

Essay Fourteen

Communitarian Dimensions of the Moral Laws

Walter G. Muelder

COLLEGE AND SEMINARY

In the Burlington, Iowa, High School the principal, Ray H. Bracewell, who had once aimed for the ordained ministry, counseled me against taking advanced studies in Latin or Greek while in college. The parish ministry did not require these, he argued, for the relevant materials were all available in English translations. I later came to regret following his lead. As a theological school dean and ecumenist, I needed these tools. Another decision also affected my destiny, as I majored in history and studied widely in the social sciences instead of going beyond the junior college level in mathematics and the physical sciences. My minor at Knox College was English literature. I fulfilled the language requirement by taking German, which was spoken in our home, in which I memorized the catechism, in which my father preached, and which became a passport to a year of study at the University of Frankfurt. Though eventually taking a Ph.D. in philosophy, I had but one formal course in philosophy at Knox College, from which I graduated in 1927.

The orientation in history and numerous social sciences reinforced my predilection for social ethics issues, particularly in peace and labor prob-

lems. I was a student assistant to Professor Floy Painter at Burlington Junior College while she was writing her doctoral dissertation on Eugene V. Debs. Debs had a favorable standing in our home partly because he opposed America's entrance into World War I. He was, of course, involved in the Pullman Strike of 1894 and organized the Socialist Party of America. In Burlington, railway labor issues were related both to the federal government, which had taken them over in World War I, and to the local scene because of the railroad strike of 1922. This deeply divided the city during my high school years. As for peace, my revulsion to war took the form of an attempt with others to disestablish the ROTC and to argue that it had no place in a Christian college. My reforming zeal was aided and abetted by weekly preparations drawing heavily from *The Christian Century* while serving a two-point Methodist circuit at Gilson and Orange, Illinois. I recall that Kirby Page, Sherwood Eddy, Harry Emerson Fosdick, as well as Tolstoy and Gandhi, fed these sermons. The League of Nations was still a significant institution and, at least once, Fosdick's sermon before the League was featured in Knox's chapel service: "The Christian Conscience about War" (1925).

My ambition was to become a professor of philosophy. Armed with Gospel fervor, pacifism, and socialism I came to Boston University School of Theology, where my father had preceded me to study under Borden Parker Bowne. The above concerns have not diminished across the years, but have developed and matured.

In my junior year I enrolled in Psychology of Religion in which a collateral text was James Bissett Pratt's *The Religious Consciousness*. A large part of that book was devoted to mysticism. It spoke to my religious condition and led me to the classics of mysticism and to works like William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* and Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*. The following year the whole panorama of religion in the East and West opened before me in Brightman's course on mysticism. In my first year I also sat under Timothy Tinfang Lew who had us read *China Today Under Chinese Eyes*. For this I had had some preparation at Knox when I participated in an oratorical contest, choosing the topic "The Chinese Revolution." I was asked to repeat the oration at the commencement exercises in 1927.

Systematic study of personalism began the same year. By 1930 I was well grounded, thanks to Marlatt, Cell, Knudson, and, above all, Brightman. Later I was to eke out a graduate student's existence by being, in turn,

a fellow and reader for Marlatt, Knudson, and Brightman. I greatly enjoyed chapel services. I helped Glen Trimble run the Socialist Christian Club. The latter, among other things, challenged the compulsory ROTC at the College of Business Administration to debate their disestablishment—and in this we had the support of Professor Brightman. From the beginning of my Boston days, I tried to take as many courses from him as possible.

FRANKFURT AND ERNST TROELTSCH

I had need to get many things coherently together by the end of my seminary years in 1930. But other formative influences were yet to crowd into my formal education, most notably a year at the University of Frankfurt. Here I must mention Tillich, but also Horkheimer, Mannheim, and Wertheimer, one of the leading Gestalt psychologists. Frankfurt was a predominantly Social Democratic city, and it supported its opera and municipal theater well. Here I saw social democracy in action, not as just a minor political party with a soap box demonstration as on Boston Common. Social democracy was in its death throes in Germany as twenty-seven political parties shattered the political and economic scene. Germany was staggering under the shameful sole war guilt clause of the Versailles Treaty and an astronomical indemnity. Inflation and then the world depression hit and millions were unemployed. Hitler, as Einstein was to say, became a cancer on the empty stomach of Germany.

