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NEW TESTAMENT ETHICAL LISTS¹

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IT is now generally recognized that the catalogs of virtues and vices in the New Testament are derived ultimately from the ethical teaching of the Stoa.² Lists of the kind are all but absent from the Old Testament and are very scantily represented in the Talmud,³ while the (acrostic) catalogs of sins recited in the synagogue confessions can scarcely be traced back of the fifth Christian century. In the Hellenistic Jewish literature, however, such lists are fairly abundant and are elaborately developed by Philo; in his *Sacrifices of Abel and Cain*,⁴ he assembles no less than a hundred and sixty evils in a single catalog. Early Greek Christianity, therefore, was in contact with the practice of teaching by using ethical lists on two sides, the Hellenistic Jewish and the pure Greek. It is the purpose of the present discussion to investigate the respective influence of these two sources, and also to inquire how far the New Testament writers developed the method independently.

An excellent example of a Jewish-Greek list is in Wisdom 14
25—26:

¹ Presidential Address delivered before the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis at its Annual meeting held at Union Theological Seminary, New York City, December 28, 1931.

² The facts and literature are summarized, e. g., in Lietzmann's *An die Römer*, 3d ed., 1928, p. 351.

³ The examples cited by Strack-Billerbeck (iii, p. 75) on Romans 1 29—31 are all from Hellenized works.

⁴ § 32, Cohn's edition, i, p. 214f. In Mangey's edition (ii, p. 268f.) and Yonge's English translation (iii, p. 254f.) the passage is detached from its proper context.

<i>αἷμα καὶ φόνος</i>	<i>κλοπή καὶ δόλος</i>
<i>φθορά ἀπιστία</i>	<i>τάραχος ἐπιτορκία</i>
<i>θόρυβος ἀγαθῶν</i>	<i>χάριτος ἀμνησία</i>
<i>ψυχῶν μασμός</i>	<i>γενέσεως ἐναλλαγὴ</i>
<i>γάμων ἀταξία</i>	
<i>μοιχεία καὶ ἀσέλγεια</i>	
blood and murder	theft and fraud
corruption faithlessness	tumult perjury
troubling of good	unthankfulness for benefits
defilement of souls	confusion of sex
disorder in marriage	
adultery and wantonness	

Here certain characteristics deserve notice:

As in practically all lists of the kind, whatever their origin, the sins are selected somewhat at random. There is little attempt to classify them; a rough metrical scheme, assonance and paronomasia are chiefly responsible for their order.

In accord with Jewish custom actions rather than thoughts are enumerated; even "unthankfulness for benefits" is probably conceived as manifested in ungrateful conduct. A true Stoic analysis would probe deeper and would center on sins of the disposition as the cause of the acts.

In the context all these sins are described as the result of a primal fault: "The devising of idols was the beginning of fornication, and the invention of them the corruption of life" (14 12). The attempt to unify the sources of human guilt is essentially Greek; apart from some exceptions not only the Old Testament but later Judaism as well tend to isolate sins from one another as breaches of different divine laws. But in making the root sin "idolatry" the writer is wholly Jewish; while certain Stoics regard the practice as foolish they never think of treating it as the cause of every other vice. As the cardinal defect most Greek moralists would choose "ignorance," although thorough-going Stoics might prefer "pleasure." In the Jewish scheme of things, however, neither "ignorance" nor "pleasure" could play so decisive a part; where Jewish authors adopt the Hellenistic terminology—as Philo often does⁵—they are argu-

⁵ For instance, in his mammoth list cited above all the vices are personified as followers of Pleasure.

ing as Greeks and not as Jews. "Ignorance," no doubt, might be given an Old Testament coloring by defining it as "ignorance of God's laws,"⁶ but in this identification the Greek meaning of the word is altered out of recognition. And pleasure as something evil in itself is all but incomprehensible to the Jewish mind; according to Judaism many pleasures are not only approved but are explicitly commanded by God.⁷

Finally, it may be observed that the author of Wisdom is not concerned to correct the sins that he catalogs. Since he and his coreligionists were not "led astray by any evil device of men's art, nor yet by painters' fruitless labor," (15 4) they are free from these sins that have their origin in idolatry. He writes, in other words, simply to exalt his own religion by describing the depths of baseness to which non-Jews have descended.

