ethics/Christian living since the mid-1970s. Yet this connection pervades the Christian Scriptures. In Scripture, action is rooted in identity: the guidelines for what one does follow from who one is or claims to be. And in Scripture, one's identity is determined primarily by who one worships, to which god one belongs. In other words, in Scripture, worship is the root of ethics and supplies the criteria of judgment necessary for discerning proper action and the shape of the life of individuals and communities.

Old Testament

Some explorations of Scripture and ethics search for discrete precepts or rules that can be distilled from canonical texts (e.g., the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount). Such an approach, however, is foreign to the way Scripture understands ethics (a category that is anachronistically applied to Scripture). Rather, ethics—better, what one is to do, how one is to live, how a community is to live together—is rooted in identity. For example, Jews welcomed strangers not primarily because it was a universally right thing to do (in fact, it could be quite dangerous), but because they were Jews, they were God's people, who themselves "were once strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exod. 23:9; Lev. 19:34).

In Scripture, moreover, identity is rooted in worship: who one worships determines who (or whose) one is. Not only strangers but also slaves, the Israelites were liberated by God not simply to be free from the Egyptians; they were liberated to become God's people, to become the people who worship only Yahweh (e.g., Exod. 3:18; 7:16). This relationship between worship and identity is signaled in a number of ways. It was established liturgically, in the rite of the paschal lamb, whose blood marked the Israelites' identity as those to

be "passed over" when the final plague visited Egypt. It was sustained liturgically in the annual celebration of the Passover and other holy days wherein the Israelites reaffirmed their identity, celebrated God's mighty deeds, repented of their sins, and restored right relationship with God and one another.

Further, it shapes the Mosaic covenant, where guidelines for worship and living are inseparably intertwined. The Decalogue (often misidentified as a code of ethics) is fundamentally liturgical, beginning as it does with injunctions regarding right worship: "I, the LORD, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides me" (Exod. 20:2–3 NAB). The entire first table of the Decalogue focuses on worship—idols, God's name, the Sabbath. Worship, then, is the larger overarching and necessary context for understanding the remaining commandments in the Decalogue. Likewise, the 613 commandments in the Torah are a similarly integrated complex of injunctions about worship and life. Right relationship, right action, right form of communal life, the OT proclaims, can follow only from Israel's right relationship with God.

Finally, the purpose of this action and life is worship—to give glory to God. The commandments are for God's people. They distinguish Israel from the peoples among whom Israel finds itself. They trace what life looks like in a community that worships only God. How Israel lives bears witness to God's power, presence, and truth. And when done rightly, it gives glory to God.

Of course, the very first thing the Israelites do after receiving the covenant is commit idolatry (Exod. 32). This becomes the overarching theme of the OT: Israel's continued idolatry, the consequences, and God's continued call for Israel to return to right worship. Certainly, the Israelites, both individually and corporately, violate many if not all of the commandments of the Torah. They commit adultery, kill, exploit the poor, fail to care for widows and orphans, and more. But the authors of Scripture make clear that this failure to follow the commandments and live in right relationship with one another follows from their worship of their neighbors' false gods and their failure to properly worship Yahweh. The prophets never uncouple the connection between right worship and right living (e.g., Isa. 58:1–14; Hosea).

New Testament and the Early Church

The NT continues the story of Israel and shares the moral logic of the OT. Thus, worship and ethics

are again inseparable. In Jesus' temptations in the desert, the fundamental question is one of idolatry, which he finally answers decisively with a version of the Shema, an OT liturgical practice that orients all life toward the worship of Yahweh (Matt. 4:10). When asked to identify the greatest commandment, Jesus again begins with the Shema: "You shall love the Lord your God . . ." (Matt. 22:37). In the Gospels, Israel once again finds itself oppressed with its religious and political leadership engaging in the externals of religious ritual but worshipping in fact at the altars of idols, particularly the power of the Roman Empire. Thus, the hearers of the prophetic proclamation are called to repent, to turn again to God, to live under God's kingship again, for as in Egypt, "the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15).

To live as God's people—to worship, love, and trust God—leads to distinctive and countercultural economic, social, and political practices. Thus, God's people will care for those along the wayside (Luke 10:25–37), forgive (John 7:53–8:11), give away all their possessions (Matt. 19:16–24), love enemies (Matt. 5:44), make peace (Matt. 5:9), and more (see Matt. 5–7). Such is the distinctive witness of those who now follow Jesus (Matt. 16:24), God incarnate, as the Israelites followed Yahweh in the desert.

As in the OT, liturgical practice remains key for orienting all of life toward the worship of God. Echoing events of the exodus, the blood of Christ spilled in the passion on the Passover establishes the new covenant and demarcates God's people from those who worship other gods. Those baptized into his "name" (cf. the Decalogue) are grafted into God's people, the church, be they Jew or gentile. They are sustained in their identity as the body of Christ in the sharing of the Eucharist. This liturgical participation calls and shapes them to imitate individually and corporately God incarnate, the Christ, in whom they participate.

Yet as with the Israelites, the early church falls into idolatry and false worship. Destructive factionalism stems from idolatrous claims to "belong" to baptizers rather than to Christ (1 Cor. 1–4); it is the "double-minded" who wish to be friends with God and the world who meet the greatest censure (Jas. 1:8; 4:8); even the appearance of idolatry is cautioned against (Acts 15:29; 1 Cor. 8:4–13). And the cause for one of Paul's most extensive liturgical discussions is the scandalous continuation of economic divisions in the context of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17–34). Constructively, liturgical language becomes the

idiom for Christian living—Christians are called to become a "living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1–2)—and the paschal referent of that sacrifice becomes the repeated warrant: for reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:17–20), caring for the poor (Gal. 2:10), loving one's enemies (Matt. 5:44), and more. In short, the shape of the life of the Christian community is to follow from its identity as Christ's body sustained through participation in a panoply of communal and liturgical practices (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 2:5–11) (see Yoder).

Contemporary Context

These connections between worship and the Christian life continue through most of Christian history. From the martyrs to the monastics and the saints, the Christian tradition is replete with those concerned not simply with doing good in the world, making right decisions, or even living upright, moral lives. Rather, the tradition is peopled with exemplars primarily concerned with being united with Christ via prayer and liturgy and thereby living in the form of Christ in the world.

With the advent of nominalism and voluntarism in the fourteenth century, Luther's notion of "the two kingdoms," and the Enlightenment, this connection was severed, and "morality" became a separate sphere of inquiry, a realm of individual decision-making for which "rational" (i.e., universal) justifications must now be discovered. Yet, a return to Scripture and tradition complicates this notion of morality as well as other conventional assumptions—for example, that a sustainable theological distinction can be made between issues in "social" ethics (e.g., poverty) as opposed to "personal" ethics (e.g., sexuality).

A Christian ethic that seeks to take Scripture and tradition seriously must grapple with the almost constant witness of Scripture and tradition that the norms for Christian living derive from one's identity as a member of God's people, of Christ's body, the church, and that the primary question for any ethic is this: who or what does one worship (Hauerwas and Wells)?

See also Ecclesiology and Ethics; Idolatry

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