

RELATIONAL VIRTUE: SOTERIOLOGICAL PARTICIPATION AND ETHICS

A Research Paper

Submitted to Dr. Mark Rathel

of

The Baptist College of Florida

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Course

PHI 402. Contemporary Ethical Issues

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April 28, 2017

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Introduction

Marcus Aurelius famously said, “No longer talk at all about the kind of man that a good man ought to be, but be such.”¹ This sentiment sounds well and good, and perhaps it is a bit inspirational, but ultimately there are many ways for Aurelius’ advice to go wrong. For if one man seeks to be a good man by conquering the world for his people, and another seeks to be a good man by nonviolent resistance, problems will ensue. This problem is obvious, but perhaps there is a more fundamental one. What does it mean to *be* a good man, and should that even be a human goal? Perhaps rather than striving to be a good man, one should instead just obey a certain list of commands no matter what kind of man he is, or he should seek the greatest good for the greatest number regardless of the cost for his own person. The concept of *being* a good man is primarily that of virtue ethics.

Virtue ethics has a long and proud history in Christian thought, but there have been objectors. For one, the Reformed tradition has never made much use of the idea. As far as this author can tell, neither has Orthodoxy. Some, though, are stronger objectors than others, including many who subscribe to a kind of participatory soteriology, of which one Reformed example is Evangelical Calvinism. One representative of these objectors is author Bobby Grow. In this paper, I intend to examine this struggle of participationism against virtue ethics. After a brief overview of the two systems, I will argue that, despite objections, virtue ethics can conform to a participatory soteriology if recast relationally, defining virtues in relational context with respect to their effects on relation to both God and man, making the point of unity between these two spheres the person of Jesus Christ, and transfiguring the idea of “habit” into the cultivation of loves in relational union with others, most essentially with Christ through the Spirit.

¹ Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* (Wisehouse Classics, 2015), Kindle book, book X, 16.

Two Streams of Thought

Traditional Virtue Ethics

To understand the purported conflict between virtue ethics and participatory soteriology, there must be a clear account of what each is and entails. This brief survey of the two will begin with virtue ethics. What does the term mean? Broadly speaking, in contemporary moral theory, virtue ethics refers to a kind of ethical system in which the guiding moral light is the concept of a virtue. Virtues are properties of ethical agents, and thus virtue ethical theories are agent-oriented rather than act-oriented (as in deontological theories) or end-oriented (as in consequentialist theories). Ethics in this way concerns the existence of virtuous ethical agents.

What then is a virtue? According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, a virtue in the virtue ethical sense is “an excellent trait of character...a disposition, well entrenched in its possessor.”² Unlike mere habits, virtues go deep and affect the whole being and act of those who have them. A person may possess a virtue in varying degrees or not at all. Perfect virtue is effortless and “automatic,” whereas lesser degrees of virtue may still involve inner conflict against vice.³

Virtue ethics has had a wide impact within the Christian tradition, primarily through the Aristotelian influences in the Greek culture of the New Testament era and, perhaps more importantly, the later adoption of Aristotelian philosophy into the work of St. Thomas Aquinas. This led in the medieval period to a concept of seven virtues. Three are the “theological virtues,” available only by grace: faith, hope, and love. Four are the “cardinal virtues,” available by nature

² Rosalind Hursthouse and Glen Pettigrove, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2016 ed., s.v. "Virtue Ethics," <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/ethics-virtue/>.

³ Ibid.

to all rational agents: justice, temperance, fortitude, and prudence. This tradition would usually classify other qualities which might go by the name “virtue” under one of these seven.

Essential to virtue ethics is the concept of habit. Indeed, the Thomist tradition defines a virtue precisely as a *habitual* disposition.⁴ N. T. Wright explained the concept of virtue in this habit-centered way:

Virtue, in the strict sense, is what happens when someone has made a thousand small choices, requiring effort and concentration, to do something which is good and right but which doesn’t “come naturally”—and then, on the thousand and first time, when it really matters, they find that they do what’s required “automatically,” as we say.⁵

Therefore, for the virtue ethicist, moral development consists in rational and willful development of new, virtuous habits which over time the agent so internalizes as to make a given virtue a fundamental element of way of life. He trains himself to develop habits which reshape him as a virtuous man. If he wishes to become temperate, he will discipline himself with forced habits of moderation until he defaults to temperance in all his doings.

