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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Kenneth E. Schmitt entitled "The Christian Ethics of Paul Ramsey: An Analysis of His Moral Reasoning as an Expression of His Theological Position." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Philosophy.

Charles H. Reynolds,
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance.

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THE CHRISTIAN ETHICS OF PAUL RAMSEY: AN ANALYSIS OF HIS MORAL REASONING AS AN EXPRESSION OF HIS THEOLOGICAL POSITION

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the manner in which Paul Ramsey's ethical position is an outgrowth of his theological background and assumptions. The paper will proceed by investigating Ramsey's apperception of the meaning of Christian Ethics as an outworking of prior faith commitments with agape as the basic moral principle, examining his methodology for doing the work of Christian Ethics by tracing the development of "in-principled love" through the component stages of moral reasoning and demonstrating that the mode of justification in Ramsey's argumentation as an expression of felicity to covenant commitment.

PREFACE

For more than three decades Paul Ramsey has dedicated his professional career to the work of delineating the ethical implications of the Christian covenant commitment. This task has involved him in discourse on the pressing moral problems of our day, from sexual responsibility to the ethics of war to the morality of modern medical technology. The vast compass of these concerns and the extensive literature Ramsey has generated dictate the scope of this analysis of his work. Rather than approaching Ramsey's long career from a chronological perspective, cataloging the development of his thoughts and charting his intellectual growth, this study will provide a systematic, thematic view of Ramsey's ethical postulations. Rather than attempting an exhaustive investigation of his argumentation on each of the issues he has addressed, this work will focus on the central categories that lie at the heart of Ramsey's ethical understanding and from which his positions are derived. Precedent for the applicability of this method to Ramsey's work has been provided by David H. Smith's essay "Paul Ramsey, Love and Killing" and Charles E. Harris, Jr.'s essay "Love as the Basic Moral Principle in Paul Ramsey's Ethics."

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CHAPTER I

THE MEANING OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS IN RAMSEY'S WORK

In contrast to Herman Melville's caricature of the gospel of love as "a volume bound in rose-leaves, clasped with violets, and by the beaks of hummingbirds printed with peach-juice on the leaves of lilies,"[1] Paul Ramsey characterizes Christian ethics as a matter of "labor and fortitude." This labor consists of a constructive elaboration of the way the data of morality and contemporary moral demands may be comprehended in the light of Christian faith. Thus moral theory, from a Christian perspective, is informed and controlled by the prior faith commitments which are implicit in the profession of Christianity. The nature of these commitments and hence the meaning of Christian morality is defined by the Christian scriptures and has been articulated by reflective thinkers throughout the course of the Christian era who have struggled to develop a definition of ethical thought and practice from those scriptures.

The starting point for a study of the meaning of Christian ethics is the biblical affirmation that moral obligation stems from the fact and act of God. Of this Ramsey writes:

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[1]Herman Melville, Pierre, quoted in Paul Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. xi.

> Biblical writers do not view ethics naturalistically as rooted in human nature or in the social environment, or abstractly in terms of some generalizations about human values. They view ethics theologically or rooted in the nature and activity of God.[2]

God is involved in ethical obligation not merely as an enforcer armed with supernatural sanctions ready to coerce compliance with his commandments from unwilling subjects, but as a pattern or prototype of moral activity. This is summarized by the oft-repeated biblical statement: "I am holy, therefore be ye holy."

The holiness of God has expressed itself to mankind in the form of covenant-making and covenant-keeping. Ramsey quotes Otto Boab as saying concerning the concept of covenant, that "within the scope of this idea may be found all that is relevant to the basic religious beliefs of Israel and to the faith by which she championed them."[3] From this he goes on to state that this concept of covenant is central to the comprehension of the just arrangement of society according to biblical norms. An analysis of Ramsey's understanding of the idea of covenant reveals two constituent elements: (1) the unilateral establishment by God of a bond of fidelity between Himself and man, and (2) the responsibility

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[2]Paul Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. 1.

[3]Otto Boab, The Theology of the Old Testament, quoted in Ramsey, p. 367.

on the part of man to pattern interpersonal relationships after this example. The first aspect is the recognition of God's "sure love" for His creation and His consequent faithfulness of it. The second is a realization of the incumbency of the principle of replication upon the recipients of that love. Together they define the nature of ethical obligation as human fidelity to God's prior righteous action; man's person-to-person relationships must be consistent with the norm established in the God-person relationship. "Christian moral reflection always includes a referent to the past and consists of an attempt to spell out norms of conduct which are appropriate to the divine precedent."[4] The essence of each of these elements is expressed by statements contained in the Johannine gospel and epistles:

> Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. (Jn. 15:13)
>
> By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 Jn. 3:16)

These two components of the covenant concept are reflected in the two basic notions which Ramsey derives from the idea of covenant and offers as the sources of his understanding of the central category of Christian ethics.

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[4]David H. Smith, "Paul Ramsey, Love and Killing," in Love and Society: Essays in the Ethics of Paul Ramsey, JRE studies in Religions Ethics I, ed. by James T. Johnson and David H. Smith (Missoula, Montana: American Academy of Religion and Scholars Press, 1974), p. 3.

> For a proper study of the origin and nature of Christian ethics, a distinction may be made between (1) God's righteousness and love and (2) the reign of this righteousness in the kingdom of God. These are two sources of "Christian love." Never imagine you have rightly grasped a biblical ethical idea until you have succeeded in reducing it to a simple corollary of one or the other of these notions, or of the idea of covenant between God and man from which they both stem.[5]

The Righteousness of God

In the first of these sources from which Ramsey derives his conception of Christian ethics, "the righteousness of God," Ramsey sees the essence of the biblical record. "The Bible has been called 'the book of God's righteousness.' The 'righteousness of God,' his judgment and his steadfast faithfulness to the covenant he makes with men, is not only frequently mentioned in the Bible but is its main theme."[6] As such the biblical notion of righteousness, rooted in the righteousness of God, provides both the meaning and measure of human obligation. Ramsey refers to God's righteousness as the plumbline for measuring the rightness of human relationships.

The revelation of the righteousness of God is best understood as the enactment of his salvation. Throughout the Old Testament the righteousness of God is linked with His salvific activity:

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[5]Ramsey, p. 2.

[6]Ibid, p. 2.

> In thy righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline thy ear to me, and save me! (Ps. 71:2)
>
> But for you who fear my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. (Mal. 4:2)

Thus God's righteousness is operative as He seeks the salvation of men. In contrast to the traditional dogmatic dichotomy drawn between the righteousness or judgment of God and the love of God, this conception of God's righteousness understands the Old Testament as teaching of a God who is righteous and <u>therefore</u> a Savior. His righteousness is defined in terms of and exemplified by His unwavering faithfulness to covenant.

According to the principle of replication implicit in Ramsey's covenant concept, the righteousness of God becomes the measure of true justice for human obligation. Inasmuch as the existence of the covenant community is rooted in the act of God, the righteousness of her members must also grow out of His righteousness. The external legal code of the Old Testament is an expression of its central precept, God's righteousness, hence all its laws are derived from and defined in terms of His prior righteous action.

> For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow. and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. (Deut. 10: 17-19)

The divine precedent provides a standard of what is expected in human interaction. Since God demonstrated a particular regard for the helpless, the needy, the poor, and the outcast, this same regard must characterize his people. Jeremiah wrote in the 7th Century B.C.:

> Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness,
> and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who
> has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to
> the alien, the fatherless, and the widow.
> Did not your father eat and drink and do justice
> and righteousness?
> Then it was well with him.
> He judged the cause of the poor and needy;
> then it was well.
> Is not this to know me?
> Says the Lord. (Jer. 22:3-15-16)

In light of these and other biblical passages the meaning of human ethical obligation involves much more than the commonly accepted definition. Prevailing usage distinguishes between justice, as equality before the law or equal opportunity, and mercy or righteousness, as kindness in excess of what may be expected. Justice then is seen as the governing principle of society, that which every individual has the right to claim as his due. Mercy or righteousness is relegated to the interstices of extra-juridicial relationships, it is something for which we hope but that we cannot expect. However, the biblical concept of God's righteous judgment, which as we have seen is mercy-laden and salvific in nature, is the standard by which true human justice receives its definition. This is demonstrated by the juxtaposition of the two terms by biblical writers.

> But let justice roll down like waters and
> righteousness like an everflowing stream.
> (Amos 5:24)
>
> Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;
> maintain the right of the afflicted and the
> destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy;
> deliver them from the land of the wicked.
> (Ps. 82:3-4)

In addition, numerous passages, such as the following from Isaiah indicate that true human justice reflects God's righteousness.

> For when thy judgements are in the earth, the
> inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.
> (26:9)
>
> He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
> or decide by what his ears hear;
> but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
> and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.
> (11:3-4)

Ramsey concludes that in biblical thought, the meaning of justice has been invaded by the vocabulary of salvation. Justice no longer is mere equality before the law or equal opportunity; rather it appears as partiality for the poor and helpless of the earth.

> The biblical norm for sound ethical conduct tends
> to leave behind all prudential reference to
> enlightened self-interest, all reference also to
> mutual participation in the common good, over-
> leaping even the criterion of membership in the
> chosen people of God to include concern for the
> alien who has no holding. Justice or righteous-
> ness 'shows a persistent tendency to topple over
> into benevolence, and easily to have special
> reference to those who stand in dire need of a
> Helper.'[7] Biased in favor of the helpless,

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[7]Norman H. Smith, The Distinctive Ideas of The Old Testament, quoted in Ramsey, p. 12.

> justice means care for the poor, the orphans, the widows, and aliens resident in the land. Why? Because the Bible measures what is required of man against the perfect righteousness of an utterly faithful-savior-God.[8]

Ramsey claims that, this conception of justice is radically different than any other in the history of human thought. It is not corrective, to each according to what he had; or distributive, to each according to his contribution; rather it is redemptive, to each according to his need. Ramsey summarizes this notion of justice, with its bias toward the helpless, in the principle: "To each according to the measure of his real need, not because of anything human reason can discern inherent in the needy, but because his need alone is the measure of God's righteousness toward him."[9]

This fundamental idea of Old Testament ethics extends into the New Testament where it finds its fullest expression in the person of Jesus. According to Paul (I. Cor. 1:30) Jesus is the "righteousness of God." This is reflected in the teachings of Jesus.

> Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you. (Matt. 5:42)

Giving to the poor and lending to would-be borrowers is presented as an obligation rather than an option. The measure of the obligation is determined by the extent of the

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[8]Ramsey, p. 12.

[9]Ibid., p. 14.

need and the ability of the giver to meet it. It was this idea of justice or righteousness that gave rise to the medieval moral theology of almsgiving. Theologians of the Middle Ages considered almsgiving as a requirement of justice rather than a deed of charity and thereby justified cases of "theft" by the poor when the wealthy failed to comply with their obligation toward the needy.

> You have heard it said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust . . . You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt. 5:44,45,48)

Jesus here eliminates preferential considerations in the expression of good-will. The all-inclusiveness of God's righteousness defines the scope of our righteousness. Ramsey paraphrases the commandment as "Be ye therefore completely self-giving and redemptive in any single case of your goodwill, even as your heavenly Father disinterestedly cares for all."

However, the redemptive nature of the righteousness of God is most graphically depicted in the kenosis of Christ.

> Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. (Phil. 2:5-8)

The extent of the righteousness of God, of the divine love for man, which serves as the prototype for human ethical obligation, is portrayed by the condescension and incarnation of Christ. The revolutionary teachings of Jesus, his life of humility and self-abnegation and even his sacrificial death were a continuation of the great act of self-emptying love by which Christ became a man. That Christ's love was consistent with the non-preferential love he taught is established by Paul's statements in his letter to the Romans:

> While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps for a good man one will dare to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. (Rom. 8:6-8)

Hence with the advent of Jesus, religious ethics became Christocentric. The righteousness of God was manifested in this incarnation and crucifixion of Christ, therefore Christian love is grounded in this account of divine condescension. Compliance with Paul's admonition "Have this mind among yourselves" became a matter of extending the life of Jesus by imitating him in one's dealings with others.

This is consistent with the biblical method of establishing obligation by referring to a supernatural precedent. The responsibility of care for the helpless and disenfranchised is discovered in God's treatment of the Israelites enslaved in Egypt; the meaning of true human

justice is demonstrated by God's redemptive righteousness; the meaning of Christian love is determined by reference to the love manifest in Christ. For Ramsey, then, the relevance of the righteousness of God to the meaning of Christian ethics is that it provides a divine precedent for norms of interpersonal conduct.

> Using the measure of divine love inverts self-love and discovers the neighbor. Not that we should do to others as we would be done by, or merely love our neighbors as ourselves . . . but that we should love our brothers as Christ who laid down his life for his friends and for those predestined to be his disciples (The Johannine writings) or love our neighbors as Christ who, while men were yet sinners and his enemies, for their sakes emptied himself of all self-concern and himself did not grasp at being equal to God (Paul)—this is the principle par excellence of Christian ethics.[10]

The Kingdom of God

The second of the sources from which Ramsey derives his understanding of Christian ethics is the "Kingdom of God." Whereas the righteousness of God defines the content of human ethical obligation, the concept of the Kingdom of God delineates the context in which that obligation is dispensed. For Ramsey, there is a vital relationship between eschatology and ethics in the teaching of Jesus.