Turning now to the New Testament, the longest catalog of vices is in Romans 1 29—31. It comes as the climax of an argument which follows the thesis and language of Wisdom 13—14 very closely, so closely in fact as to prove a dependence of some direct or indirect sort. Paul, moreover, like Wisdom does not attempt to reform the evils in his list; he too depicts a condition in which supposedly he and his readers have no share, and which is meant only to horrify these readers with the depravity of the outside world. And in his list also euphony rather than logic has determined the selection of the terms and their order. On the other hand only two terms of Wisdom's fifteen and Paul's twenty-one—"murder" and "deceit"—are common to both. This is partly due to Paul's omission of sexual aberrations, which have been already dealt with in vv. 26—27, but is chiefly owing to the fact that Paul chooses sins that are predominantly those of thought rather than of act. One reason for this change may be Paul's different aim. Wisdom carefully limits his reproaches to failings that—in his opinion, at least—are comparatively rare among Jews. Paul, who is about to castigate the Jews as relentlessly as he does the Greeks, may deliberately have chosen moral defects acknowledged common to all mankind. But in any case Paul is much more Stoic in his phrasing; the phrase *τὰ μὴ*

⁶ Psalm 147 20, etc.

⁷ Deuteronomy 16 15, etc.

καθήκοντα that introduces his list is from the technical language of the moralists.

Now the reproduction of Wisdom's general argument is by no means confined to Paul. There is, to be sure, curiously little on this theme in the Rabbinical literature,⁸ but Baruch 6 43-44 similarly deduces sexual vice from idolatry, while in 2 Enoch 10 4-6 unnatural sins, gross excesses and wanton cruelties are made to culminate in "idolatry." So "idolatry" is the climax of "abominable, murderers, fornicators and sorcerers" in Revelation 21 8 and of "dogs, sorcerers, fornicators and murderers" in Revelation 22 15,⁹ while in Revelation 9 20-21 "murders, sorceries, fornication and thefts" are introduced by an Old Testament description of idolatry. We may compare "lasciviousness, lusts, winebibbings, revellings, carousings and abominable idolatries" in 1 Peter 4 3 and "fornicators, covetous, extortioners and idolaters" in 1 Corinthians 5 10. In 1 Corinthians 6 9-10, "fornicators, idolaters, effeminate, perverse sexualists, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers and extortioners" and Galatians 5 19-21 "fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness and revellings" so emphatic a position is not given to "idolatry," but the general identity of these two lists with those above is obvious; at all events idolatry and sexual misdeeds are closely associated. And in all the lists thus far cited except Romans 1 29-31 the sins are almost exclusively sins of act.

It seems clear, consequently, that around the beginning of our era Hellenistic Judaism had developed a regular "form" for denouncing Gentiles, in which idolatry was linked with the habitual perpetration of various grossly atrocious deeds and was often made their cause. And this practice was continued by the New Testament writers, often with little regard for the context. In 1 Corinthians

⁸ Strack-Billerbeck (iii, p. 63, 55) cites only a saying of Rabbi Jehudah in *Sanh.* 63b: "The Israelites served idols only to permit themselves open licentiousness." But reproaches of Gentiles for immorality of course crowd the pages of the Talmud (Strack-Billerbeck, iii, p. 62-76).

⁹ The apparent anticlimax of "all liars" in 21 8 and "every one that loveth and maketh a lie" in 22 15 is almost certainly due to additions of the Apocalypticist, who was using "lying" in the technical sense of "apostasy." "Fearful and unbelieving" which open the list in 21 28 undoubtedly have this sense.

6 9–10, for instance, the sins enumerated have no real connection with Paul's reproof of lawsuits among Christians: the only relevant terms are "covetous" and "extortioners," and they are submerged by eight others, of which four are sexual. In other words the list must not be regarded as an integral part of Paul's argument, but as a conventional formula that he introduces as a threat. "In your lack of brotherly affection you are in danger of falling back into what you once were! If in one respect, why not in all?"