This concept of habit is of supreme import, for on these grounds will arise the critique from participatory soteriology. For this critique to make sense, however, participatory soteriology demands brief explanation.

Participatory Soteriology

There are perhaps many more people who have heard of virtue ethics than what some call “participatory soteriology.” To what does this term refer? Participatory soteriology refers to views of salvation controlled by the concept of “participation” in Christ and/or God. This paper attends specially to a Reformed variant of participatory soteriology which Bobby Grow and Myk Habets have termed “Evangelical Calvinism.” The paradigmatic doctrine of Evangelical

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [hereafter CCC], 2nd ed. (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls, 2000), n. 1803.

⁵ N. T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2010), 20.

Calvinism is union with Christ, worked out in a unique form which goes by “the vicarious humanity of Christ.”

The vicarious humanity of Christ focuses on the fact that all Christ did as a man, He did vicariously for all humanity. Jesus assumed human nature so that He could sanctify its whole course of life, bending it in all its corruption back toward God. This is essentially an ontologically grounded account of what the broader Reformed tradition refers to as Christ’s “active obedience,” but in Evangelical Calvinism this obedience connects not only to the believer’s justification but also his sanctification. Since Christ in His Incarnation held together without fail the bond between God and man in His own person, He sanctified, redeemed, and renewed human being so as to become the source of new life by the Spirit for all who are united to Him.

On the subjective side, this means that individual believers receive their sanctification, which of course would include any goods classified as “virtues,” passively through the Spirit from Christ’s own sanctified humanity. All human righteousness is in Christ, whether in respect to forensic justification or practical sanctification, and whatever practical righteousness the believer has he therefore receives as a gift by the Spirit. The virtues were formed in Christ, not in the believer, but they receive them into practice as alien virtue through their union with Christ.

Thomas Torrance described this kind of soteriology in this way from the perspective of Communion:

As one summoned to the Holy Table [the Christian] is commanded by the Word of God to live only in such a way that he feeds upon Christ, not in such a way that he feeds upon his own activities or lives out of his own capital of alleged spirituality. He lives from week to week, by drawing his life and strength from the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper, nourished by the body and blood of Christ, and in the strength of that communion he must live and work until Christ comes again. As often as he partakes of the Eucharist he partakes of the self-consecration of Jesus Christ who sanctified Himself for our sakes that we might be sanctified in reality and be presented to the Father as those

whom He has redeemed and perfected (or consecrated) together with Himself in one. Here He is called to lift up his heart to the ascended Lord, and to look forward to the day when the full reality of his new being in Christ will be unveiled, making Scripture and Sacrament no longer necessary.⁶

Bobby Grow's Participationist Critique of Virtue Ethics

At this point, the basic source of conflict between a participationist soteriology and virtue ethics begins to emerge. In virtue ethics, the human will plays a central role as it pushes toward the development of virtuous habits which over time make a virtuous man. The human is active and must do his own work to form his own virtue. Of course, most Christian accounts of virtue modify this in such a way so that the Holy Spirit plays a role in the process. The concept of an infused habit or disposition from God, created grace, helps to kick virtue development "in gear." The participationist model apparently stands in stark contrast to this. Human virtue was once-for-all formed in the person and life of Jesus Christ. No action but His truly counts. Christians receive whatever kind of virtuous activity or characteristics they do as a gift of sheer grace, arising spontaneously out of their union with Christ by the Spirit. There seems to be no place for habit-forming by will.