Ramsey cites several biblical passages which indicate Jesus' apocalyptic expectations:

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[10]Ibid., p. 21.

> When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes. (Matt. 10:23)
>
> Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power. (Matt. 9:1)
>
> For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of man be in his day. (Luke 17:24)

Ramsey then interprets these references to indicate that Jesus adhered to the traditional Jewish messianic view that "God would soon, suddenly, and catastrophically intervene to disrupt the order of life prevailing in this present age and to inaugurate by his own power alone a kingdom of righteousness."[11]

The question which presents itself is, "What is the relationship between the eschatological expectation of Jesus and his ethical teaching?" Much of Jesus' teaching was rooted in his apocalypticism. The Beatitudes, for example, are eschatological in that the blessings pronounced are predictions dependent upon the coming of the kingdom. Meekness is not a means of inheriting the earth, but an attribute that will be rewarded in eschaton. Jesus enunciated other more radical injunctions, to non-resistance of violence, unlimited forgiveness, giving to every need, lending to every borrower, which can be regarded literally

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[11]Ibid., p. 27.

only in light of his apocalyptic expectation. Is it then possible to recognize the validity of these teachings while rejecting his apocalypticism? Inasmuch as few contemporary Christian scholars accept Jesus' eschatology, is it possible to affirm the ethics that grew out of it?

According to Ramsey, this apocalytic element which appears to be a liability in the teaching of Jesus actually serves as its strongest asset in that it specifies the functional limitation of their validity. "Apocalypticism served as a burning-glass to bring biblical ethics to pin-point focus and intensity."[12] Given his apocalyptic expectation, we understand that when Jesus commanded his followers to love he was aware that the sphere in which evil could be conquered by good was limited, and therefore limited the sphere of their ethical concern. Regarding the wider range of human affairs the eschatological expectation gave form to the righteousness of God by focusing obligation on the individual neighbor.

> In face of the inbreaking kingdom, moral decision was stripped of all prudential considerations. . . . Preferential loves, even those justifiable in normal times, were supplanted by entirely non-preferential regard for whomever happened to be standing by, friend or enemy, bullying-sergeant or indigent beggar. All that mattered was perfect obedience to God. All that mattered was complete readiness for the Kingdom to come, all that mattered was the single individual a man happened

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[12]Ibid., p. 44.

> to confront. All that mattered was unhesitating total love. Thus, standing so entirely before God with all prudential righteousness gone, "the neighbor," the neighbor in any man was decisively discovered. Under such circumstances God's reign between a man and his neighbor clearly required that a person give the name of duty to the slightest momentary claim upon him. . . .[13]

The apocalyptic element extracts a person from the plurality of relationships and network of neighbor claims which blunt the demands of obligation to a single neighbor and too often provide an excuse for self-concern. It stands a man face to face with his neighbor and by placing that relationship in the light of the eschaton enables him to behave toward that neighbor as if there were no other claims at all upon him. By apocalyptically removing all others from view, Jesus assured that God's righteousness would prevail in the dealings of one person with another. By standing his followers on the border between two worlds, Jesus confronted them with the absolute demands of obedience to God and love for neighbor and demonstrated the meaning of God's reign in human relationships.

Schweitzer wrote "The late Jewish Messianic world-view is the crater from which burst forth the flame of the eternal religion of love."[14] Because of this world view

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[13]Ibid., p. 39

[14]Albert Schweitzer, Out of My Life and Thought, quoted in Ramsey, p. 39.

Jesus clearly articulated the implications of the righteousness of God. "It was apocalypticism within the context of biblical faith in God's saving love which produced Jesus' decisive statement of divine righteousness as the measure and meaning of human obligation."[15] The righteousness of God and the kingdom of God, then, are the sources of Ramsey's understanding that love is the supreme principle of morality in Christian ethics.

The Meaning of Christian Love

In the introduction to his Basic Christian Ethics, Ramsey wrote:

> The central ethical notion or "category" in Christian ethics is "obedient love"—the sort of love the gospels describe as "love fulfilling the law" and St. Paul designates as faith that works through love . . . This concept, basic to any understanding of the Christian outlook with the demands it places upon moral actions, gives us the clue essential to understanding certain other ideas, such as "justice," "right" or "obligation," "duties to oneself," "vocation," "virtues" of moral character, "sinfulness" and the "image of God" which in turn are of crucial importance in elaborating a theory of Christian ethics.[16]

Therefore, analysis of Ramsey's understanding of the meaning of Christian ethics depends upon apprehension of his conception of love.

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[15] Ramsey, p. 45.

[16] Ibid., p. xi.

Charles Harris uses Outka's "other regarding care rather than personal acquisitiveness"[17] to define Ramsey's notion of love and designated it as "radical altruism." This characterization is consistent with Ramsey's representation of the Pauline position. In seeking to trace the emergence of love from legalism, as well as Jewish theology and apocalypticism, he explores Paul's understandings of love in contrast to law.

> For you were called to freedom brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Gal. 5:13-14)

To Paul, Christian ethics did not consist in following carefully-formulated rules derived from his or Jesus' teaching, rather than the Old Testament legal code. Hence, in response to the Judaizer's insistence upon the necessity of circumcision, Paul didn't impose a law forbidding it. Instead, he insisted that circumcision wasn't the issue.

> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love. (Gal. 5:6)

For Paul, the essence of Christian ethics was the internal reality of a faith which expressed itself in love, seeking

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[17]Gene Outka, "Agape: An Ethical Analysis," quoted in Charles E. Harris, Jr., "Love as the Basic Moral Principle in Paul Ramsey's Ethics," The Journal of Religious Ethics, IV (Fall, 1976), p. 239.

and serving the needs of one's neighbors rather than conformity to an external code, whether it is based on the sayings of the Old Testament or the statements of Jesus. Given this apperception of morality, Paul could say:

> All things are lawful but not all things are helpful: all things are lawful, but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. (I. Cor. 10:23-24)

An appropriate formulation of Paul's principle would be "Love and do as you then please" in which love is the safeguard which protects against the egoism of the statement "Do as you please." "Christian love will be pleased only by doing what the neighbor needs."[18] Thus Ramsey interprets the love commandment as meaning "Everything is quite lawful, absolutely everything is permitted which love permits. Everything without a single exception" and "absolutely everything is commanded which love requires, absolutely everything without the slightest exception or softening."[19] The primary reference which determines what is and what is not to be done is Christian care for the neighbor's needs.

However, if this principle is to have any normative relevance, the question with which a certain lawyer responded to the love commandment, "Who then is my neighbor?," must be considered. It is significant that, in telling the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus refused to answer the question,

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[18] Ramsey, p. 78. [19] Ibid., p. 89.

and instead recast it. The question asked for a general definition of "neighbor" which would provide criteria for determining who deserved neighborly treatment. Actually, the lawyer asked who his neighbor was so he would know who his neighbor wasn't. Jesus provided instead an example of neighborly love which did not depend upon the worth of the individual to whom it was directed.

> What the parable does is to demand that the questioner revise entirely his point of view. Reformulating the question first asked so as to require neighborliness of himself rather than anything of his neighbor. A shift is made from defining the qualities of the man who rightfully ought to be loved to the specific demand that the questioner himself become a neighbor. The parable actually shows the nature and meaning of Christian love which alone of all ethical standpoints discovers the neighbor because it alone begins with neighborly love and not with discriminating between worthy and unworthy people according to the qualities they possess.[20]

The intended result of Jesus' reply is that neighborly love discovers the neighbor in every man it meets and recognizes him as a rightful recipient of Christian care. This care is not to be confused with the abstract "love for mankind" which all too often blurs the demands of responsibility to individual men. Linus, the resident philosopher of "Peanuts" fame, is a prime example of this tendency. When his sister, Lucy, objected to his plans to become a doctor on the grounds that he didn't really love humanity as much as he claimed, Linus insisted "I love mankind, it's people I

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[20]Ibid., p. 93.

can't stand." Christian love, in contrast to love for mankind, in general, is a "simple-minded orientation of a man's primary intention toward this individual neighbor with all his concrete needs. Christian love means an entirely 'neighbor-regarding concern for others' which begins with the first man it sees."[21] Though this love is universal in compass, in that it is directed toward any man, it is concrete in that it begins with the particular neighbor, not mankind.

The nature and meaning of this neighborly-love is also contained in the commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The love that is to be extended to the neighbor is the love that one extends to himself. Basically, an individual loves himself for his own sake, regardless of the positive or negative qualities or attributes he may possess. Though we may dislike what we have done, we naturally love ourselves for our own sakes; and after the failure has passed, we generally continue to wish for our own good. Christian love, then, cares for the neighbor for his own sake; its motive is other-regarding rather than self-regarding. It has nothing to do with feelings or emotions, positive or negative qualities, attraction or revulsion. It loves the neighbor for his own sake, therefore whether a

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[21]Ibid., p. 95.

man is a friend or an enemy has nothing to do with whether he is a neighbor. This depends upon the direction of the will, the orientation of intention. One to whom you can extend neighborly-love, disinterested concern for the sake of the other alone, is your neighbor.

Ramsey's elucidation of the meaning of Christian love includes consideration of the relationship of the love for superior values and the love for God to this notion. Regarding the former, he notes that there are two questions with which ethics is concerned: "What is good?" and "Whose good shall it be when choice must be made between mine and thine?" Christian ethics however is primarily concerned with the second of these questions. Indeed, Christianity replaces the query "What is good?" with "Whose good?" According to Ramsey, Christian ethics raises no fundamental objection to definitions of value given by any school of philosophical ethics; it is not attached to a predetermined set of values or to discrimination between higher and lower goods.

> Any love for neighbor is as much of a task at any level where men are involved with one another and with goods they want, be they material or spiritual values. A "culture-vulture" may be a vulture still, and the chief concern of Christian ethics is not with spreading enlightenment, desirable as that may be, but with purging away vulturous self-interest.[22]

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[22]Ibid., p. 111.

As such, Christian ethics is a deontological ethics concerned with right, rather than a teleological ethics concerned with the good. Only when the first has been established does the second become a concern; when Christian love has been expressed to the neighbor it then seeks to become enlightened about what is truly good for the neighbor.

Regarding the relationship of love for God to neighborly-love, Ramsey notes that the particular formulation of the love commandment has occasioned the creation of a dichotomy between religious duties due to God and ethical obligations owed to man:

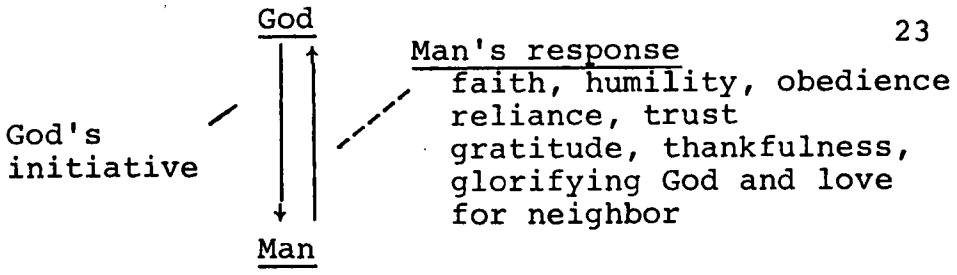
> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Matt. 22:37-39)

He resolves this tension by reference to the Pauline summary of the entire law in terms of the second love commandment.

> The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Rom. 13:9)
>
> For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Gal. 5:14)

This is not, in Ramsey's estimation, a mere humanitarian reduction of love for God to love for neighbor, but the recognition that neighbor-love is responsive obedience to the love of God for man. Neighborly relationship with others

stem from and are an expression of the proper relationship with God. Ramsey offers the following diagram to explain the relationship between the two:



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Thus neighbor love is the fulfillment of the law in that it is perfect obedience out of gratitude to God whose whole requirement may be summed up: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Man's whole duty is obedient, responsive love. This is the meaning of Paul's assertion that the essence of Christian ethics is "faith that works through love." Of this, Luther said,

> . . . When you know that you have through Christ a good and gracious God who will forgive your sins and remember them no more, and are now a child of eternal blessedness, a Lord over heaven and earth with Christ, then you have nothing more to do than to go about your business and serve your neighbor.

The love of God for man, manifest in Christ, provides both the measure and motivation of neighbor-love.