It was while in Frankfurt that I requested Brightman's consent to do my dissertation on Ernst Troeltsch's philosophy of history. This, I hoped, would bring several things into focus: religious idealism, Tillich's religious socialism, Marxism (Troeltsch had been a member of the Weimar Republic cabinet), the religious-historical method, the nature of historical wholes, which had fascinated me after doing a year-long seminar on Hegel and writing on his philosophy of history, and Christian ethics. I was seeking the foundations of a Christian social ethic.

My interest in the philosophy of history was combined with an equally intense interest in history of philosophy. During my ten years of formal higher education I eventually took the grand sweep of Western thought five times, not counting specialized seminars on Plato, Aristotle, Locke and Leibniz, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Schopenhauer, Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Marx. Teaching aspects of Western thought—religious, po-

litical, economic, or ethical, not least American movements—has always been congenial to me, though I do not consider myself a specialist. In mid-career my interest in correlating these studies with church history and biblical studies was always for the sake of deepening and developing Christian social ethics. I needed tools, however, that would help me go beyond the Leibniz, Lotze, Neo-Kantian, or even Bowne formulations of personalist theory. Perhaps I could find tools and orientation in a study of historical totalities, or Individual Totalities, as Troeltsch called them.

What did Troeltsch contribute to personalism for me in this process? He helped me find the *reality* of social wholes and the conception of person-in-community. He helped integrate the historical materialism of Marx in a larger dialectic of history without repeating the errors of Hegel's philosophy of history and philosophy of right. He confirmed my personalist rejection of positivism. He challenged me to take seriously Individual Totalities as objects of historical enquiry, acknowledging them as empirically given entities, as wholes of personalist existence that would require a communitarian redefinition of personal consciousness and a social ethics reconstruction or development.

To appreciate this development we must, therefore, tarry with Troeltsch's category of historical wholes, the Individual Totality. The term *Totality* designates that a *Gestalt* of this type is an empirical object; the word *Individual* signifies its uniqueness, creativity, and the unrepeatability of historical objects, be they epochs, cultural tendencies, peoples, masses, states, classes, or particular persons.¹ An Individual Totality taken as a temporal and developing historical object is found to have the following attributes: (1) *Originality* and *Uniqueness*. These refer to the objective fact that historical social wholes cannot be deduced; they must simply be accepted. Illustrations would be the unique qualities of the Jewish people, Hellenism, the American temper, and the distinctive great personalities like Jesus, Caesar, Paul, Luther, and so on. (2) *Representation* as a characteristic means that historical wholes stand for innumerable details, which must be filled out by the reader who considers these wholes. One grasps these details by such a process of representation, but also through the object under study. In this way religious metaphors make whole ranges of data and

¹Ernst Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 4 vols. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1912-1925) 3:120.

meaning graspable, as Clifford Geertz says much later in his *Interpretation of Cultures*.

(3) Historical wholes are *unities of meaning and value*. Their cohesion is one of meaning and value both for the observer and for the participants. Within larger totalities are smaller units of meaning and value with their own identities while participating in the whole. For example, Methodism within Protestantism and the latter within Christianity, or again, the church-type, the sect-type, and mysticism in Troeltsch's treatment of the church's history of social teachings. He had a pluralistic view of such unities as contrasted to Hegel's statism and absolute monism. Thus Troeltsch reinforced the personalist principle of organic pluralism.

(4) Closely related to the above is the category of *Common Spirit*. It refers specifically to the relation of the individual and society. The question of the ontological status of common spirit is crucial. Both personalists and Troeltsch combat faulty reification, yet persons participate in the objective empirical reality of many common spirits. Communitarian personalism stresses this participation as requiring communitarian moral laws.

(5) Another dimension of historical totalities is the *Unconscious*. A person is never conscious of the full range of elements that are represented in a totality or in a common spirit. Thus, there are many presuppositions, instincts, and impulses of which a person is not aware, but which, nevertheless, have their effects in and through a person and which influence historical development.

(6) Then, too, there is the factor of *Creativity*. Creativity is located only in personality. Persons are embedded in a superindividual setting from which they draw spiritual life, but novelty arises through persons and becomes causally significant as creativity. (7) Such novelty should be distinguished from the element of *Indeterminism*, or what Troeltsch called *freedom in the sense of the unpredictable*.