This tension led Bobby Grow, a theological author and blogger, to criticize virtue ethics rather sharply from a participationist standpoint. After disparaging virtue ethics as "fake-it-till-you-make-it" theology, he explained as follows (the rather lengthy quote is necessary to fully expound his point):

...when we, like Joe Christian, think that we must fake it till we make it in order to transmute our 'old-fallen-nature' into the 'new-created-nature' we have in Christ we miss the freedom of the Gospel. The emphasis, because of habitus-like thinking, is now on my effort (yes, with God's help) to mould and shape 'my' character into the character of Christ; Christ is the exemplar I am trying to imitate then through the disposition of the habitus (given by God of course). This might fit well with a view of salvation that works from a declarational emphasis—i.e. or a forensic emphasis—that focuses on the outside

⁶ Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2005), 158.

of things (like the forgiveness of sins through a paid penalty), but it does not jive well with a participationist theory of salvation.

A participationist theory of salvation emphasizes a view of salvation that sees ‘saved’ persons in deep and intimate union with Jesus Christ (I Cor 6.17); that realizes that we as saved persons have been given new hearts (II Cor 3), and these hearts are not our own hearts but Christ’s. A participationist theory of salvation focuses on God in Christ moving from outside of us into us, as he becomes us (see Irenaeus; II Cor 5.21; etc.), and re-creates our humanity in and from his vicarious humanity from the inside out. A participationist salvation understands that our characters aren’t transformed by focusing on what we can do, or how we can habituate in certain ‘moral’ activities; instead it focuses on who God in Christ is for us and in us. It focuses on His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these other things are added to us and through us from there.⁷

The basic critique present in these two paragraphs amounts nearly to a charge of semi-Pelagianism in the doctrine of sanctification. Though much of even the Reformed tradition satisfies itself with framing the post-conversion Christian life as basically synergistic, strong participationist soteriologies resist all such impulses (while also resisting monergism). Salvation in all its components—justification, sanctification, and glorification alike—must be deeply all of Christ.

Bobby Grow has thrown down the gauntlet, championing participationism against virtue ethics. Before anyone takes up his challenge in battle, however, one may ask whether the duel is as necessary as it appears. Is the tension between virtue ethics and participatory soteriology actually irresolvable? This author quite doubts so. Therefore, the remainder of this paper shall offer, in a rather experimental and exploratory form, a possible reconciliation between the two conceptions of moral thought through the category of relation.

⁷ Bobby Grow, "The Disastrous Results of Fake-it-till-You-Make It Theology: The Habitus," *The Evangelical Calvinist* (blog), June 10, 2016, accessed February 16, 2017, <https://growrag.wordpress.com/2016/06/09/the-disastrous-results-of-fake-it-till-you-make-it-theology-the-habitus/>.

An Experiment in Integration

Participation, Virtue, and Relationality

To understand what possibilities may allow for a union of virtue ethics with a participatory soteriology, both participation and virtue must be recast in relational terms. What does this mean? The key phrase might be “relational ontology.” Every person is who and what he is specifically in relation to other persons (and, to an extent, non-persons, but to explore this tangent is beyond this essay). Relations are constitutive of being. The first and primary constituting relationship of all men is to God their Father and Creator. Then come a host of other relations, including parental, fraternal, filial, communal, societal, ethnic, geographical, and the like. To borrow Aristotelian categories for a moment, such relationships are not merely accidental to the individual man, but essential. They determine and define him.

A relational ontology of man is not at all foreign to participationism. T. F. Torrance spoke frequently of “onto-relations,” defined as “the kind of relation subsisting between things which is an essential constituent of their being, and without which they would not be what they are.”⁸ Though he usually employed the term in the context of Trinitarian theology, the step of applying it to anthropology is not a big one. Moreover, the determination of man by God as God’s partner was a major theme of Karl Barth.⁹ Applying this relational principle to participationism will play a key role in connecting it to virtue ethics.

How, then, can a relational principle adjust or reform virtue ethics? This question will occupy much of the remaining essay. A few initial pointers will occupy the this paragraph. First, all systems of virtue ethics have at their core an ideal of the virtuous man. Alasdair MacIntyre

⁸ Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality & Evangelical Theology: The Realism of Christian Revelation* (Eugene (Or.): Wipf and Stock, 2003), 42-43.