It is from this meaning of love, as the primitive idea of Christian ethics, that other notions basic to a Christian conception of morality derive their definitions. In light of the Christian understanding of love as "disinterested regard for another person for his own sake," justice, as

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[23]Ibid., p. 129.

we have seen, becomes redemptive rather than corrective or distributive. The essence of justice is no longer equal opportunity before the law, but the principle "To each according to the measure of his real need, because his need is the measure of God's righteousness toward him." Duty is no longer defined in terms of the good, neighbor-love comprises the meaning of obligation; it defines what is right. Given non-preferential love as the supreme moral principle, duties to oneself are delineated in terms of duties to others. The ethics in vogue, enlightened selfishness and self-realization, are replaced by enlightened unselfishness, in which a man loves himself for the purpose of loving his neighbor. A Christian theory of vocation, then, demands that a Christian, regardless of his function in society, order his life for the service of God in devotion to the good of his neighbor. Virtues, within Christian ethical theory, are also controlled by the distinctive perspective of faith which works by love. Thus in contrast to this faith effective through love, sin is seen as pride or anxiety which is expressed as selfishness. If agape is the basic notion or controlling category of Christian ethics, then sin is the opposite: anxious self-centeredness. Finally, in reference to the image of God, Ramsey writes:

> This term like all the Christian categories whose meaning we have explored in this book, can be defined only derivatively by decisive reference

> to the basic "primitive idea" in Christian ethics, i.e. the idea of Christian love which itself in turn can be adequately defined only by indicating Christ Jesus. Jesus' pure humility and prompt obedience to God and his actions expressing pure and instant love for neighbor; these were in fact the same thing, the same image, the very image of God. Standing wholly within the relationship of imaging God's will "with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror the glory of God," and fully obedient love: these are in reality the same. There is no obedience, no response to God, there are no religious duties beyond this: Thou shalt love; and love fulfills every legitimate obedience. Existence within the image of God is the same thing as existence for another.[24]

The starting point for the study of Ramsey's understanding of the meaning of Christian ethics was the idea of covenant. It is significant that the concluding chapter of Basic Christian Ethics is devoted to covenant obedience to God as the religious foundation for community life. Inasmuch as the conditions of the covenant are bound up in the biblical notion of the righteousness of God, covenant obedience takes the form of neighbor-love. In light of the bond of fidelity which God established between Himself and mankind, the principle of replication demands a consequent bond "by which one person affirms the being and well-being of another." Throughout Ramsey's discussion of Christian ethics, he refers to the basic norm as "obedient love" because it is rooted in the covenant concept and can be reduced to a corollary of that idea. He concludes his discussion of Christian ethics with the statement:

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[24]Ibid., p. 230.

> . . . Consenting to the sovereignty of God manifestly means acknowledging his righteousness or justice to be the sovereign rule of life. These two are in fact, the same thing: obeying the covenant and doing justice, love for neighbor and fulfilling the law.[25]

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[25]Ibid., p. 388.

CHAPTER II

THE METHODOLOGY FOR DOING CHRISTIAN ETHICS IN RAMSEY'S WORK

Paul Camenisch, in an essay, "Paul Ramsey's Task: Some Methodological Clarifications and Questions," suggests that consideration of an ethicist's methodology should begin with the task that the method is intended to effect. For Ramsey, love alone "can occupy the ground floor if Christian ethics is not to suffer fundamental alteration."[26] As we have seen, this love is understood to take form as disinterested regard for the other person for his own sake, the measure of which is defined by the neighbor's need. Given this basic notion and supreme principle, he seeks to develop subsidiary principles and specific moral judgments that will serve to guide individuals in the expression of neighborly-love. Thus, according to Camenisch, "Ramsey's position is that a major task of Christian ethics is serving the neighbor."[27] This is demonstrated in Ramsey's discussion, in the Introduction to War and The Christian Conscience, of the development of the just-war doctrine from the original pacifistic position in Christian ethical theory.

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[26] Ibid., p. 184.

[27] Paul F. Camenisch, "Paul Ramsey's Task: Some Methodological Clarifications and Questions," in Love and Society, p. 67.

> The change-over to just-war doctrine and practice was not a "fall" from the original purity of Christian ethics; but, however striking a turning-full-circle, this was a change of tactics only. The basic strategy remained the same: responsible love and service of one's neighbors in the texture of the common life. The primary motive and foundation for now approving Christian participation in warfare was the same as that which before, in a different social context, led Christians out of Christlike love for neighbor wholly to disapprove of the use of armed force.[28]

Though the tactics changed, the task in both approving and disapproving of the use of armed force was loving service to neighbor need. In order to understand both Ramsey's tactics and the methodology he employs for deriving them, it is essential to keep his conception of the task of Christian ethics uppermost in mind.

The Tasks and Methods of Christian Ethics

Ramsey's stated purpose in the essay, "An Unfinished Agenda," was "the preparation of an agenda for the possible clarification of the tasks and methods of Christian ethics."[29] In this rejoinder to Professor William K. Frankena's monograph, "Love and Principle in Christian Ethics," Ramsey analyzes Frankena's delineation of the options in Christian ethical theory. According to Frankena there are three

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[28]Paul Ramsey, War and The Christian Conscience: How Shall Modern War Be Conducted Justly? (Durham, N.C.: The Duke University Press, 1961), p. xvii.

[29]Paul Ramsey, Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), p. 121.

primary possible positions: pure agapism, mixed agapism, non-agapism. The first of these options "assigns to the 'law of love' the same position that utilitarianism assigns to the principle of utility; it allows no other basic ethical principles other than or independent of 'the law of love'";[30] "nothing else than love, however, can occupy the ground floor if Christian ethics is not to suffer fundamental alteration."[31]

Pure agapism may take one of four forms. (1) Pure act-agapism demands that an agent determine ethical obligation in a particular situation by analyzing the facts of that situation alone in the light of love. Inasmuch as this position disregards similar situations or generalizations based on past experiences it represents "circumstantial" or "situational" ethics of the present form. The question of right and wrong in any circumstance is to be resolved in reference to "the loving thing to do." (2) Summary rule-agapism or modified act-agapism[32] holds that there are rules

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[30]William K. Frankena, "Love and Principle in Christian Ethics" in Faith and Philosophy, Ed. by Alvin Plantinga, quoted in Paul Ramsey, Ibid., p. 105.

[31]Ramsey, loc. cit.

[32]Of the two designations for this form of pure agapism, Ramsey writes "Here I deliberately reverse the sequence of Frankena's two expressions for this position, in order to make more prominent its reliance on 'summary rules'," (Deeds and Rules, p. 106). Ramsey's emphasis, as we shall see, minimizes distinction between summary rule and pure rule agapism and in so doing tends toward conflation of the two concepts as delineated by Frankena.

of conduct based on past experience. Such rules are summaries of the manner in which love expressed itself in previous similar situations and serve as a guide to love. However, such summary rules are never to constrain love; if such a rule seems contradictory to the dictates of love for a given situation, the latter rather than the former is given precedence. (3) Pure rule-agapism differs from summary rule-agapism in that it maintains that love expresses itself in principles which have general validity. According to Frankena's characterization of this type of ethical theory, "we are always to tell what we are to do in particular situations by referring to a set of rules, and that what rules are to prevail and be followed is to be determined by seeing what rules (not what acts) best or most fully embody love."[33] In addition to these three forms of agapism, Ramsey suggests a fourth classification, combinations of act-agapism, summary rule-agapism, and pure rule-agapism. A combination agapism of this sort would hold that act-agapism would be applicable to certain situations while rule-agapism would be more relevant to others.

In contrast to pure-agapism, mixed-agapism recognizes love as one of the basic principles to be considered in the elaboration and articulation of the Christian ethical position, but not the only one. Other principles and

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[33]Frankena in Ramsey, Deeds and Rules, pp. 106-107.

precepts, independent of love, are also definitive of right and wrong and are directives of ethical obligation. These norms may be matters of rational morality, such as the traditional concept of natural law, or insights imparted by revelation, such as Bonhoeffer's doctrine of biblical mandates. The third generic type of ethical theory which Frankena discusses, non-agapism, refers to notions or norms other than love, "the imitation of God," "gratitude to God," etc., as the basic principle in Christian ethical reflection.

Regarding Ramsey's relationship to this typology, Frankena wrote:

> I have mentioned Ramsey, but am not clear just what his position is. It seems to be a form of pure agapism—or possibly of derived agapism—but it is not clear just what kind of pure agapism it is and it may even be a kind of impure or mixed agapism.[34]

Other interpreters of Ramsey, however, are more forthright in categorizing his ethical theory as pure-agapism. For example, Charles Harris:

> The notion that love or agape should be the supreme principle of morality is often espoused in the literature of contemporary Christian ethics. Nowhere is the supremacy of love more stoutly maintained than in the writings of Paul Ramsey. For twenty-five years Ramsey has dealt with some of the most pressing moral concerns of the times . . . and always the claim has been made that love is the controlling moral principle.[35]

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[34]Ibid., p. 121.

[35]Charles E. Harris, Jr., "Love as the Basic Moral Principle in Paul Ramsey's Ethics," The Journal of Religious Ethics, IV (Fall, 1976), p. 239.

and David Smith,

> For Ramsey this is the core of the Old Testament ethic, but the basic idea is continued in the New Testament. Early Christians regarded Jesus as the "Righteousness of God." For them the center of the covenant was Jesus who both embodied and taught the importance of love. The love commandment, therefore, is the basic rule or principle of Christian morality.[36]

It would appear that the confusion which surrounds the classification of Ramsey's ethical theory stems from the failure to clearly delineate the distinction between pure and mixed-agapism. If pure-agapism assigns right-making and wrong-making to agape absolutely and exclusively, independent of all or any other principles or precepts, then Ramsey is clearly a mixed agapist. But if pure-agapism is so defined as to allow merely no other basic principles than the law of love, then Ramsey can quite comfortably fit within the pure-agapist mold. Ramsey himself seems to be somewhat confused on the matter:

> It remains for me to say that, on account of the diversity in the practical wisdom that may be needed for the guidance of moral and political action, it seems to me that if a Christian ethicist is going to be so far a pure agapist, and is going to go as far as this will take him in throwing light upon the path of action, still there can be no sufficient reason for him programmatically to exclude the possibility that there may be rules, principles, or precepts whose source is man's natural competence to make moral judgments. An inhabitant of Jerusalem need not rely

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[36]Smith, op. cit., p. 5.

> on messages from Athens, but he should not refuse them: he might even go to see if there are any. This would be mixed agapism.[37]

Ramsey's purpose in this statement is to defend the pure-agapist's right to consider secondary and non-distinctive principles in the course of ethical reflection, yet then he concludes by calling such a position mixed-agapism. Is it refusing to receive or refusing to rely on messages from Athens which makes one an inhabitant of Jerusalem? Can one receive and even seek Athenian messages and still be considered an inhabitant of Jerusalem so long as he does not rely on such messages?

I think so; therefore to facilitate analysis we shall recognize the primacy, as opposed to the exclusiveness, of agape as the distinguishing trait of pure-agapism. With Ramsey we shall admit that nothing other than love can occupy the ground floor, yet admit rules, principles and precepts nonderivative of agape in successive stories.

Indeed, Ramsey considers himself a pure-agapist of the fourth form or combinationist genre.[38] He rejects pure act-agapism with a caustic footnote, before dealing with the nature of the decision between summary rule- and pure rule-agapism:

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[37] Ramsey, Deeds and Rules, p. 122.

[38] In light of the foregoing discussion of Ramsey's understanding of the relationship between act, summary rule and pure rule agapism it would seem that in proposing this fourth form Ramsey is merely demonstrating his own proclivity for multiplying categories.

> Pure act-agapism seems to be a possibility only because a good many people think the unexamined life is worth living![39]

As cast by Frankena, this choice between summary rule and pure rule agapism is actually between love and legalism. Ramsey rejects Frankena's representation of pure rule-agapism, "we may and sometimes must obey a rule in a particular situation even though the action it calls for is seen not to be what love itself would directly require"[40] and redefines it in reference to love rather than rules. The rules of pure rule-agapism are manifestations of love's directions in the face of the moral decisions and problems of the Christian life. Faced with a particular situation, an individual is not to refer to a set of rules, as Frankena suggests, but to love. In so doing, he discovers principles, having general validity, which embody love. To act according to such a rule then is to act according to the requirements of love in that situation. Thus, the focus of pure rule-agapism is not the rule, but rather the love which the rule embodies, and therefore pure rule-agapism cannot be eliminated from a discussion of the methodology of Christian ethics.

Actually, as presented by Ramsey, pure rule-agapism encompasses both act- and summary rule-agapism. He notes

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[39]Ramsey, Deeds and Rules, p. 109.

[40]Frankena in Ramsey, Ibid., p. 110.

that act-agapism, because it is grounded in agape, cannot ignore the social consequences of an action in a particular situation. A Christian, seeking to do the loving thing, recognizes that an action which seems to be the loving thing to do in light of the immediate circumstances may weaken or destroy a practice which generally embodies love, and thereby, in the long run, lead to a totality of less rather than more love. Act-agapism, because it is agapism, should have a concern for the social consequences of its action. In doing so, it becomes open to or "drives on" to summary rule-agapism. Moreover, according to Ramsey, summary rule-agapism drives on to pure rule-agapism. As we have seen the reference in rule-agapism is love rather than rules. To then insist upon summary-rules alone "would be like saying that it (love) cannot will in every situation what in fact it does will to do or not to do."[41] If we recognize that summary rules present the substance of past acts of loving obedience, we must also recognize the possibility that such a summary may define what love finds generally pleasing.[42]

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[41]Ramsey, op. cit., p. 113.

[42]This argumentation alone is not adequate to establish a pure-rule theory in that whereas a summary rule might be exceptionless, a pure rule must be. However, Ramsey does demonstrate with this logic that pure-rule agapism cannot be eliminated from consideration. Additional arguments which buttress the pure-rule position will be considered in the section dealing with exceptionless moral rules.