It would of course be futile, to attempt to construct a standard set of vices that might compose a hypothetical "original" list. No such catalog ever existed; teachers merely lumped together such evil deeds as might occur to them at the moment. No term is common to all the lists cited above. "Fornication" (in some form or other) comes nearest but is absent from Romans 1 29–31, although found in 1 24–27. "Murder," "theft," and "covetousness" are likewise popular because highly obvious. "Sorcery" is in all three of the lists in Revelation and in Galatians 5 20 as well. "Drunkenness" (also obvious) occurs three times. Otherwise there is little repetition; the conventionality consists in citing general gross sins rather than any particular vices.

In Galatians 5 19–21, however, a real attempt has been made to adapt the list to the context. Two, indeed, of the fifteen terms—"idolatry" and "sorcery"—are perfunctory, since all Christians were supposedly free from temptations to such things.¹⁰ Four terms—"fornication, lasciviousness, drunkenness, revellings"—recur in substance in 1 Peter 4 3 and so may be judged moral commonplaces. but their citation in any exhortation addressed to Greeks could certainly do no harm. But the remaining eight terms—"enmities, strifes, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings"—fit perfectly into the plan of Galatians. They form the counterpart of the nine virtues that follow—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control"—every one of which reinforces the lesson that Paul was endeavoring to teach. This catalog of nine sins, consequently, is Paul's own composition, which he has inserted into a conventional citation. In support of this we may note in addition that in Greek these eight

¹⁰ The weakened sense of "idolatry" in 1 Corinthians 10 14 cannot apply here.

terms—*ἔχθραι*, *ἔρις*, *ζῆλος*, *θυμοί*, *ἐριθειάι*, *διχοστασία*, *αἰρέσεις*, *φθόνοι*—have little discoverable assonance, while in the terms that remain when these are deleted—*πορνεία*, *ἀκαθαρσία*, *ἀσέλγεια*, *εἰδωλολατρεία*, *φαρμακεία*, *μέθαι*, *κῶμοι*—the euphony is well marked. Unlike Romans 1 29–31 Paul has chosen terms that as a whole describe sins of act rather than of disposition and so is Jewish rather than Stoic.

A somewhat similar phenomenon may be observed in the two associated lists of Colossians 3 5, 8: “fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry” and “anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking.” These are obviously largely conventional, but Paul has made them serve his immediate purpose excellently. In this way we have the probable explanation of the perplexing phrase “covetousness which is idolatry,” which reappears in Ephesians 5 5 as “covetous man who is an idolater.” Exegetes have always been puzzled by this unexpected equation of two unrelated vices and have evolved no satisfactory interpretation for it.¹¹ From the facts analyzed above, however, it is evident that Paul is citing a formula which concluded with “covetousness and idolatry;” “idolatry” being the culminating term as in other lists already discussed. But it suddenly occurred to him that the Colossians were in no need of a warning against idolatry, and so he changed the wording, producing a phrase that no doubt lacks clarity but which teaches an excellent moral lesson.

Otherwise in Colossians 3 5, 8 there is nothing inappropriate to so general a warning, even when addressed to earnest Christians. Omitting synonyms there are really only four sins in the two lists—sexual indulgence, love of money, anger and untruthfulness—all of which are universal temptations everywhere. In Ephesians 4 31, 5 3–4 the adaptation has been carried still farther. “Passion” and “evil desire” have disappeared and are replaced by the much

¹¹ Some, noting that the other terms in Colossians 3 5 are sexual, have explained “covetousness” here as “impurity for pay,” “prostitution,” and have pointed to the abundant parallels that connect prostitution with idol-worship. Others have seen in the covetousness a reluctance to be cut off from the normal business life of the Hellenistic world, a reluctance that might tempt to apostasy. Strack-Billerbeck (ii, p. 606–607) note that there are no true Rabbinic parallels.

milder offences "foolish talking" and "jesting,"¹² the confusing equation of "covetousness" and "idolatry" is transferred to the final application, and adjurations to positive virtues are interspersed. In this way the section acquires an even more specifically Christian coloring. An incongruity, however, appears in including "covetousness" among the sins "not even to be named;" this was probably an oversight.