In all historical wholes pulsates creative personality. Persons interact with a physical environment and with impersonal, unconscious forces such as Marx identified in the economic order; but personality is the bearer of common spirit and the key to the temporal development of meaning and value. Hence, a further word about development is needed to show how Troeltsch propelled me beyond Bowne, Knudson, and Brightman, who had not wrestled with philosophy of history in a major way.

Development is temporal in a durational sense, is inherently teleological, is fraught with meaning and value, and has a practical interest. Pure

contemplation is out of the question. The impartial bystander does not exist. Thus Troeltsch joins Marx and the pragmatists in stressing the concreteness of theory and practice. Philosophy and science both have a stake in the future; its values are inherent in their modes of inquiry. This perspective was already securely established in my outlook, and later evidence and reflection have only confirmed it. My essays on "Norms and Valuation in the Social Sciences" (1950) and "Theology and Social Science" (1966) show this interaction of social science with philosophy and theology.

Development denotes a dynamic psychical process that tends toward an end, akin to logical development of a thought. It does not mean universal progress, for it is definitely contingent. It is purposive and temporal and expresses itself within and through the unities of meaning and value and the common spirit of Individual Totalities. It is not the monistic trait of some universal world history. The irrational, individual, accidental, and dysteleological facts of history must be acknowledged. Historical development, in contrast to contemplation, embraces a formative principle—the shaping of future community life according to norms. These norms are universal and ideal.

This long excursus into Troeltsch shows how he influenced my development and helped integrate Marx's historical materialism and his dictum on the unity of theory and practice. At a crucial point, however, I had to correct Troeltsch because he finally surrendered the idea of personality as a *universal* principle and restricted its validity to the West. His historicism went too far, ending in relativism.

My appropriation of personalistic method and principle had made me assert that Eastern religions, philosophies, and cultures also presuppose the person as the agent of his experiences. The expert is the agent, the subject of all theoretical and practical judgments and choices. Bowne showed that superpersonal impersonalism is reductionist as well as is subpersonal naturalism. Brightman's organic personalism provided for relativity without succumbing to relativism.

ENCOUNTER WITH NEOORTHODOXY

No sooner had I digested Troeltsch and become a kind of Troeltschian personalist than I encountered neoorthodoxy. I am sorry that this movement ever happened, though it was a dialectical response to the liberalism and historical relativism that Barthians associated with Troeltsch. Neo-

thodoxy made me plain angry because it seemed to beg all the basic questions and to sidestep the painstaking work of epistemology, value-theory, ethics, and metaphysics. Knudson had already exposed the errors in theological positivism in his critique of Ritschl. Biblical positivism is, of course, what Barth intended with his dialectical "No" and its objectivism, which Bultmann later demythologized on existentialist assumptions. In the United States I had some patience with Reinhold Niebuhr's attacks on reformist liberals and sentimental "parlor pinks." I appreciated his Marxism and his realistic appraisal of communism, but I disliked his failure to do his philosophical homework as he put forward a Neo-Augustinian view of persons, politics, and power. Moreover, I rejected his abandonment of pacifism; that is, he seemed to be joining that long line of Christians who are pacifists only between wars. To be a Christian pacifist seemed to me to take pacifist risks during wartime.

Nevertheless, neoorthodoxy forced me to reexamine my assumptions and to respect its role in resisting Hitler and Nazism. I knew, of course, that Niemöller, the pacifist, also openly defied Hitler. I also acknowledged the constructive role persons like Niebuhr and Bennett played at the Oxford Conference (1937), their contributions to the revival of social Christianity, and their ecumenism in the formation of the World Council of Churches. W. A. Visser't Hooft and others were valiant and brilliant leaders, but one must not forget the non-Barthians like William Temple, J. H. Oldham, Ehrenstrom, and Alivasatos, to mention only a few prior to Amsterdam (1948). Neoorthodoxy pushed theology in a Christocratic direction and tended to regard natural theology and the natural law tradition as alien to biblical theology, thus digging a gulf between reason and revelation, between philosophy and theology, which is only now being bridged.

Two things at stake were the nature of collective wholes and the contrasts between a more pessimistic and more optimistic or melioristic view of human nature. These had implications for such issues as war and peace, violence and nonviolence, and the relation of individual morality to collective egoism and the constructive life of groups, including the possibilities of democratic socialism.