> Thus does agape in the form of act-agapism drive on and open the way to summary rule-agapism, and the agape at work in summary rules drives on and opens the way so far as may be, to pure rule-agapism. This for Christian ethics is the meaning of being ready for Jesus Christ to reign over human life and the meaning of being ready to do everything that love requires—everything without a single exception (not even excepting general rules).[43]

Having thus categorized Ramsey's ethical theory as pure agapism of the combinationist genre, the structure of Ramsey's methodology becomes the focus of consideration. In "The Case of the Curious Exception" Ramsey writes:

> Our model of the component stages in moral reasoning can, therefore, be stated as follows: ultimate norm (agape, utility, self-realization, etc.); general principles; defined-action principles, or generic terms of approval and generic offense terms; definite-action rules, or moral-species-terms; then the subsumption of cases.[44]

Each of these component stages of moral reasoning is characterized by a move along the spectrum of specificity from generality to particularity. Within this hierarchical structure, the ultimate norm, which alone occupies the ground floor, gives rise to principles of the greatest generality such as the principle of benevolence, the principle of universalizability, and the principle of reversability.

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[43] Ibid., p. 115.

[44] Paul Ramsey, "The Case of the Curious Exception," in Norm and Context in Christian Ethics, Ed. by Gene Outka and Paul Ramsey (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. 76.

From these are derived more substantive principles, which govern or regulate conduct, designated by Ramsey as "defined-action principles" and which in turn issue in yet more specific "definite-action rules." The association of these with the expressions "moral-genus-terms" and "moral-species-terms" is a heuristic device indicating increasing specificity. Thus for Ramsey, "moral reasoning is always a matter of surrounding the particulars of actions by increasingly specific general terms—i.e., increasing illumination—for the direction of concrete actions."[45] The increasing specification of an action seeks to define it properly with regard to its morally relevant features. For example, Ramsey suggests that "picking someone else's apples without his permission" is generally considered undesirable and can be regarded as a "defined-action principle." However, should an individual who picks someone else's apples without his permission do so, as a last resort, in order to feed his starving children, the morally relevant feature "when one's children are starving and there is no other recourse" is a sufficient right-making condition to override the wrong-making condition "picking someone else's apples without his permission." This increasing specification of morally relevant features results in definite-action rules which permit or prescribe definite kinds of actions in such a way

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[45]Ibid., p. 76.

that there is no doubt whether a particular action is of the sort specifically described. From there, then, agents can subsume the singular situations with which they are faced. Ramsey recognizes that few people actually work through this suggested sequence when confronted with a moral decision and, rather rely on moral sensibility to recognize the good and right thing without such elaboration of why. Nonetheless, he claims validity for this hierarchical structure as a model for doing ethics.

The key to the efficacy of this methodology is the recognition and consideration of the relevant moral features, which by implication also eliminates irrelevant features. In a rather lengthy quote, Ramsey says:

> The problem in passing from the most general material principles to defined-action principles and to definite-action rules that more closely specify what is to be done or not done is ordinarily not how to avoid lighting upon morally irrelevant or indifferent features of acts and situations. A greater difficulty is posed by how hard it is to pay attention to all of their morally relevant features. This difficulty in turn does not flow from myopia or simply from habitual inattentiveness or occasional unresponsiveness in the decisions we make. It flows, rather, from the fact that the agent's moral "onlook," his ultimate norm or operational "system" of ethics selects in the features of acts and situations that which will appear morally relevant to him while selecting out characteristics that may, on a larger view, be not only relevant but necessary in order to comprehend all the moral-wisdom needed for the direction of conduct. Thus, fairness-features or justice-features of acts, relations, and situations may be overlooked by someone whose gestalt

> in perceiving relevance or perspective in judging importance or whose ultimate norm leads him always only to consequence-features. Therefore it had better be said that sound moral reasoning "requires . . . consideration of all relevant features of the act in question, whether relevant for the given principle or not"; or, . . . we should, rather, say all possibly morally relevant features.[46]

Thus the serviceability of the model of moral reasoning which Ramsey has proposed is contingent upon the ability of the agent to identify and evaluate all morally relevant features of a given situation. However, the clarity with which an agent sees such is obfuscated by the "moral onlook" with which he comes to the situation. It is this realization that led Ramsey to adopt the position of allowing "messages from Athens" to be considered in the course of moral reflection. Such messages, secondary and non-distinctive normative principles which are not derivative of agape, serve to safeguard this Christian agent from simply "selecting into" or "selecting out of" a situation the features which his agapism predisposes him to see.

Harris attacks Ramsey on this matter claiming that his use of such adventitious principles in moral reasoning suggests that love cannot serve as the basic principle of a

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[46]Ibid., p. 81.

moral system. According to Harris' analysis[47] one criterion for determining the adequacy of a normative ethical system is that it must be "efficacious." The efficacy of a moral principle has to do with the validation of that principle, the manner in which subsidiary principles and particular moral judgments are derived from the ultimate principle. Harris defines "efficacious" as "capable of generating both subsidiary moral principles and particular moral judgments on concrete moral issues without extensive appeal to moral principles not derived from the basic principle itself."[48] Therefore, agape as conceptualized by Ramsey, is not efficacious insofar as it receives messages from Athens and hence cannot serve as an effective guide for conduct.

Again the matter seems to turn on the question of whether agape must be the basic or exclusive principle of ethical theory. Ramsey maintains that,

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[47]The value of Harris' analysis is somewhat questionable in that it does not view Ramsey's particular ethical judgments within the context of his commitment to the Christian position. In doing ethics, Ramsey seeks to understand rather than transform the Christian position on an issue. Thus his agapism is based on Biblical texts in which love is given the preeminent place in moral theory and the understanding that this constitutes the uniqueness of Christian ethics. Harris' criticism of Ramsey's conceptualization of agape and his resultant rejection of love as an adequate basic moral principle without consideration of the bases for this position or positive direction regarding the appropriate ultimate principle does little to enhance one's understanding of this meaning of Christian ethics.

[48]Harris, p. 241.

> So long as love is given primacy, Christian ethics can draw enlightenment from any source whatever, from "natural law" or from some theory of value or, lacking these, from some purely pragmatic sociological or psychological approach.[49]

Harris' own position is weakened by his admission that though the ideal normative system would be one without adventitious principles no normative moral system can function without at least occasional appeal to additional moral premises. Thus as Ramsey moves through the component stages of moral reasoning in the hierarchical model he proposes, he employs several considerations from both Jerusalem and Athens which aid in the specification of the morally relevant features of the matter at hand.

The Morality of Means

A major element of Ramsey's thought and therefore one of the factors which he considers in struggling to travel the distance between his ultimate norm, the principles and rules he develops and the particular judgments he espouses, is what has been characterized a "morality of means." Of this, Harris writes, in interpreting Ramsey's thoughts,

> It is for this reason that proper regard for means is a hallmark of any genuine Christian ethics. It is modern secular humanism, not Christianity, which conceives of morality as entirely a matter of engineering the consequences

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[49]Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics, p. 184.

> of actions. From the standpoint of Christianity, there may be some things which men should never do. The only thing more important in ethics than the consequences for good or ill of man's actions and abstentions is considerations having to do with "keeping covenant with man." A morality of means is thus more important in Christian ethics than a morality focused on ends.[50]

The source for this morality of means is the deontic character of agape with its focus upon the "right" rather than upon the "good." Ramsey strenuously objects to Frankena's identification of agape with the principle of benevolence or doing good and the consequent categorization of Christian ethics in the teleological camp. To do so is to vitiate the power of the Christian position. Ramsey goes so far as to assert that the reduction of Christian ethics to a teleological perspective is tantamount to the abandonment of it and to affirm that a teleological ethic, even a wholly future-facing agape-ethic, is in essence the suspension of most of morality.

This conviction stems from Ramsey's understanding of the relationship of the kingdom of God to the Christian conception of ethical obligation.

> Eschatology has at least this significance for Christian ethics in all ages: that reliance on producing teloi, or on doing good consequences, or on goal-seeking, has been decisively set aside. The meaning of obligation or of right action is not to be derived from any of these ends-in-view in an age that is fast being liquidated. The

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[50]Harris, p. 247.

> Christian understanding of righteousness is therefore radically non-teleological. It means ready obedience to the present reign of God, the alignment of the human will with the Divine will that men should live together in covenant-love no matter what the morrow brings even if it brings nothing.[51]

As we have seen, the belief in the inbreaking kingdom strips moral decision of all prudential considerations, turns a man's face from the future to his present companions and demands that he determine what love not only permits but what it requires that he do or not do toward them. Thus for the Christian, agape defines what is right or obligatory not what is good. It follows, given the Christian understanding of the nature of God, that the good will result from the right being done, but agape should not be reduced merely to the right way to the good. Love comprises the meaning of obligation regardless of what tomorrow brings, even if it brings nothing. It would appear that the shift from a deontological to a teleological emphasis within Christian ethical theory accompanied the wane of the expectation of an imminent eschaton.[52] As the years continued to come, a future orientation replaced the earlier apocalyptic hope

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[51]Ramsey, Deeds and Rules, pp. 108-109.

[52]Though Ramsey approves of the rejection of Jesus' apocalypticism, indeed rejecting it himself, he disapproves of the shift from a deontological to a teleological ethic which resulted from it. He would then dispense with the literal expectation of an imminent eschaton, while retaining the function of such a belief, its service "as a burning glass to bring biblical ethics to pin-point focus and intensity."

and brought with it an understanding of righteousness in terms of doing good. Hence, such a teleological conception of morality is inconsistent with the sources of Christian understanding of ethical obligation.

Regarding the traditional typology of ethical theory delineated most fully in Frankena's Ethics, Ramsey seems to agree with Frankena that Christian Ethics may very well be a third type beyond or between teleology and deontology. Even though this matter remains unresolved, Ramsey maintains that:

> If agapism is not a third and distinctive type of normative theory which is neither teleology (goal-seeking) nor deontology (an ethics of duty), then it seems to me more true to say that it is a type of deontology than to say that it is a type of teleology.[53]

Ramsey's understanding of the morality of means expresses itself in his protection of the individual. His contention is that adherents of a goal-oriented ethic, because of the emphasis of the ethic, often become morally careless about the means employed to bring about the goal; everything is reduced to reference to achieving the desired end, people as well as things. Whenever goals or consequences become the sole focus, the tendency is to manipulate individuals as means to realize the required result. This concern conditions much of Ramsey's reflection on contemporary

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[53]Ramsey, Deeds and Rules, p. 108.

medical issues, such as experimentation on human subjects, allocation of scarce resources, and informed consent for treatment.

It must be noted, however, that Ramsey by no means totally eliminates the consideration of consequences from moral decision making; rather he relegates them to their appropriate place in ethical reasoning. In distinguishing between a secular ethic as "calculative morality" or a "problem-solving ethic," and a religious ethic as an ethic of obedience he grants that

> in principle whenever the situation permits this, a religious ethic of obedience contains an element of calculation, but there is this difference in how it is contained. "In a secular ethic calculation is a reliance; it is a means of 'saving the situation'. In a religious ethic calculation it is affirmed, not as a reliance, but as a means of service,"[54] when he faces the task of relating the ultimate demand of agape to the concrete needs of everyday experience.[55]

If it is to be rightly understood, then prudence must be in service to a prior principle, agape. Calculation of consequences is a part of the process of discovering all the morally relevant features of a particular situation. A consideration of the consequences in terms of the projected balance of good and evil is an aspect of sound moral judgment.

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[54]Edward Leroy Long, Jr., The Christian Response to the Atomic Crisis, quoted in Ramsey, War and the Christian Conscience, p. 156.

[55]Ramsey, War and the Christian Conscience, p. 156.

Camenisch notes that the "proper locating of consequences is as far as Ramsey's interest in restricting their influence goes. To exclude them totally would be immoral"[56] because imprudence is immoral. Thus, in attempting to determine what should be done in a specific instance, a Christian should attempt to tally up the consequences of the various courses of action commended by love and consider the results of such calculation in reaching a final decision.

Christ Transforming Natural Law

Another source from which Ramsey draws enlightenment as he seeks to develop subsidiary principles and particular judgments from his ultimate norm is what he terms "love transforming justice" or "Christ transforming natural law." No other Protestant ethician has shown more interest in or appreciation for Roman Catholic ethical reflection than Ramsey. In particular, his insistence upon the legitimate role of natural law theory in Christian moral inquiry has led many to consider him a crypto-Catholic. Therefore, in order to be complete, an analysis of Ramsey's methodology for doing Christian ethics must deal with his understanding of the meaning and role of natural law in moral theory.

Though Ramsey espouses a natural law theory as an aspect of ethical reflection, his is certainly a revisionist

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[56]Camenisch, p. 77.

theory of the traditional Roman Catholic dogma, to say the least. Charles Curran demonstrates this in an essay, "Paul Ramsey and Traditional Roman Catholic Natural Law Theory," by critiquing Ramsey's interpretation of Jacques Maritain and comparing Ramsey's position with the traditional doctrine of the two functions of natural law.

In contrast to the Roman concept, Ramsey understands natural law as being flexible, non-rationalistic, non-deductive and contextual.