⁹ E.g. Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1964), 20.

gave two examples of this in *After Virtue*: “For Homer the paradigm of human excellence is the warrior; for Aristotle it is the Athenian gentleman.”¹⁰ For a Christian virtue ethic of any kind, the concrete person of Jesus Himself must take the place of this ideal man.¹¹ In this case a man is more virtuous the more he resembles Christ. Resemblance to Christ is, of course, God’s work and primarily an eschatological goal rather than a present possibility. Nonetheless, the work of Christ is in a vital sense already accomplished. This theme participatory soteriology stresses. With the principle of a relational ontology in mind, it is clear that even now Christians exist objectively “in Christ” in some sense. The relation is not merely external, accidental, or nominal but real and ontologically determinative. This remains true no matter the metaphysical nature of the relation. So, by being determined as “in Christ,” the Christian is already a virtuous man. Christ once-for-all established human virtue in His earthly sojourn. This relation of Christ to the Christian, and of the eschatological reality to mundane existence, should provide helpful material for linking virtue ethics to participationism.

Another factor needed to recast virtue ethics relationally is a relational understanding of virtue itself. Perhaps the seven virtues of classic Christian virtue theory will suffice, but if they are to do so, this experiment will need to redefine them in relational terms rather than as complete within the individual alone. No one can wholly possess or obtain virtue in abstraction from a relational context, this will go far in evading Grow’s criticisms. To this task the experiment will now turn.

¹⁰ Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 182.

¹¹ E.g. Romans 8:29.

Recasting Virtue Relationally

What is virtue? Per the definitions given above, virtue is a habitual disposition to behave in a certain and excellent way. Yet how is this excellence defined? Understanding the nature of human excellence is key to any virtue ethic. All hinges on what or who a human being should be. Various forms of virtue ethics understand the aim of virtue differently, centered variously on *eudaimonia* (“happiness” or “flourishing”), pure motivations, particular aims and goals, or some Platonic concept of goodness.¹² While some or all of these have at least a degree of merit, in the interest of working with a relational union of participationism and virtue ethics, what follows will attempt to be a relational account of virtue.

Human beings do not exist in a vacuum or as isolated individuals. Even in total apparent solitude, they live *coram Deo*. As Father, Son, and Spirit, God is their Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.¹³ Each of these roles lays a complete claim on the man. He is to God a son, a brother, and a temple, or a creature, a redeemed sinner, and a dependent. These relations call forth specific kinds of response to God. From this situation arises the fittingness of the so-called “theological virtues.” In his contingency and dependence, the man owes to God faith, hope, and love. Nothing better suits and fosters the man’s relationship to God than to give to Him utter trust, to hold fast to all His promises, and to love Him with all his heart. Though in a certain sense he already stands objectively before God as son, brother, and temple, by cultivating the relationship through faith, hope, and love he comes subjectively in his life to better act in each of these roles. The existing objective relationship comes into subjective efficacy through the virtues, which are themselves grounded in and empowered by the objectivity.

¹² Hursthouse and Pettigrove, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. “Virtue Ethics.”

¹³ Of course, these role-person associations are only partially legitimate, for *opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*.

This line of thought can extend to the horizontal sphere and the so-called “cardinal virtues.” Once again, even though one might in principle live out of contact with all human relationships, in practice nearly all men exist in many. The cardinal virtues of justice, temperance, prudence, and fortitude readily lend themselves to serve as condensed criteria for proper human relations. A man duly relates to his peers when he treats each one righteously, moderates all that he does and consumes, wisely manages all his interactions, and resists both cowardice and recklessness. The sense of this suggestion is probably self-evident. The cardinal virtues find solid ground in their promotion of healthy personal relations. If everyone were to possess the cardinal virtues in their fullness, all people would rightly relate to all others at all times. For every degree that anyone lacks in one of these virtues, his relationship with others, or at least some other, must suffer in quality.

Provisionally, then, one could define virtue in relational terms as the qualities by which a man maintains purely ordered and healthy relationships both with God and with men. The virtuous man is the man who lives in proper relation to God and to other people. Of course, given Romans 3, no one could in fact meet this ideal, with a single exception. By this definition, Jesus’ status as the ideal man is fully clear. He is the one who offered to God unstained obedience and to man incomparable goodness, thereby fulfilling a right relationship with both parties.