My commitment to socialism in the 1930s was reinforced by the triple team of Ward, Bennett, and Niebuhr at Union Theological Seminary who were actively involved in politics and economic reconstruction. Then, too, the Great Depression made all churches more systematic in their social analyses. As for methods of social change, the Spanish Civil War precip-

itated a decision as to whether domestic violence was qualitatively different from international war. After wrestling with the Marxist doctrine of class-struggle and observing class violence in Harlan County, Kentucky, I made a firm decision practically to stay in the pacifist fold, a decision that carried me through the Second World War. I emphasize the term *practical decision* because adherence to the method of "moral laws" required that theoretically such issues remain open, particularly due to the Law of Consequences, the Law of the Best Possible, and the Law of Specification. The Law of the Best Possible leads to the practice of compromise in politics. Pacifism requires a continuing examination of the "best" and the "possible" relevant to the actual situation. Taking Jesus Christ as the exemplar of the Law of Personality often helped in making the nonviolent decision when the calculation of consequences was too complex to be decisive.

What of community? In the 1930s the doctrine of the church played an increasingly important role in my ethical reflection. Oxford (1937) said, "Let the Church be the Church!" In other words, let the actual church become and act like the normative Church. Such an imperative appealed to a dimension of prophetic and redemptive community other than the power struggles of collective egoism featured in *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. I now had three challenges: (1) the church's vocation in world history; (2) the Christian conception of human nature; and (3) the right and effective method of social change. These concerns penetrated during World War II while I was teaching at the University of Southern California and involved in ecumenical action and civic unity affairs.

During that war, I often appealed to vocational pacifism as the proper function of the churches, inasmuch as in the separation of church and state the task of the church is prophetic and not accommodative. In Christian anthropology I criticized Niebuhr's *Nature and Destiny of Man*. In social change issues I adhered to pacifism while making the discovery of thinkers like Gunnar Myrdal, Robert MacIver, and John Elof Boodin.² The communitarian conception of human nature became a cornerstone of my developing ethic. I argued, in effect, that personality is a *socius* with a *private*

²Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944); Robert M. MacIver, *The Web of Government* (New York: Macmillan, 1947); and John E. Boodin, *The Social Mind* (New York: Macmillan, 1939).

center. Boodin's doctrine of *Social Mind* reinforced what I have said about Troeltsch and historical wholes. Myrdal contributed multiple and cumulative causation and a conception of ranking discrimination and prejudice for the purpose of social policy and strategy. MacIver's sociology of community was later to contribute to the role of self-enforcing values in his treatment of the ubiquity of government and the positive tasks of the state as distinguishable from community. Again Myrdal, like Troeltsch, while affirming much in Marx, went beyond him in outlining plurality in social causation. Moreover, for Myrdal, a benign circle of causation can be set in motion when a vicious circle has been operative. An upward spiral of cumulative causation presupposes and may demonstrate a melioristic conception of social change in contrast to a merely conflictual view of power. Myrdal's meliorism was evident not only in his attitude toward race relations in *An American Dilemma*, but also in his forthright treatment of values and valuation in the social sciences.³

Now I had social scientific grounds to supplement my philosophical and theological criticisms of neorthodox conceptions of persons and collectives. I expressed this melioristic persuasion in my review of *The Nature and Destiny of Man* in this way.

There is a Christian perfectionism which may be called a prophetic meliorism, which, while it does not presume to guarantee future willing, does not bog down in pessimistic imperfectionism. Niebuhr's treatment of much historical perfectionism is well-founded criticism from an abstract ethical viewpoint, but it hardly does justice to the constructive contributions of the perfectionist sects within the Christian fellowship and even within the secular order. There is a kind of Christian assurance which releases creative energy into the world and which in actual fellowship rises above the conflicts of individual and group egoism.⁴

At the time when this was written, Martin Luther King, Jr., was only fifteen years old, but it was later to influence him as a graduate student when wrestling with Niebuhr in relation to nonviolence. Today, one can appeal

³Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, vol. 2, appendix 2.

⁴Walter G. Muellder, "Reinhold Niebuhr's Conception of Man," *The Personalist*, 26, no. 3 (July 1945): 292. Reprinted in *The Ethical Edge of Christian Theology* (Lewiston NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1983).

to King's career as a further vindication of this view. A communitarian nonviolence is a *relational synthesis of duty and purpose* through love.