> The natural law is known through "inclination" or a "vital knowledge of connaturality or congeniality" and not through a deductive reasoning process. Natural law therefore is known only in medias res, in social contexts, or in the prism of actual cases. Thus natural law is distinguished from ius gentium, which involves conceptual reason and deduction.[57]

Maritain's view holds that natural law consists of two elements: an ontological element which recognizes an essential constitution within man that in turn dictates ends with which man must comply and a gnoseological aspect which concerns knowledge of this unwritten law embedded within human nature. The ontological aspect establishes that there is within human nature "an order or a disposition which human reason can discover and according to which the human will must act in order to attune itself to the

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[57]Charles Curran, "Paul Ramsey and Traditional Roman Catholic Natural Law Theory," in Love and Society, p. 50.

essential and necessary ends of the human being."[58] The gnoseological aspect asserts that this natural law is recognized by human reason in an intuitive rather than conceptual manner. It is significant that in his treatment of Maritain, Ramsey rejects the ontological element and develops his theory in relation to the gnoseological element alone.

This is consistent with his position on the two functions of natural law in traditional Catholic teaching. The first of these is the theological aspect regarding a non-revealed source of ethical wisdom innate within human nature and the relationship of such wisdom to that received by revelation. Ramsey agrees with the traditional Catholic position on this point, affirming some virtue in natural human moral decisions, on the basis of the doctrine of creation and the recognition that creation has not been totally destroyed by sin. However, he qualifies this by emphasizing the existence and influence of sin in criticism of those who optimistically fail to recognize its deleterious effects on this unwritten law within human nature. The second element of the Roman doctrine of natural law deals with the philosophical-ethical matter of the way in which human nature contributes to Christian moral reflection.

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[58]Jacques Maritain, Man and the State, quoted in Curran.

The Catholic position is built on the ontological and metaphysical concept of nature seen in Maritain and maintains that actions should follow from nature. Ramsey rejects this ontological basis in favor of an understanding of natural law as an "innate sense of justice or injustice by which in the context of the prism of the case, we can discern the right thing to do."[59] Thus Ramsey is able to argue for the role of natural law in moral decision-making without accepting corollary Catholic doctrines based on this ontological understanding of human nature.

The expressions "love transforming justice" and "Christ transforming natural law" (variations on H. Richard Niebuhr's phrase "Christ transforming culture") were coined by Ramsey to demonstrate that natural law by itself is inadequate for Christian moral decision making. Inasmuch as agape is the basic principle and controlling aspect of Christian ethics, love is transforming, renewing, reshaping, and redirecting natural law. Whereas natural justice provides the basis for the relationship of man <u>with</u> fellowman, love transforms this to be understood as love <u>for</u> fellowman.

> Ramsey himself believes that the morality of covenant or Christian love is needed as the explicit theological premise actively at work in the moral life of men in every natural order in order to sustain any proper ethics, to comprehend and interpret it adequately or even

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[59]Curran, p. 57.

> to restore it in this hour of moral and political disorder. It is only the immediate presence of the claims of righteousness of God between persons, and not any human sense of generic injustice, which asks that on occasion one should be unwilling to save his own life at the unavoidable cost of another's life. Thus does Ramsey understand the role and function of love transforming justice in this particular matter of basic human rights.[60]

Because of Ramsey's insistence upon the role of natural law in Christian ethical reflection, he has been accused of inconsistency. Some have seen his theory of natural law, especially as developed in Nine Modern Moralists, as a departure from the earlier agapistic position presented in Basic Christian Ethics. Ramsey defends himself against this charge in Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics:

> True, that book (BCE) was concerned to clarify what I regard to be both primary and also distinctive in Christian ethics . . . But to say that only agape is primary and distinctive does not deny that there may be independent secondary and non-distinctive principles . . . It only denied that natural justice is primary or distinctive in Christian ethics, thus putting natural justice, if there are such principles, in the quite secondary position where it may be subject to elevation and transformation by love.[61]

Although Curran acknowledges that this claim is consistent with Ramsey's position in Basic Christian Ethics, he objects that the theory proposed in this early work does not allow a place for natural law.

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[60] Ibid., p. 54.

[61] Ramsey, Deeds and Rules, p. 122.

> . . . The central emphases on Christ and redemption seem not only primary but virtually exclusive, despite some remarks to the contrary. Christian ethics looks only to Jesus Christ and is derived not from the human but from Jesus Christ, according to Ramsey's exposition in Basic Christian Ethics. This Christocentrism not only does not positively develop the place of creation, but it seems to exclude a real role for creation in Christian ethics, so that there is nothing for Christ to transform.[62]

In Ramsey's defense, his "remarks to the contrary" must be considered.

> So long as Christian love is given primacy, Christian ethics can draw enlightenment from any source whatever, from "natural law" or from some theory of value or, lacking these, from some purely pragmatic sociological or psychological approach.[63]

> Searching for a social policy Christian love may make use of, say, the ethical insights summed up in the so-called "natural law," but its base of operations never shifts over onto the ground of the rational moral law.[64]

> It has been pointed out that Christian love always occupies the "ground floor"; no next-of-kin ethical viewpoints are allowed to move into residence there. Although much needs to be added from many sources to complete the whole edifice of Christian social ethics, no other foundation can be laid than that which has been laid.[65]

A final quotation epitomizes Ramsey's position on the matter:

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[62]Curran, p. 56.

[63]Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics, p. 184.

[64]Ibid., p. 340.

[65]Ibid. pp. 343-344.

> The main point has been that, while Christian love cannot get along without seeking to find from any source the best possible social ethic, such love remains dominant and free in any partnership it enters.[66]

In the face of these statements it is inconceivable that one could conclude Ramsey's early ethical theory excludes a role for natural law. Granted, Basic Christian Ethics did not develop that role because the scope of the work was defined by the title. Ramsey's purpose was to establish love as the primary and distinctive aspect of Christain ethics. He sought only to lay the foundation in his first book, subsequent works added successive stories. Finally, regarding Curran's criticism that Basic Christian Ethics presents human love as opposed to rather than transformed by Christ's love, one need only note that unless transformed by it, human love is indeed independent of, if not opposed to, Christ's love.

The Doctrine of Double Effect

The aspect of Roman Catholic natural law theory which Ramsey has emphasized and employed more than any other is the principle of double effect. His first reference to this doctrine is with regard to the genesis of noncombatant immunity in his discussion of the just war in War and The Christian Conscience. Ramsey's understanding of the

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[66] Ibid.

principle of double effect is demonstrated by his account of its evolution. In response to Augustine's question of the morality of self-defense against an unjust aggressor, Thomas Aquinas wrote:

> I answer that nothing hinders one act from having two effects, only one of which is intended, while the other is beside the intention. Now moral acts take their species according to what is intended, and not according to what is beside the intention, since this is accidental as explained above.[67]

As articulated by Aquinas this principle has two aspects, the first of these being the definition of right intention. In the case of defense against an unjust aggressor, the intention can never be to kill the aggressor who is actually a neighbor in the guise of a thief or robber. Rather, the object of intention must be the good of saving life, with the other effect, harm to the aggressor, as an unavoidable by-product. Whereas Augustine, according to Ramsey, maintained that a Christian in his private capacity should allow himself to be killed rather than kill an unjust aggressor, Aquinas' analysis was more subtle. He held that insofar as the intention is life-saving, the killing of an unjust aggressor is not inconsistent with charity.

The second aspect of the doctrine, the principle of proportion, is defined by Aquinas as follows:

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[67]Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica II-II, Q. 64, art. 7, quoted in Ramsey, War and The Christian Conscience, p. 39.

> And yet, though proceeding from a good intention, an act may be rendered unlawful, if it be out of proportion to the end.[68]

Thus if any situation involves means in excess of those necessary to achieve the desired end, the act is regarded as unlawful even if the intention is right. Therefore it would be unjustifiable to kill a man, even an unjust man, in order to protect one's property from physical damage. The principle of proportion demands that the unintended evil secondary effect of an action must not be out of proportion to the good effect intended by the action. In Aquinas' formulation of the doctrine of double effect, Ramsey observes his own understanding of the relationship of natural law to Christian ethics.

> Profoundly at work in his line of reasoning is what justice transformed by love requires to be extended even to him who wrongfully attacks. This is what produced the original statement of the so-called rule of double effect. This principle was born precisely out of an attempt to put into practice a not so equal, Christian regard for the unjust man.[69]

Later developments of the rule insisted that the good effect "must not only be the formal object of the intention but also the immediate material object of the physical act."[70] Conditions were attached to the secondary evil consequence

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Ramsey, War and The Christian Conscience, pp. 43-44.

[70] Ibid., p. 55.

which demanded that the action which produced the effect be either indifferent or good in itself and that the evil effect be not the means to the good effect but rather, with the good effect, the result of a prior cause. This elaboration, developed by the medieval church as a penitential discipline, safeguarded against the subjectivity of inward intentionality by equating intention with the deed directly done.

Ramsey's relationship to this matter of the identification of intention and direct doing with the traditional Roman Catholic concept of the doctrine of double effect is somewhat ambiguous. Charles Curran claims that

> The most important observation about Ramsey's continuing application of the principle of double effect is that, in his latest statement of it and even earlier, he has really not revised the traditional Catholic theory but has rejected it.[71]

Curran's argument rests on Ramsey's failure to adopt a tight intention/direct doing correlation in abortion cases. David Smith accuses Ramsey of equivocation rather than rejection, noting that he vacillates from a strict intention/direct doing correlation with his writings on war to a somewhat looser view in regard to abortion.

It would appear that Smith's analysis is the more correct of the two and that Ramsey's equivocation stems from

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[71]Curran, p. 63.

the fact that in his moral theory natural law serves a prior principle. In his initial introduction of the doctrine Ramsey notes that the modern elaboration of the intention/direct doing correlation goes beyond the substance of Aquinas' position. His concern is that these developments represent a shift from love to natural justice as the basic norm of Christian ethics.

> The difference in interpretations of this passage in Aquinas depends on whether one stands with Aquinas close to Augustine's rejection of private self-defense lest a man inordinately love his life and property more than God and his neighbor in God or whether one stands closer to the fully developed modern theories of natural justice.[72]

Because Ramsey's ethical theory admits love alone on the ground floor and only permits such natural law concepts as the doctrine of double effect entrance to the second story to provide direction in determining neighbor need, his definition of the intention/direct doing correlation is dependent upon the specific situation. Thus when writing on war, dealing with opponents who espouse a secular ethic of calculative morality which tends to sacrifice individuals on the altar of the nation's interests, Ramsey ties intention to the objective determination of right action by making statements such as

> Double effect cannot merely mean letting the bullet go and withholding the intention (in the case of unjust attack by an aggressor) or letting

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[72]Ramsey, War and The Christian Conscience, p. 56.

> go the bomb and withholding the intention (in the case of the killing of non-combatants in wartime)[73]

and by citing references such as

> But I doubt that the man with the sledgehammer can intend to kill the poisonous spider (on his neighbor's bald pate) and call the death of his neighbor merely incidental. And I doubt that the air strategist can drop his H-bombs on New York-Newark and call the result death of millions of innocent people merely incidental.[74]

In matters such as these where the demands of love are served by a tight correlation between the intended and the directly done, he employs this narrow understanding of intention.

On the other hand, Ramsey proposes a much different understanding of the correlation between intention and direct doing in discussion of abortion. Ramsey first joined the issue in a discussion of the ethics of ectopic operations in War and The Christian Conscience. In view of the identification of intention with direct doing in traditional Catholic moral theology, Ramsey interprets the Catholic position to mean that inasmuch as direct killing is always wrong, surgery which would remove the fetus prior to viability is morally prohibited. Even when fetal and maternal life conflict, "to tear asunder violently the membranes and tissues which connect the fetus to . . . the mother, is nothing else than to inflict a fatal wound

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[73]Ibid., p. 51.

[74]Ibid., p. 65.

upon him."[75] Though the obvious intention of such an operation is to rescue the life of the mother, the means by which it is accomplished is the death of the fetus and therefore strict identification of intention and direct doing demands that the killing of the fetus be regarded as the intention of the operation. According to the traditional Catholic perspective it is morally better to allow both the mother and the fetus die than directly kill.

Ramsey, unable to countenance such a decision, refers to higher principle than natural law's double effect doctrine.

> One thing charity will never allow him to do: namely, to stand by idly while two of the companions God has given him inevitably die from "natural" causes or processes when one might have been saved, had he been willing to soil his hands by performing an action which, according to his view of natural law means, was defined as wrong.[76]

Christ transforming natural law means that agape utilizes the dictates of natural law as a service rather than a reliance. Therefore the entrance of love gives light in terms revising the natural law determination of what is right in a given concrete context. It was this insight that motivated Ramsey to redefine the intention/direct doing correlation in regard to abortion. In his subsequent discussions of this issue he refined his analysis of such

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[75]Ibid., p. 181.

[76]Ibid., p. 197.

situations to demonstrate that the death of the fetus is indeed indirect. Noting that not all surgical procedures which result in the death of the fetus have the same moral character, Ramsey defines the moral character of the act in reference to its "primary thrust" or intention. In the case of a justified abortion, "the intention of the action and in this sense its direction, is not upon the death of the fetus . . . [but] is directed toward the incapacitation of the fetus from doing what it is doing to the life of the mother."[77] Even though abortion is the immediate material object of the physical act, the intention of the act is not killing but incapacitation, the prevention of its aggressive function in relation to the mother. Ramsey justifies "observable, physically direct killing" of an unborn infant when and only when such action has the function of preventing the fetus' lethal action upon the mother's life. Such action is patently immoral when the objective is simply killing the child rather than stopping its death-dealing function.