Recasting the concept of virtue in this relational sense offers the first hints of a way out of Grow’s participatory critique of virtue ethics. Virtue understood in this relational sense has two special features: (1) the ability to develop virtue is intrinsically dependent upon a prior objective relationship, ultimately to God, and (2) no one can simply become virtuous by mustering the strength of his own will, for virtues require participation in a relationship to exist

at all. More on these advantages shall come in the next section, where they will be juxtaposed with Barth's apparent divine command ethic in hope of some integration.

Relationally Contingent Virtue and Divine Command

Most know of Karl Barth as falling in line with divine command theory, though like all other aspects of his thought, he subjected even this ethical system to a thorough Christological correction. Joshua Kim explained the difference:

For Barth, the divine command of God is not a regulative moral principle. It is the command of the living God. Thus it does not come from human beings but from God, who is wholly other. That is, —the command of God is the command of the gracious God made known in Jesus Christ. What is the command of the gracious God made known in Jesus Christ is really important. And the divine command of God is the concrete, specific, and direct command of God given to individuals here and now.¹⁴

According to Kim, for Barth there is not so much a list of general divine commands but rather as men walk *coram Deo* they are again and again confronted with the Word of God. This repeated confrontation occasions obedience to God, which is core of ethics. However, as Kim also mentioned, this does not allow for arbitrary or ever-changing ethics because the determinate context for all divine-human intercourse in its pattern of command and response is the objective, gracious covenant God has established between man and Himself in the election and reconciliation of Jesus Christ.¹⁵

The degree of resemblance which this account of Barthian command ethics bears to the relational virtue proposal of this essay is somewhat startling. Barth here employs a kind of relational ontology of the human person: The Word of God redefines and reconstitutes man as a new creature in covenant with God. This fixed context sets the stage for man to determine himself for or against God, who has already determined Himself for man and man for Himself.

¹⁴ Joshua Jin Woon Kim, "Ethics as the Command of God in Karl Barth's Theology," *Academia*, 6, accessed March 02, 2017, https://www.academia.edu/8087260/Ethics_as_the_command_of_God_in_Karl_Barths_theology.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 5.

At this point, man's coming into subjective realization of his objective relationship with God by the theological virtues almost seems possible. There remains one obstacle, however. Precisely at this point Barth seems, at least by common accusation,¹⁶ to adopt a kind of occasionalism in which the man is again and again confronted with the need and chance to obey but in each instance starting once more from his own destitution and only obeying by a fresh experience of grace. There seems to be no room for development or growth into virtue.

A likely solution to this lies in William Werpehowski's argument that the reformation of a Christian's history by the history of Christ in repeated encounter allows for this kind of space.¹⁷ While Barth's concept of repeated confrontation with the Word rules out any purely linear narrative of self-determined development, there is always the history of relation, the mixed history of one who, God having determined him as His own, has variously responded to this divine relationship both by disobedience and obedience. His past disobedience may cloud his hearing and discernment of God's command, but God's Word will speak loud enough that he can indeed obey. His past obedience has determined his present context and place before God, the specific moment and situation in which God speaks to him, and even though this past obedience will not simply carry him magically into further obedience, it provides a history of faith and fulfillment from which to draw upon in determining to once again obey God in the present.

In this account, then, man's only capacity for virtue comes from God's repeated and personal speech, His Word coming to man again and again to summon him to obedience. This encounter arises from the relational context of the covenant of grace enacted by Jesus Christ, in

¹⁶ E.g. "By describing the Christian life primarily in terms of command and decision, Barth cannot fully account for the kind of growth and deepening that he thinks is essential to the Christian's existence." Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1985), 176, cited in Kirk J. Nolan, *Developing Moral Virtue Ethics within the Reformed Theological Tradition* [hereafter *Developing Reformed Virtue*], PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2010, 105-106, accessed March 2, 2017, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/851307940?accountid=133490>.