POSTWAR ISSUES AND ECUMENISM

As already indicated, Myrdal's treatment of social causation and Troeltsch's conception of development aided in putting my socialist appreciation of Marx in perspective. Together with my personalistic values, these tendencies helped formulate my essays of "Cumulative Power Tendencies in Western Culture," "Power, *Anomie*, and Personality," and "A Personalistic Critique of Marxism."⁵ Here I might point out that most of my writing does not reflect a systematic career plan, but has been responsive often to teaching needs and responsibilities occasioned by understaffed departments and lacunae in the literature of the field in which I was teaching at that moment. This stimulus from the field and the audience was also evident with the development of my responsibilities in the World Council of Churches.

With the consummation of the World Council in 1948, dominated in "Life and Work" by the Idea of the Responsible Society, my thought became more and more absorbed in the social ethics of the church's vocation. Involvement in this and other dialogues interfaced several fronts: preparation for the Evanston Assembly's main theme, "Jesus Christ, the Hope of the World," entailed confrontation with Barthians, Lutherans, and Orthodox; membership in the Faith and Order Commission from 1952 to 1975 required many-sided debates and for seven years special research and case studies on institutional barriers to Christian unity; cochairing the Commission on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church and Society called for theological reflection, socioeconomic research, and boldness as a gadfly to a male-dominated ecumenical bureaucracy. All this while church and society issues heightened my awareness of the eclectic character of my own discipline and fed my growing commitment to a world "responsible society," including the radical pressures in areas of rapid social change as colonialism yielded to independence in the Third World. The principal ef-

⁵The first two were published by the Conference on Science, Philosophy, and Religion, *Conflicts of Power in Modern Culture* (Seventh Symposium, 1947) and *Perspectives on a Troubled Decade* (Tenth Symposium, 1950). The editors were Bryson, Finkelstein, and MacIver.

fect of these manifold dialogues while continuing as dean and professor was (1) to strengthen the explicit theological component in my reflection, (2) to enlarge my commitment to ecumenism, not least after being an official observer at Vatican II (1964), (3) to compel me to do research on women-men relationships prior to the resurgence of women's liberation, (4) to articulate a critical institutional reform in church and university, and (5) to confirm my faith in nonviolent strategy and philosophy of social change. The latter confirmation deepened as Martin Luther King, Jr., applied the nonviolent interpretation of Boston Personalism to the racial struggle and melded it with the spiritual resources of the Black Church, interfaith ecumenism, and the politics of federal constitutional enforcement.

Summarizing now where I stood in the 1950s on a number of issues: (1) affirmation of norms and values as lockstitched in the social sciences; (2) the communitarian nature of the moral subject; (3) agreement with Professor DeWolf in formulating and adding Communitarian Laws to Brightman's system of moral laws; and (4) systematizing a personalist critique of Marxism. This evaluation of Marx was essentially as follows: the strengths include—(1) the dialectic as a principle; (2) his historical approach to science and economic institutions; (3) his repudiation of mechanistic materialism; (4) his repudiation of abstract idealism in favor of the unity of theory and practice; and (5) his critique of ideology. The weak points from a personalistic perspective are: (1) the impersonal and unempirical elements in the dialectic; (2) his tendency to hypostatize categories like class; (3) the tendencies toward scientific naturalism; (4) his incomplete criticism of ideology; (5) his inadequate doctrine of human nature making the self an ensemble of social relations; (6) his defective philosophy of political order, including the state; (7) his inadequate understanding of the will to power; and (8) his analysis of religion. On the basis of this positive and negative critique of Marx, I challenged personalists to develop a more adequate communitarian unity of theory and practice. About this time I delivered the Lowell Lectures, which were published as *Religion and Economic Responsibility*. One of the chapters was a thorough repudiation of Stalinism and much in Marxism-Leninism. "Socialism from Above" violates what the World Council was later to define as a "just, participatory, and sustainable" society.

Domestically, I declared myself on "Right-to-Work" laws, an issue made acute by the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947. I condemned the laws be-

cause "democracy suffers from the anarchy of union insecurity" that they seek. Moreover, "The 'right-to-work' laws are a virtual conspiracy of the crafty, the ignorant, or the misguided to subvert industrial peace, exploit persons' need to work, and deluge the community with industrial irresponsibility."⁶ Such laws are the most crass application of the seizure of state power in behalf of "free enterprise" against the true freedom of workers.