Curran objects to Ramsey's redescription of such cases, claiming that his case of the rational argument regarding the incapacitation of the lethal function of the fetus represents a major shift in his ethical theory.

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[77]Curran, p. 61.

> This definitely indicates a change in his thinking and may also show that the concept of love transforming justice is no longer as central in his thinking as it was in an earlier period.[78]

Contrary to Curran's contention, this development in Ramsey's thought seems to provide a striking example of the very manner in which love transforms justice. Closed off from the impact of charity upon its decisions, natural law demands strict identification of intention with direct doing and seals the fate of two lives in conflict. However, when love enters it recasts the situation in terms consistent with its claims. Ramsey writes

> It is, therefore, worth repeating here that what I have suggested means a fresh determination of what is right in a given context in which the requirements of love prevail, and that right should not be determined by the natural law alone. It is better to save life than to allow to die, even on the Sabbath day or in the face of rules that in very many instances helped and do still help to show love what should be done. By this end, the absolutely supreme end of agape, not every means, not even every indispensible means is justified, but surely every means to save life the only alternative to which is that death will even more abound. To make this choice, on behalf of life and against death and inaction, is not to do wrong but to do what we know to be right in order that good may come of it.[79]

Exceptionless Moral Rules

Yet another factor which serves to shape the development of Ramsey's moral theory as he moves through the component

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[78] Ibid., p. 62.

[79] Ramsey, War and The Christian Conscience, pp. 185-186.

stages involved in unpacking the implications of his ultimate norm is his continued insistence on the existence of exceptionless moral rules. Though this emphasis on general norms binding in all occasions is an emphasis of Roman Catholic natural law teaching, by virtue of its ontological understanding of human nature, Ramsey's position on exceptionless norms does not stem from his concept of natural law.

Rather, Ramsey's recognition of the role of exceptionless norms in Christian ethics stems from his concept of agape as obedient love. By virtue of God's unilateral establishment of a bond of fidelity, between Himself and man, man is responsible to replicate this pattern in his interpersonal relationships. The very notion of agape as faithful love will at times issue in universal judgments about ways of action.

> A position we might call "pure or general rule-agapism" would seem to be entailed in any conviction that in Jesus Christ the righteousness of God and the mystery of the ages, the meaning of creation, the nature of mankind, and the destination of man toward unfailing covenant with God and with fellowman, have been made manifest. An unbinding love would seem the least likely conclusion one would reach if he seriously regarded the freedom of God's love in binding Himself to the world as the model for all covenants between man.[80]

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[80] Ramsey, Deeds and Rules, p. 127.

Ramsey demonstrates the "way in" from agape to rules of behavior with the following sequence. That agape is to serve as the basic notion of Christian ethics simply means that we are to determine what to do in a particular situation by ascertaining all the morally relevant features of the situation and then asking what is the loving thing to do. This position, act-agapism, logically leads to a second step, summary-rule agapism. The serious seeker of "the loving thing to do" will naturally inquire how love expressed itself in similar situations in the past. Recognizing the limitations of human nature and the difficulty of determining the requirements of love in every instance without error, a serious Christian will give due consideration to rules of thumb which summarize past acts of loving obedience. Of course, these summary-rules in no way constrain love as they serve to guide conduct because the summary-rule agapist is ever ready to violate those principles in order to follow the dictates of love in the particular situation with which he is faced. However, given such summary rules, the way to general rules is paved by two arguments that demand careful consideration. G. E. Moore posited the first of these in Principia Ethica; that in light of the fact that summaries of past acts of obedience tend generally to lead to the correct decision, one is less likely to make a moral mistake while following a rule than

by attempting to apply agape on one's own. Second, a sincere Christian will recognize that what love immediately requires may not be what love indeed requires. Though an act may seem to be the loving thing, in terms of its direct results, its indirect results may serve to weaken and thereby aid in the destruction of a social practice which generally embodies love and thereby issue in a totality of less loving actions than if it had not been admitted as an exception.

> Thus does agape express itself in particular acts, and then it opens the way to summary rules; and in turn the agape at work in summary rules establishes a beachhead upon the territory of general rules of conduct. In fact, it would be surprising if the Christian life could be held back from rules as generalizations, since the most loving general social practice would seem to be implied in readiness for Jesus Christ to reign over human life.[81]

Camenisch rightly notes that Ramsey's concern in defending the existence of exceptionless moral rules is to lend continuity to the moral life. Ramsey speaks strongly against the "atomistic individualism of secular thought" which like acid "eats away at moral relations, and at the very idea that there are moral bonds between man and man, or between one moment and another."[82]

> In Ramsey's view, these various trends tend not only to isolate each moral agent from all others and from morally significant larger entities such

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[81] Ibid., p. 126.

[82] Ibid., p. 44.

> as society, but even to isolate each of his moral decisions from all his other moral doings. Thus they threaten the individual with significant harm both by severing him from the sustaining and protecting web of moral relations, obligations, duties and rights which have traditionally surrounded the lives of civilized persons and by severing him from his own moral past and future. They therefore leave him marooned and directionless in the present moment of decision.[83]

Ramsey argues that these trends are opposed by the recognition of general rules; indeed, he goes so far as to argue that such rules are the basis for any hope of a Christian social ethic. In Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics, he likens such practices to the rules of a game which define the terms on which the players can interact. In Norm and Context in Christian Ethics he characterizes exceptionless moral rules as "canons of loyalty" which establish the minimum faithfulness rules which a man can expect to receive in society. It is Ramsey's opinion these generally valid rules provide the continuity-stability, security, reliability, constancy, consistency—which needs to be restored to modern moral life. In light of this, he maintains that the existence of such rules does not shift the focus of ethical obligation from love to rules, but rather commends them on the basis of the love they embody.

So far as the effectiveness of these rules in providing the continuity Ramsey seeks, Camenisch is somewhat skeptical:

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[83]Camenisch, p. 81.

> I can summarize without caricaturing; all of Ramsey's impressive argumentation on behalf of exceptionless principles and rules has resulted in giving as the possibility of negative rules and principles which require a continuing interpretation to discern what they forbid, are to be held to as exceptionless only in the absence of love-violating counterinstances, and are prohibited by the inviolable rights of prudence from making pronouncements in individual cases. . . . one must ask at this point if the game has been worth the candle.[84]

Ramsey objects that Camenisch overstates his case, an objection which is buttressed by the imposing catalog of concepts he presents as possible general rules in Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics.[85]

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[84]Ibid., p. 84.

[85]of pp. 112-113—The question is simply whether there are any general rules or principles or virtues or styles of life that embody love, and if so what these may be. Answers that have been given to this question include the characteristics of love peerlessly set forth in I Corinthians 13 (which are all, so far as I can see, universal statements about what agape requires); the qualities called the "fruits," "works," and "gifts" of the spirit by St. Paul; the qualities called "theological virtues," "infused moral virtues," "gifts," "fruits," and "Beatitudes" in Thomistic ethics; what Christ teaches us concerning the broadest and deepest meaning of justice; the bond of marriage tempered to the meaning and strength indicated in Ephesians 5; order, or the orders, in dialectical relation with justice and with love; truth-telling and promise-keeping; and (as the floor below which love cannot and may not and must not fall) those works of sin in the flesh listed in Scripture, the more or less than seven more or less deadly sins, or those "classes of things" like murder, theft, rape, promiscuity, pillage, adultery, and sexual relations that are genuinely and therefore irresponsibly premarital. Some of these things may not be quite general, and there may be more to be added that will always and everywhere form the conscience and life of the Christian man.

In summary, Ramsey's methodology for doing ethical reflection is represented by the hierarchial structure of his normative theory in which love alone, serving as the ultimate norm, occupies the ground floor. Movement through the component stages of moral reasoning, general principles, defined-action principles, definite action-rules, and the subsumption of cases, involves the increasing specification of the morally relevant features of the particular situation. In identifying these features, the agent's moral onlook draws enlightenment from a variety of sources, the morality of means, Christ transforming natural law, the doctrine of double effect, and the existence of exceptionless moral norms, which assist him in deriving subsidiary principles and particular judgments from his ultimate norm.

CHAPTER III

THE MODE OF JUSTIFICATION IN RAMSEY'S WORK

Having discussed the meaning of Christian ethics for Paul Ramsey in terms of his basic principle and the methodology he employs in deriving subsidiary principles and particular judgments from his ultimate norm, the remaining task is analysis of the mode of justification in Ramsey's moral reasoning. Ramsey's perspective on this matter is provided in statements such as the following from the Preface to his latest work, Ethics at the Edges of Life,

> . . . I do not hesitate to write as a Christian ethicist. No more did I hesitate in my first major book on medical ethics to invoke ultimate appeal to scripture or theology and to warrants such as righteousness, faithfulness, canons of loyalty, the awesome sanctity of a human life, humankind in the image of God, holy ground, hesed (steadfast covenant love), agape (or "charity") as these standards are understood in the religions of our culture, Judaism and Christianity.[86]

His position is more fully delineated in his response to Alasdair MacIntyre's essay "Can Medicine Dispense with a Theological Perspective on Human Nature?" MacIntyre identified "the unconditional and absolute character of the

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[86]Paul Ramsey, Ethics at the Edges of Life: Medical and Legal Intersections (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), p. xiii.

doctors obligations to his patients"[87] as the chief canon of medical ethics, noting that such a requirement is central to all morality:

> This kind of requirement is, of course, central to all morality: the same unconditional character is embodied in the student's obligation not to cheat in an examination, the patriot soldier's (as contrasted with the mercenary's) obligation to accept death rather than dishonor, the obligation on all not to engage in malicious gossip—and most strikingly, the simple obligation upon all of us to give up our lives rather than allow certain evils of Auschwitz and Ravensbruck. Any account of morality which does not allow for the fact that my death may be required of me at any moment is thereby an inadequate account.[88]

Inquiring as to the grounds for such a commitment, he cited the German Euthanasia program as a matter of sociological fact that theological beliefs may not prove supportive of the unconditional requirements of morality. He then considers Kant's thesis that the requirements of morality also entail a belief in God and immorality as well as freedom. However, recognizing the plausibility of the connection between Kant's conception of morality and his theological commitments, MacIntyre is uncomfortable with the position that the "absolute and unconditional requirements

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[87] Alasdair MacIntyre, "Can Medicine Dispense with a Theological Perspective on Human Nature?" in Knowledge, Value and Belief, ed. H. Tristam Engelhardt, Jr. and Daniel Callahan (Hastings-on-Hudson: Institute of Society, Ethics and the Life Sciences, 1977), p. 26

[88] Ibid., pp. 26-27.

of morality and theological presuppositions of a Kantian kind really stand or fall together"[89] because of "the arbitrariness which the premises of all theological argument now seem to possess to those who do not already accept them."[90] Compelled to accept Kant's conclusion that the absolute character of moral obligation necessarily presupposes teleology, MacIntyre argues that Kant's further assertion that teleology necessarily presupposes theology is incorrect and proposes a conception of narrative moral history to replace Kant's theological perspective as authorization for unconditional obligation. With that, MacIntyre breathes a sigh of relief and concludes "Hence the incredibility of Christian theology need not endanger belief in moral obligation after all."[91]

Ramsey's reply "Kant's Moral Theology or A Religious Ethics?" objects to the very topic of MacIntyre's essay, "Does Medical Ethics Need Religious Backing?," with the words of C. S. Lewis' Screwtape:

> . . . We do want, and want very much to make men treat Christianity as a means; preferably as a means to their own advantage, but, failing that, as a means to anything—even social justice. . . . For the enemy [God] will not be used as a convenience. Men or nations who think they can revive the Faith in order to make a good society

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[89]Ibid., p. 37.

[90]Ibid., p. 36.

[91]Ibid., p. 41.

> might just as well think they can use the stairs of Heaven as a short cut to the nearest chemist's shop.[92]

Religion is not to be used as a means to any end, but is to be regarded as the end of humankind which in turn shapes and directs all the means which men employ and the matters in which they engage themselves.

After questioning MacIntyre's exegesis of Kant and clearly demonstrating the anti-theological bias which lay behind it, Ramsey offered his own view of the authorizing reasons for the unconditional imperatives of ethics. Given our pluralistic society, with many communities of moral significance, each individual must decide to which of these communities of moral discourse he belongs, and in so doing determine the standards of righteousness and faithfulness by which his own action and that of other men will be judged. As we have seen, Ramsey places himself within the Judeo-Christian tradition and therefore concludes:

> . . . Then the ultimate warrant for moral norms must be an appeal to what the Lord of heaven and earth is believed to have been doing and to be doing in enacting and establishing his covenant with us and with all mankind, in all estates and orders and relations of life to which we have been called.[93]

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[92] C. S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, quoted in "Kant's Moral Theology or a Religious Ethics?" Knowledge, etc.

[93] Ramsey, "Kant's Moral Theology," p. 66.

Divine performances function as "Master Speech Acts" which generate and control subsequent "speech acts." Thus the authorizing reasons for men's correlative obligations to one another are God's righteous dealings with mankind, apart from this, a conception of unconditional moral obligation is unintelligible.