¹⁷ Kirk J. Nolan, *Developing Reformed Virtue*, 107-108.

whom God and man are perfectly related, so that all virtuous being and act presuppose and rely upon this one and inimitable foundation. As his history lengthens and comes to contain more instances of obedience, man finds that he has more reason for trust, more ground for confidence, and more experience of grace, and these growing realities build ever stronger the desire and capacity to obey God's command yet again out of faith, hope, and love.

Final Considerations and Applications

Practical Application of Relational Virtue

If this experimental relational virtue is on track, then the cultivation of right relations to God and man must be the basic practice of moral formation. The concept of a habitual disposition is perhaps slightly off-base. Rather, the point is the development of genuine and well-ordered personal loves. In essence, a relation virtue ethic depends upon the double-edged law of Christ: "Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength"¹⁸ and "Love your neighbor as yourself."¹⁹

One would be in error, at least according to this author's opinion, to in this way frame the development of true love as a simple learned habit. Love runs deeper and is more responsive than that. Human love arises in a relational context when one beholds the reality of the beloved and responds in appropriate appreciation and embrace. The means for developing such a response is essentially a passive reception of the object's revelation in its proper goodness. This cuts out all notion of mere human self-improvement.

¹⁸ Mark 12:29-30.

¹⁹ Mark 12:31.

The practical content of this is probably more mundane than it may first sound. To develop a virtuous relation to God in love requires merely to know and hear Him, to receive His self-revelation in plain acceptance. His glory, His own Self revealed, is enough to work the change. In the most practical terms, this means seeking communion with God where He has promised to reveal Himself. This means reading the Scriptures as God's appointed place of speech, hearing Him in prayer, immersing into His domain in baptism, dining with Him in the Supper, and fellowshiping with Him in the lives of the people who serve as His temple.

Likewise, in the development of virtue in a more horizontal sense, the basic gist remains coming to know others and to respond to them in congruous appreciation. Talking and listening, understanding and inquiring, giving space and filling gaps—these basic modes allow other creatures to reveal their own peculiar glories, glories which naturally call forth a positive response. Though in sin, nobody's true glory is intact, a right relationship with God in Christ will allow the virtue-seeking man to see all as they are in Christ, perfect and complete. By this he can come to appreciate them as God does and thus to develop relations of virtue.

The Adequacy of the Relational Proposal

With a possible conception of a relation virtue ethic in place, the question asserts itself: Does it suffice? Can this proposal avoid or answer Bobby Grow's criticisms of virtue ethics? Recalling those criticisms will enable a consideration of this question. Three basic problems were involved.

First, is this account semi-Pelagian, as Grow implied and in other places has suggested more explicitly must be true of virtue ethics? Clearly the answer is "no." In this account the man has already achieved perfect virtue in Christ, and this reality is irreducibly necessary as the context in which he can develop virtuous relationships to God and others in time. He receives his

virtue subjectively into his life as a gift, sheer grace arising from the relations God has established in covenant and providence.

Second, is this account synergistic? The charge of synergism is a slippery one, as one man's synergism is another man's semi-Pelagianism, and some other man's synergism is perhaps yet another man's monergism. Even so, the charge certainly applies no more to this relational account of virtue ethics than to any standard element of participatory soteriology. Indeed, in a robustly moderate way this account seems to fulfill a maxim of Evangelical Calvinist T. F. Torrance that "All of grace does not mean nothing of man. All of grace means all of man."²⁰ Man does act, but his act is utterly responsive and secondary, predesigned in the vicarious humanity of Christ and occasioned exclusively by God's Word.

Finally, must this account lead to a burn-out from "faking it?" The only possible answer is "By no means!" This relational account of virtue places makes the development of virtue to an important degree passive as one simply hears and sees the people to whom he relates. He responds to them in congruently, a response which is partially active but still fundamentally a response. This prevents exhaustion and mere acting except for those who are so calloused to love in their rebellion that they simply cannot find any room to love except in the most feigned way. Yet for these hope remains because of the apocalyptic nature of the Word of God, which may at any time break through their hardened hearts and free them.