In addition to these issues, the hysteria of the McCarthy era required greater attention to civil liberties and academic freedom and their attendant church-state relations. An entirely unexpected dimension of applied personalism was the request from the Commission on the Life and Status of Women in the Church to prepare a paper on its concerns just before the Evanston Assembly (1954). This sociological analysis catapulted me into cochairing the department redesigned as the Department of the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society. Some of my concerns, outlined before full clergy rights were established for women in the Methodist church, are relevant here:

1. An adequate program for the cooperation of men and women in the Church will depend on a profounder Christian vocational ethic than has been prevalent in the Church. This vocational ethic will be oriented not primarily in the work of the ministry but in the total vocational problems of lay persons in our society.
2. The Church has not thus far taken full advantage of its strategic position in society to be a formative influence in molding basic attitudes and values in this field.
3. An abstract Christian idealism regarding the equality of men and women, however true it may be in principle, will not of itself provide the leverage for developing sounder culture patterns in the occupational world.
4. The redefinition of roles and status is as important from the masculine as from the feminine side.

⁶*'Right-to-Work' Laws: Three Moral Studies* by an Oblate Father, an Emminent Rabbi, and a Methodist Dean. (Washington DC: International Association of Machinists, 1954, 1955) 43-55.

5. The rich resources of women's talents and spiritual attitudes are often lost to the fellowship of the Church, and to its work in society, by the fact that men define the function of the Church too exclusively in masculine terms. . . . It is important in this connection that the masculine definition of the Church surrender its absolute theological sanction.⁷

When dealing with all these problems from an ecumenical perspective, the encompassing idea was "the responsible society." This middle axiom, first formulated at the Amsterdam Assembly (1948), seemed to gather up the essence of the Oxford Conference (1937), and it appeared to guide reflection for the coming decades. I made it the theme of the University Lecture (1954) and the opening chapter of my major social ethics book, *The Foundations of the Responsible Society*. A middle axiom is a second-order principle that mediates ultimate categories or principles and actual programmatic decisions. It is not as abstract as the highest ideal values, nor as specific as concrete proposals, but it gathers up a whole range of relevant values, gives them dialectical focus, and points a direction or states a guideline for concrete decision making. I found the method of formulating middle axioms to be a useful device in supplementing and applying the regulatory "moral laws." Originally, I planned the "Moral Laws" and the "Foundations" volumes as an integrated single book, but after the manuscript was finished, the publisher feared the costs. Nevertheless, the two belong together, including the chapter "Jesus Christ and Responsible Community," which rounds off the whole with a theological statement.

A special statement on racism and civil rights will indicate their place in my developing social ethics. At Berea College the seal and motto was "God has made of one blood." That the student body and faculty were all white was no fault of the college, but that is a story of itself. Prevented by law from coeducating the races, those of us who taught there were highly conscious of an interracial vocation. Yet, I had an adjustment to make during the civil rights struggle, for as a socialist, I tended to subsume race and

⁷"Some Social Aspects of Cooperation Between Men and Women," mimeographed by the World Council of Churches from an address to the Commission on Life and Status of Women in the Church, Lake Forest, 1954.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITARIAN PERSONALISM

I must confess to the eclectic character of Christian social ethics in this historical era. The disciplines on which it draws have relative autonomy. And yet, the principle of coherence requires the search for the whole, giving due regard for the dialectical tension among the parts.

Second, the communitarian principle is ecumenical with respect to both space and time, that is, it is social and historical. It affirms solidarity and the constants of the human condition. The search for these constants in theology, philosophy, and science presupposes the priority of personality as the subject.

Third, the Moral Laws as regulatory principles are constant, but their formulation may doubtless be refined. Fourth, all principles are abstractions derived by persons from the concrete metaphysical reality of personal wholeness. Abstract ideals like freedom, justice, participation, sustainability affirm the personality principle while being embodied in changing historical configurations. For example, actual freedom is always concretely historical and subject to the flow of circumstance; yet, it is anchored in the moral constants of person-in-community.