> In any case, I think it cannot be denied that neither view of obligation is explicable historically, culturally, or in point of origin without reference to some sort of "divine command" account of the moral life or a theological perspective upon human beings as created in the "image of God." The source of unconditional obligation, tested by suffering and giving up one's life rather than to do or to allow evil to be done, is to be found in the web of authorizing and exciting reasons that once were the fabric of our civilization.[94]

This is illustrated by Ramsey's comments in the Preface of Ethics at the Edges of Life to those who do not share his views regarding religious warrants. His claim is that the Judeo-Christian tradition has so shaped medical ethics that the field can be considered a case of "Christian Casuistry" in which the perspectives of the predominant Western religion have been brought to bear upon specific cases and used to determine their resolution and that unless one is prepared to propose an entirely new ethics, he will be forced to use ethical principles that are rooted in our past religious culture. Given this understanding that religious warrants

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[94]Ibid., p. 71.

are so fundamental to the edifice of Western law and morals that they cannot be removed without bringing the whole house down, the mode of justification in Ramsey's moral reasoning is theological, even when not overtly so.

Displayed in A Medical Indications Policy

The "medical indications policy" which Ramsey offers as a criterion for the determination of care for the dying will serve as an example. According to such a policy, decisions regarding when and how medical care should be extended or when it should be withheld or withdrawn are treated as objective medical determinations based on the conditions of the patient rather than "abstract classifications of treatments or on the wishes of any of the parties concerned."[95] Ramsey unpacks the implications of his medical indications policy in a rather involved paragraph and footnote in the final chapter of Ethics at the Edges of Life. I quote these at length because it provides in schematic form the meaning of a medical indications policy and reveals the assumptions upon which it is based:

> The chapters in part 2 of the volume have cumulatively shown, I believe, that wrongmaking is now one of the consequences of continual appeal to the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary means as mere classifications . . . This is most certainly the case when the class

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[95] Ibid., p. 159.

> meaning of extraordinary (or morally dispensable) means is used by someone who fails to distinguish (1) between (a) conscious decision to refuse treatment in one's own case and (b) withholding treatment in the case of another; (2) between (a) "terminal" patients who are dying and (b) "terminal" patients who are simply incurable; (3) between (a) medical help and (b) prolonging dying; (4) between (a) biological indices for medical help and (b) socioeconomic measures of burden or advantage to come to the primary patient; or (5) between (a) medical help for a primary patient and (b) relieving the burden or serving the advantage of others.[96]

From these distinctions Ramsey draws the following conclusions to govern the treatment or non-treatment of dying patients:

> 17. The foregoing tabulation might be made of some of the conclusions suggested by the foregoing chapters. If 3a and 4a are the case, 1b is not morally permissible for 2b, 4b, or 5b reasons; 1a may be morally permissible or even praise-worthy for 2b, 4b, or 5b reasons even if 3a or 4a are the case; 1b is morally permissible if 2a; 2b patients, given that 1a is not the case, should be evaluated for treatment in terms of 4a and 5a and the availability of 3a; 1b is morally permissible even if 4a is the case, if there is no 3a or if to attempt 3a would likely do more harm; 1a is morally permissible if 2a.[97]

When all the a's and b's are sorted out and the dust is settled, a medical indications policy means that a terminal patient can morally refuse treatment for himself on the grounds that he is incurable or if such treatment would only prolong his dying or it would create further socioeconomic and emotional burdens for himself and for others; that one

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[96] Ibid., p. 330.

[97] Ibid.

can morally withhold treatment in the case of another only if the patient is dying and such treatment would be medically useless (such decisions must be reached without reference to socioeconomic burden for the patient or others) or even deleterious; that decisions regarding treatment of incurable terminal patients whose deaths are not imminent should be made on the basis of availability of such treatment and its ability to sustain them, "even when this only improves their condition or adds meager life to their days" (it is understood that such incurable patients have the right to refuse treatments within the parameters of the aforementioned guidelines).[98] Thus the thrust of a medical indications policy is that treatments are to be administered or withheld in light of their objective medical value rather than on the basis of a subjective determination of the quality or value of the patient's life.[99]

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[98]Conscious decision to refuse treatment in one's own case may be morally permissible if the terminal patient is incurable, if the socioeconomic measure of burden outweighs the advantage to come to the primary patient, or if such a decision relieves the burden or serves the advantage of others even if biological indices indicate that such treatment would be of medical help to the primary patient.

[99]It appears that Ramsey's admission that it may be morally permissible for terminal patients who are incurable or dying to consciously refuse treatment permits subjective quality of life assessments to be considered in decisions regarding treatment. Rather than undermining the thrust of his medical indications policy, which is clearly in terms of objective biomedical indices, this seems to be an allowance in keeping with the essence of Eric Cassell's observation, "The function of morality in medicine is no longer simply to

> A medical indications policy . . . directs attention to the objective condition of the patient, not to abstract classifications of treatments or to the wishes of any of the parties concerned . . . Treatment indicated or no further treatment indicated is not determined by anyone's stipulation. Within whatever margin of error, this is an objective medical determination.[100]

This distinction between "objective medical determination" and "subjective determinations of the quality of life" is the heart of Ramsey's proposal. Decisions based on the former are a matter of "choosing how to live while dying" while those founded on the latter allow "choosing death as an end or as a means."

At this point the assumptions underlying Ramsey's medical indications policy become evident; Ramsey's admission that religious warrants are decisive for him provides the framework within which to understand his position. His proposed policy is the logical corollary of a religious view of life as an inherent and absolute value. Given this viewpoint Ramsey contends that the only morally permissible choice is that choice which favors life.[101]

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protect the weak and the sick from indifference or venality, but to protect them also from mercy grown overwhelming by technological advance."

[100]Ramsey, Ethics at the Edges of Life, p. 159.

[101]Though 1a and 1b in the aforementioned schema can be construed as favoring death, Ramsey rightfully regards them as choices of how to live while dying, as comfortable as possible rather than betubed.

Given this rule, it is evident from Ramsey's perspective, that decisions based on the subjective determination of the quality of the patients life or decisions to choose death as an end or means are immoral:

> The conviction that one should always choose life lies at the heart of the practice of medicine and nursing. In that sense, medical ethics must be pro-life. In this respect modern medicine was profoundly influenced by Judaism and Christianity . . . For Jesus and Christians—and for other religious outlooks as well—euthanasia is wrong because it is wrong to choose death.[102]

Thus Ramsey argues for a medical indications policy which demands that treatment be extended or withheld on the basis of objective medical considerations because of a prior faith commitment to the sanctity of life. As a Christian he accepts that the notion that "an individual human life is absolutely unique, inviolable, irreplaceable, noninterchangeable, not substitutable, and not meldable with other lives"[103] is implicit in the meaning of covenant commitments. The Patient as Person echoed the Barthian position that covenant-fidelity comprises the purpose for the creation of mankind, while the whole of creation provides the context and condition for the outworking of covenant. Therefore all of the relations into which men enter,

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[102]Ramsey, Ethics at the Edges of Life, p. 151.

[103]Ibid., p. xiv.

including the practice of medicine, imply covenant responsibilities to one another.

> Justice, fairness, righteousness, faithfulness, canons of loyalty, the sanctity of life, hesed, agape, or charity are some of the names given to the moral quality of attitude and of action owed to all men by any man who steps into a covenant with another man.[104]

This illustrates that Ramsey's ethical position is an expression of his theological presuppositions. He works out of a Christian context, sanctity of life derived from covenant fidelity based on the meaning of love, even when it is not overt as in the case of "objective medical determinations as a criterion for withholding or extending care."

Displayed in Two Dimensions of the Concept of Agape

This is consistent with David Little's analysis of the structure of justification in Ramsey's moral reasoning. He notes that Ramsey's ultimate principle, agape, operates as the basic validating norm providing a standard of validity for lower-order subsidiary principles and particular judgments. Though, as we have seen, Ramsey often enumerates other notions, such as justice, fairness, righteousness, faithfulness, canons of loyalty, sanctity of life, alongside

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[104]Paul Ramsey, The Patient as Person: Explorations in Medical Ethics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. xiii.

of agape in defining ethical obligation, these are complementary to rather than competitive or comparable with agape.

> In Christian ethics, at least, agape works by many a principle through principle and to defined principles in its ceaseless endeavor to unfold the life of charity. These are always feature-relevant specifications of love.[105]

It is through these feature-relevant specifications, justice, fairness, covenant-fidelity, etc., that love becomes in-principled. Ramsey's enjoinder to those who accuse him of vacillation in regard to his basic notion is relevant to this matter:

> As for Curran's charge and that of several other critics, that as the years passed and I became deeply involved in political ethics and medical ethics . . . I no longer employ the methodology of love transforming justice, my reply is that it is not necessary always to be going back to first base—at least not if one wants to score any runs home in special ethics. Like Pilate, what I have written I have written; and then, unlike Pilate, I write on, into particular moral problem. Can anyone deny that it is a strong sense of care, derivative from covenant love, with which I seek to illuminate the justice due in patient-doctor relationships; or that this explains for me the origin of the principle of discrimination in war and imperativeness of that principle today? Those interpreters who discern a movement away from agapeic care and to covenant instead as I have moved into special medical ethics fail to take into account the final chapter of Basic Christian Ethics and consequently imagine that I began by treating agape as a discarnate religious idea, concept or principle.[106]

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[105]Ramsey, Norm and Context, p. 91.

[106]Paul Ramsey, "Some Rejoinders," The Journal of Religious Ethics, IV (Fall, 1976), p. 191.

For Ramsey, love serves as the ground floor of ethical obligation, but it does not stop there. Rather it unfolds into specific situations in the form of principles which direct action in those situations.

Little's identification of two dimensions of Ramsey's concept of agape is helpful in understanding the relationship between the specifying principles and agape. He distinguishes elements within Ramsey's agape which both cannot and can be expressed in principles and terms them respectively the "discretionary" and "formalistic" aspects of agape.

Regarding the discretionary aspect of agape, Ramsey's descriptions of love often imply an element which is indetermined and incalculable in terms of rules or principles. He states forcefully in Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics that:

> the Christian does not believe that he lives in a world structured by rules, or that there is a "general subject" of moral agency acting in accord with these rules, or that he should tell what he should do in particular situations by referring to a set of rules and choosing from among them those that are to be followed by seeing what rules best or most fully embody love.[107]

Rather, a Christian faces the multiple claims and needs of concrete persons and asks, what does love require? The response of love cannot always be formulated in fixed rules

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[107]Ramsey, Deeds and Rules, p. 107.

therefore the agent acting on the basis of agape has discretion in that he is free to make decisions in light of the requirements of love without reference to rules. This aspect of love is operative in the categories of act-agapism and summary-rule agapism.

However, there is also a formalistic side of agape which is, in contrast to the discretionary aspect, rational and expressible in principles. Though Ramsey allows for act-agapism and summary-rule agapism, he maintains as he has shown, that these positions drive on to pure-rule agapism, therefore the most fruitful agapist theory is one which provides for a combination of act, summary-rule and pure-rule agapism. In other words, though agape includes a discretionary element, it also dictates a "range of specifications for right and wrong actions that is rationally determinable and unexceptionable and about which rational certainty is possible."[108] This formalistic side of agape issues in the defined action principles and definite action rules which form "the floor below which love cannot and may not and must not fall." It is formal in the sense that it has reference to the qualities and characteristics of acts, the form they take, rather than to a standard for evaluating consequences in determining the rightness of actions. Thus

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[108]David Little, "The Structure of Justification in the Political Ethics of Paul Ramsey" in Love and Society, p. 146.

this aspect of agape specifies actions which are to be done as expressions or embodiments of love and in so doing provides the range within which the discretionary element of love operates.[109]

The two aspects of agape, the formalistic which issues in feature-relevant specifying principles and the discretionary which relates the requirements of love to the ends and consequences of action, can be seen at work in Ramsey's understanding of the development of the just war doctrine. As mentioned before, the changeover from the original Christian position of non-resistance to the just war doctrine was a complete aboutface. However, Ramsey calls this "a change of tactics only" in that the development of the just war theory arose from a "love-informed reason" which recognized the demands of love to safeguard the innocent from aggression. Just-war theorists were motivated to approve Christian participation in war by the same neighbor-regarding love which lead Christians of an earlier age to disapprove the use of armed force. They simply realized that the strong have a social duty to defend the weak and threatened from aggressors by maintaining the social and political life in which they lived.

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[109]Lest this should be seen as a departure from Ramsey's understanding of agape as radical altruism directed toward neighbor need, Ramsey's position that such general rules as the formalistic aspect of agape suggests are reliable directives which generally embody the demands of love in relation to neighbor need.

> While Jesus taught that a disciple in his own case should turn the other cheek, he did not enjoin that his disciples should lift up the face of another oppressed man for him to be struck again on his other cheek . . . It is the work of love and mercy to deliver as many as possible of God's children from tyranny, and to protect from oppression, if one can, as many of those for whom Christ died as it may be possible to save. When choice must be made between the perpetrator of injustice and the many victims of it, the latter may and should be preferred—even if effectively to do so would require the use of armed force against some evil power. This is what I mean by saying that the justice of sometimes resorting to armed conflict originated in the interior of the ethics of Christian love.[110]

This love which provides justification for war, jus ad bellum, also produces a limitation on war, jus in bella, by demanding just conduct as well as just cause. "Thus the conscience schooled by Christ which first compelled Christians to justify warfare at the same time proscribed for them its moral limits."[111] These limits are defined in terms of two principles, discrimination and proportion.