Conclusion

The account of relational virtue offered above is, to be certain, probably incomplete. Much more attention may be necessary toward horizontal relationships and the cardinal virtues, over which divine relations here took precedence for the sake of space. Nonetheless, at least as

²⁰ Thomas F. Torrance and Robert T. Walker, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), xlvi.

an experiment this account of relational virtue seems possibly adequate to start a new conversation between virtue ethics and participatory soteriology. Ethics is a notoriously difficult field, but without doubt more discussion between more various partners shall produce more insights so that, in the end, the people of God may live every more faithfully to their Lord Jesus Christ.

Annotated Bibliography

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Aurelius' *Meditations* were something like an ethical encouragement journal for himself, by which he intended to keep up his resolve each day to live rightly. It stands as a historic example of Stoic virtue.

Barth, Karl. *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1964.

This relatively brief (especially for Barth) book is an introduction to doing theology in a distinctively evangelical (in the sense of determined by the Gospel) way. In it, Barth covers a host of topics, including theological anthropology, which is essential to the dogmatic context of ethics.

“The Disastrous Results of Fake-it-till-You-Make It Theology: The Habitus.” *The Evangelical Calvinist* (blog), June 10, 2016. Accessed February 16, 2017.
<https://growrag.wordpress.com/2016/06/09/the-disastrous-results-of-fake-it-till-you-make-it-theology-the-habitus/>.

This blog post by an editor of Evangelical Calvinism contains a brief but important participationist critique of virtue ethics which serves as the prompt for this whole paper.

Hursthouse, Rosalind, and Glen Pettigrove. “Virtue Ethics.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward N. Zalta. Winter 2016 ed.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/ethics-virtue/>.

This encyclopedia article gives a rather deep and expansive philosophical overview of virtue ethics in its history and multiple forms. The definitions and distinctions it offers are very useful in nailing down just what “virtue” means for virtue ethicists.

Kim, Joshua Jin Woon. “Ethics as the Command of God in Karl Barth’s Theology.” Academia. Accessed March 02, 2017.
https://www.academia.edu/8087260/Ethics_as_the_command_of_God_in_Karl_Barths_theology

This is a rather brief essay which summarizes Karl Barth’s view of ethics from the perspective of divine command theory. It treats Barth’s ethics as certainly command-oriented but distinguishes this from more generic and impersonal forms of the usual theory

MacIntyre, Alasdair C. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010.

This book has almost single-handedly revived the virtue ethical tradition in modern thought. MacIntyre diagnoses the moral confusion of today’s world and reintroduces Aristotelian ethics as a probable solution.

Nolan, Kirk J. *Developing Moral Virtue Ethics within the Reformed Theological Tradition*. PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2010. Accessed March 2, 2017. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/851307940?accountid=133490>.

In this dissertation, Kirk Nolan attempts to find space in the Reformed tradition for virtue ethics, where it has not usually had much a home. This project includes extensive interaction with Karl Barth and thus offers helpful insights toward integration participationist soteriology with virtue ethics.

Torrance, Thomas F., and Robert T. Walker. *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015.

This book, published posthumously from Torrance's New College lectures, has received recognition as one of the top modern treatments of the doctrine of the Incarnation. It closely connects every aspect of theology, including anthropology, with Christology, and thus it plays an important role in understanding Evangelical Calvinist ethics.

Torrance, Thomas F. *Reality & Evangelical Theology: The Realism of Christian Revelation*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003.

T. F. Torrance was a proponent of a "critical realist" epistemology, and this book treats some of the ways this affects his theological project. It includes some important thoughts on ontology and Trinity, which are helpful in connecting the natures of God and man to ethics.

Torrance, Thomas F. *Space, Time and Resurrection*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2005.

This book has little on the surface to do with ethics and instead addresses theological questions and problems related to science, physics, the natural order, resurrection, new creation, and the like. For Torrance, though, every aspect of theology can become the focal point from which all else can become clear, and thus this book includes helpful summarizing material of Torrance's participationist soteriology as a whole.

Wright, N. T. *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2010.

This book is essentially N. T. Wright's lay-level attempt to reintroduce virtue ethics to evangelical Protestantism much as *After Virtue* did for the wider world of moral thinkers.