Fifth, Troeltsch's great error was not in his analysis of historical wholes but in his confusion of relativity with relativism. He need not have conceded the metaphysical principle of personality simply because certain cultures and civilizations did not seem to appeal to it or seemed to seek redemption in escaping from it. They only demonstrate it in unique Individual Totalities. Contemporary China and India are as involved in the ethics of "justice, participation and sustainability" as are the World Council of Churches and the North Atlantic community.

Sixth, this dynamic formula is a fitting middle axiom for communitarian personalism. Three comments are in order. Since justice is love rationally distributed (love being the highest personality value), justice must concentrate on the property question inasmuch as it has to do with the production, distribution, use, and power related to all scarce values. The presumption of justice is a *nisus* toward equality consistent with the variables of actual inequality. In the struggle for justice understood as love distributed, the goal and norm are reconciliation.

color under the category of exploitation of classes. In Los Angeles I chaired the Department of Race Relations of the Church Federation; I protested the incarceration of persons of Japanese ancestry; and, when it appeared, I avidly studied Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*. Still, I did not think of racism in distinct structural terms, since both anthropology and Christian theology affirmed but one human race and one human family. Both the doctrines of creation and of redemption are barrierless. Myrdal prompted me, as did MacIver, to take every opportunity to modify what Myrdal called the rank order of discrimination by a strategy of multiple and cumulative amelioration. Hence, I did not approach race as a separable problem until the dynamics of the King crusade made evident the paradoxical character of structural racism—that it is not presently reducible to the class struggle or to the perversities of prejudice and discrimination. It is an Individual Totality lockstitched into the ambiguities of contemporary history. In this respect, as a social ethics issue, race becomes a special kind of issue—and not limited to the history of slavery, Southern Reconstruction, or the land greed of Native Sons of the Golden West.

Sexism, we have come to see, has analogous structural dimensions. One needs to recognize in radical ways that class, race, and sex are not reducible to each other; neither are they completely separable. Unjust discrimination based on these categories violates communitarian personalism. They interpenetrate as structural variables, as well as through psychic processes, at many levels of conscious and unconscious dynamics. To deal with them adequately we should use the tools of differential analysis and of interactive models. Such awareness agitates my applied social ethics a great deal. An ability to assimilate varieties of models has been made easier for me by the study of other institutional barriers to Christian unity.

In retrospect it seems almost axiomatic that the principles of person-in-community, wholeness, and dialectic should demand interactive models of research. Moreover, cultures are complex individual totalities in and through which major changes in one component institution will affect to some degree all other components. A sound interactive model conserves the personalistic principle of organic pluralism and rules out any method that reduces one causal factor to another. At the same time it will be oriented to the ethical principles of the Communitarian Laws, which take this range of empirical data more seriously into account than was done in the era of Knudson and Brightman.

Participation is also axiomatic in the idea of person-in-community. Participation is the measure of power through decision making. There is very little alienation that participatory power will not overcome. Preparation for, exercise and conservation of, and evaluation of participation are dimensions of both love and justice. Bills of human rights are codes of participation in the service of freedom and justice.

Sustainability is the dynamic equilibrium of God's creation and of human participation in it. It applies to both the ecology of nature and the ecology of social existence. In this respect for nature and society under God, the present generation acknowledges its responsibility for future generations. It means, in harmony with justice and participation and the communitarian moral laws, a democratic socialism understood in generational terms.

Finally, in ultimate terms the highest good for human persons is the adoration of the Objective Good, namely God. Beyond the relative autonomy of social ethics is God, the source and ground of the whole moral order. Since God is personal and human personality is the key to ultimate reality, the quest for the highest good is reverence for personality both human and divine. The moral good for persons participates in the religious good as its source, ground, and goal. The "telos" of personal life is God's will for all human life, which is love. The embodiment of that love of self and neighbor is the Kingdom of God. Though we do not build the Kingdom, we may be said to embody it or to express it interpersonally or in community. One of the vocational embodiments of such normative religious devotion is the Christian Church. The organic pluralism of the historical church is an illustration of embodied communitarian personalism as a servant of world community. This idea of community shows the personalistic ethic to be relational as well as teleological. Communitarian personalism is, finally, theonomous in that human beings are capable of manifesting God, since God's grace penetrates their nature and helps bring them, despite sin and evil, to fulfill God's created design for them.