The principle of discrimination, as we have seen, is a derivative of the doctrine of double effect and serves to safeguard "the moral immunity of non-combatants from direct attack." As stated by Ramsey, it demands that the primary objective of military action should never lie in directly

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[110]Paul Ramsey, The Just War: Force and Political Responsibility, quoted in William V. O'Brien, "Morality and War: The Contribution of Paul Ramsey," in Love and Society, p. 164.

[111]O'Brien, p. 165.

attacking non-combatants and civil structures as a means of gaining victory. This does not mean that no civilian will ever be killed, but that such deaths will be an unintended evil effect which is unavoidable in the course of attacking military objectives. If they be otherwise, the military initiative in question is merely murder, which is unjustifiable in any context, as opposed to killing in war, which can be justified. Ramsey offers the destruction of a target such as of the Port of New York as an illustration. If the area was destroyed by obliteration bombing, the destruction of the target would be incidental to the destruction of the area. However, if in tactical bombing a large portion of the New York-Newark area was destroyed as a result of the destruction of the port, there would be a crucial moral difference between the two actions. Even if an equal number of non-combatants were killed in both cases, the former would be patently immoral while the latter would possibly be moral because in the first the deaths were direct, in the second indirect.

Inasmuch as the principle of discrimination abstractly defines a set of exceptionless features of permissible action, it corresponds with and is an expression of the formalistic aspect of agape which establishes the outer limits of discretion. In assessing Ramsey's contribution to the understanding of morality and war, William V. O'Brien writes:

> Ramsey is insistent that the principle of discrimination always comes first in moral analysis of war and defense. If an act or policy does not pass the test of discrimination, there is no warrant for discussing its alleged proportionality. If an act passes the test of discrimination, it still must pass the test of proportion.[112]

Because the principle of discrimination abstractly defines the features of actions which are wrong in themselves it is a deontological principle which is not relative to consequences or to the particular value commitments and judgments of those making decisions regarding appropriate military action.

The second principle of the just war doctrine, proportionality, reflects the discretionary element of agape. Briefly stated, it dictates that "there should be a proportion among the good and evil effects of an action; the good accomplished or the evil prevented must be sufficient to justify (in comparison of effects) the evil that is also done." Proportionality demands that the means employed to achieve the desired end be commensurate with the good intended; the principle of proportionality would not justify the use of a sledgehammer to kill a poisonous spider on the neighbor's bald pate. Thus this principle admits teleological considerations into the discussion of the morality of a military action within the limits

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[112]Ibid., p. 166.

prescribed by the deontological discrimination principle. As we have seen failure of an act to pass that first test eliminates the necessity or possibility of an appeal to proportionality. However, proportionality must also be considered before any military action is approved, this provides opportunity for the evaluation of the balance of good over evil, in terms of consequences.

As the basic principles of the "just war doctrine" designed to regulate the conduct of warfare according to the dictates of justice, it would appear that the principles of discrimination and proportionality are derivatives of justice and thus would represent a departure from Ramsey's assertion of agape as the ultimate ethical norm. Contrary to appearance, Ramsey validates these principles by claiming them as direct derivatives of agape:

> The point that needs stressing is that the limitations placed upon conduct in the just-war theory arose not from autonomous natural reason asserting its sovereignty over determinations of right and wrong (and threatening to lead Christian faith and love, which are and should be free, into bondage to alien principles), but from a quite humble moral reason subjecting itself to the sovereignty of God and the lordship of Christ, as Christian men felt themselves impelled out of love to justify war and by love severely to limit war.[113]

Indeed, the two principles, as Little points out, are representative of the two aspects of agape. "They are, then,

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[113]Ramsey, War and The Christian Conscience, p. 59.

two more directives of agape, the one [i.e., the principle of proportion] pointing to and guaranteeing a discretionary sphere of decision-making, and the other [i.e., the principle of discrimination] supplying a 'feature-specific' designation of certain proscribed forms of action."[114]

These two notions implicit within Ramsey's concept of agape provide insight in regard to the difficulty of categorizing Ramsey's ethics in terms of the traditional typologies. As noted before, Ramsey's emphasis is on the deontic character of agape:

> Agape defines for the Christian what is right, righteous obligatory to be done among men; it is not a Christian's definition of the good that better be done and much less is it a definition of the right way to the good. . . . The Christian understanding of righteousness is therefore radically nonteleological.[115]

Yet, Ramsey does admit teleological considerations into Christian ethical reflection noting that "imprudence is immoral." This tension has led Ramsey to suggest the possibility that agapism is neither deontology nor teleology, but a third and distinctive type of normative theory.

Little suggests that such a theory could presumably result from a combination of the two traditional typologies. Insofar as agape operates rationally requiring or prohibiting

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[114]Little, p. 154.

[115]Ramsey, Deeds and Rules, pp. 108-109.

certain feature-specific actions, it is formalistic and therefore deontological in character. As such it serves as a validating norm defining the parameters of right moral action. In addition, the discretionary aspects of agape functions as a plus factor considering the consequences of actions in the light of love. This teleological reflection must take place within the limits defined by the formalistic side of agape.

> Ramsey seeks to link together the deontological (or formalistic) and teleological (or discretionary) sides of his position in the following way. Teleological "reasoning" is conditioned by the formalistically determined requirements of agape, and in that way it is "in their service" or "subordinate" to them. As one thinks teleologically, he may not properly violate the fixed or determinate outer limits of agape. But within the limits set by these requirements, the teleological task is "systematically indeterminate" and incalculable.[116]

Whether Little's analysis of Ramsey's reasoning is accepted or rejected it serves to demonstrate that Ramsey's ethical system is ultimately neither teleological nor deontological but theological. Teleology and deontology are not typologies that arise out of Ramsey's work but rather are explanatory notions superimposed on his moral reasoning to aid in our understanding of his quest for fidelity to the convictions of the Christian community as expressed by the implications of agape. The nature of this quest, and hence the mode of

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[116]Little, p. 148.

justification in his moral reasoning, is demonstrated in the following comments:

> We must say that . . . there is a prudence or practical wisdom which applies charity to every case of action deserving of the name Christian. At the point of decision in a concrete case there takes place a convergence of judgments guided in these ways, a convergence in which sometimes love does what justice requires and assumes its rules as norms, sometimes love does more than justice requires but never less, and sometimes love acts in a quite different way from what justice alone can enable us to discern to be right. When one's own interests alone are at stake, the Christian governs himself by love and resists not one who is evil. When his neighbor's need and the just order of society are at stake, the Christian still governs himself by love and suffers no injustice to be done nor the order necessary to earthly life to be injured. He governs himself by love and develops the theory of justified war as a reflection of the action which he judges is demanded of him. In this and in private cases of conflict of life with life, he governs himself by love and develops the rule of double effect, and the distinction between direct and indirect killing, as logical and necessary limits of action that is permitted and sometimes required by a love-formed justice. In all this he goes into action in ways which he would not be so free to adopt, or so strictly bound to adopt, if he were ruled only by a purely natural justice. In all these ways he yet finds in love's guidance, it is true, powerful support for rational and limiting rules of conduct.[117]

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[117] Ramsey, War and The Christian Conscience, pp. 178-179.

EPILOGUE

AN EVALUATION OF RAMSEY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THEOLOGICAL ETHICS

An assessment of Ramsey's contribution to the field of religious ethics is a difficult task to undertake in light of the nature of much of his work. His career of over thirty years has been characterized by constant polemical and controversial forays into the battlefield on which the pressing moral problems of his cultural milieu were being debated. His purpose was to understand the Christian position and its implications for life rather than to transform it. All of his recent work in theological ethics has, therefore, been topical, directed toward specific issues of ethical inquiry and has more often than not been in response to the arguments of others or to critiques of his own arguments. This style, though both lively and relevant to contemporary concerns, sacrifices the clarity that stems from systematic consideration of moral issues. David Smith's observation concerning Ramsey's contribution to a specific issue is also pertinent to Ramsey's work as a whole:

> There can be no denying that this mode of work has serious limitations. . . . it may lead to a foreshortening of theological and empirical analysis. Also that it can lead to inconsistency. On the other hand, the limitations may be the inevitable price paid for profundity. Ramsey's

> reasoning has a much higher degree of accessibility to the modern sensibility than that of such German writers as Barth and Thielecke, both of whom deal at length with conflict cases. If Ramsey's paradigm finally settles few issues, there are even fewer conflict situations to which it does not bring light.[118]

The most common criticism raised against Ramsey's position in Christian Ethics has concerned the deontic character of his moral theory. His critics maintain that Ramsey's moral reasoning does not give adequate consideration to the role of consequences. David Little voiced this objection in response to Ramsey's work on the just war:

> . . . I have always been surprised by Ramsey's relative indifference to the question of "the ends for which wars may legitimately be fought." In the debates over United States policy in Vietnam, I have not, and do not, share the judgment of many critics of that policy that the cause for and the end of United States military effort there was unambiguously "unjust and immoral." But I have always believed, against Ramsey, that the critics were right to bring up the question of cause and end, and to consider those questions subjects for moral evaluation.[119]

Other critics more generally feel that Ramsey recognizes the role of consequences but does not grant them sufficient weight. They agree with Curran's position that "Ramsey does not give enough importance to the role of teleological considerations."[120] An ongoing dialog between Ramsey and

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[118]Smith, p. 16.

[119]Little, p. 159.

[120]Charles Curran, "Politics, Medicine, and Christian Ethics: A Dialogue with Paul Ramsey," quoted in Joseph L. Allen, "Paul Ramsey and His Respondents Since The Patient As Person," Religious Studies Review, V (April, 1979), p. 90.

Richard McCormick in a series of articles dealing with medical experimentation upon children has provided the most extensive response to Ramsey's deontology. McCormick claims that Ramsey's opposition to all nontherapeutic medical treatment on children sacrifices societal good through resultant beneficial medical advance to individual integrity. Ramsey's response is that to avoid evil is a higher priority moral obligation than to do good and that giving the teleological principle of the best consequences for the community primacy over the deontological principle of individual rights in such situations would result in an "accordian morality" which provides no protection for the individual.

In assessing this dialog between Ramsey and his respondents, Joseph L. Allen notes:

> Taking all these critics into consideration, Ramsey's position appears at present to be more complete and coherent than theirs on the deontology/teleology issue. But even if this is true, his deontology is not without problems.[121]

He concludes his discussion of this dialog by observing that the best solution to this problem is not yet evident.

The other frequent criticism of Ramsey's work is that in the course of his career he has changed his methodology or revised his basic principle of Christian Ethics. Curran

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[121]Joseph L. Allen, "Paul Ramsey and His Respondents Since The Patient As Person," Religious Studies Review, V (April, 1979) p. 92.

claims that order replaced agape in his schema: "In my judgment, the political ethics expounded by Ramsey in his writings from the middle sixties to the present cannot be described as employing the methodology of Christ transforming natural law or love transforming justice."[122] James Johnson also notes a shift but sees it as a move from love to covenant; Johnson approves of this inasmuch as this appeal seems rooted in natural law which provides a more understandable ground for moral discussion in a pluralistic society. Charles Harris claims that Ramsey's move from a language of "love" to one of "covenant, canons of loyalty, and fidelity" indicates a decline in emphasis upon radical altruism. He asserts that Ramsey's moral insights are actually derivatives of the sanctity of human life principle rather than agape.

Ramsey's response to this criticism is that his understanding of love has always been rooted in the concept of covenant. Indeed in his first work, Basic Christian Ethics, he wrote:

> The covenant means unconditional obedience; it means unclaiming love. In this book, the basic norm for Christian ethics has been called "obedient love" because of its intimate association with the idea of "covenant" and with the "reign" of God.[123]

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[122]Curran, "Ramsey and Roman Catholic Natural Law," p. 55.

[123]Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics, p. 388.

Camenisch maintains that these two concepts "have from the beginning been closely interrelated, even interdependent, in Ramsey's thought"[124] and that this use of covenant terminology (as well as his complex attitude toward consequences) is related to his constant commitment to the protection of individuals.[125]

In conclusion, it is significant to note that even Ramsey's strongest critics are appreciative of his work, recognizing the depth of the contribution he has made to theological ethics. They seem to agree that though his moral reasoning settles few issues it sheds light on all he addresses. Allen's comments provide a fair appraisal of Ramsey's ethics:

> Finally, the responses to Ramsey's work have recently raised so many questions about the shape of his basic theory that it would be helpful for him to offer a systematic and extended theoretical statement—not a "defense" by a systematic theoretical reexamination. Over the very years when, according to some, his substantive position shifted and when many would say that his central operative concepts at least developed considerably, his writings have been almost entirely topical and/or polemical. He has repeatedly alluded to his basic normative theory, but for many years has not given it systematic statement. That being the case, the number and nature of the questions about this theory should come as no surprise. It may be unrealistic to want such a theoretical restatement today. That may not be the way his

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[124]Camenisch, p. 71.

[125]James T. Johnson and David Smith, ed. Love and Society, p. viii.

interests or habits incline. Short of such a work, however, we shall not be likely to obtain satisfactory responses to the questions about what he really means on the theoretical level in his theological ethics. But even without it, we are fortunate to continue receiving work with the moral insight and carefulness that Ramsey has so long provided.[126]

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[126]Allen, p. 94.

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