The Pastoral Epistles contain three lists of vices with certain peculiarities of their own. In 1 Timothy 1 9-10 fourteen unusually gross abominations are detailed as "contrary to the healthful teaching" and as rebuked by the law. The arrangement here is determined by the second table of the Decalogue, and so no significance can be attached to the omission of "idolatry;" the Jewish character of the list is self-evident. The five-term list in 1 Timothy 6 4-5, "envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wranglings," has conventional elements but is chiefly constructed out of anti-Gnostic polemic. Somewhat different from all the others is the eighteen-term list 2 Timothy 3 2-4. By its context it is simply one more of the familiar Jewish apocalyptic predictions of the moral degeneracy of the last days. Its contents, however, attribute less extreme vices than is usual to the evil teachers who usher in the end. Sins of act are considerably outnumbered by sins of disposition, so the closest New Testament parallel to this list is Romans 1 29-31. Four terms of the two lists are, in fact, in verbal correspondence. One, *γονεύσιν ἀπειθείς*, has no significance, but two others of the four, *ἀλαζόνες* and *ἄστοργοι*, are found nowhere else in the New Testament. And the fourth term, *ὑπερήφανοι*, is by no means common; two of its three other New Testament occurrences (James 4 7 and 1 Peter 5 5) are in citations of Proverbs 3 34. So the list in Romans may very well have inspired that in 2 Timothy. The modifications would be due to the fact that the author of the Pastorals was writing against very concrete adversaries, a peculiarly objectionable type of gnostics. He consequently selected terms that could be recognized as describing these people,¹³ and that led up to his more explicit characterization of them in the verses that follow.

¹² The substitution of "clamor" for "malice" seems to have no special point, unless *κακία* was thought too general a word.

¹³ Hence the non-use of "murder," which is in the list in Romans.

The same controversy against gnostics determined the invective of Jude, an epistle that can almost be described as an unbroken catalog of vices. Most of the language, however, is so pictorial as to put Jude's arraignment in a class entirely by itself; it is only in vv. 8 and 16 that sins are described in direct terms. And in neither of these verses is there any conventional element; Jude chose his adjectives to fit the immediate controversy and had no need to depend on precedents. What is true of Jude in this regard is equally true of 2 Peter.

Finally, a formal catalog of sins has found its way into the Synoptic tradition in Mark 7 21-22. There are twelve terms: "fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, malices, deceit, lasciviousness, envying, railing, pride, foolishness." The peculiarity of this list is that it purports to show the results of a single evil principle within the man, and in accord with this most of the vices are external; that all are not so—"coveting, envy, pride, foolishness"—is due to the carelessness of the compiler.¹⁴ Otherwise the list is conventional; since its terms are practically all found in the lists already examined, a further search for its sources would be unprofitable. We may presume that it is such a list as might be given in the Evangelist's day by pretty much any teacher engaged in explaining the words of Jesus that precede it.

To summarize our results. Most of the New Testament lists of vices are conventional, and the sins enumerated have generally little to do with the context in which the lists occur. Direct non-Jewish precedent is highly likely in the case of Romans 1 29-31 and only less likely for 2 Timothy 3 2-4.¹⁵ In the other instances, however, the immediate background is specifically Jewish-Greek, and as common ancestors they have the Jewish lists, such as Wisdom 14 25-26, whose purpose was to impress on Israelites the crimes inseparable from idolatry.

We may note further that avoidance of the sins cataloged in these lists is never identified with Christian morality. Life as a Christian hardly begins until such temptations have been put to death.¹⁶

¹⁴ The parallel Matthew 15 19 has corrected this, and has made the list more compact by reducing its twelve terms to six.

¹⁵ As a matter of fact, while Romans 1 29-31 contains only six "non-LXX" terms, 2 Timothy 3 2-4 contains ten.

¹⁶ Colossians 3 5; 1 Peter 2 1, etc.

The New Testament lists of virtues present problems somewhat different from those offered by the lists of vices. There existed no regular formulas in praise of the Jews' moral achievements¹⁷ that are counterparts to the above condemnations of the Gentiles' misdeeds. Jewish sense of reality was doubtless too strong for this; even the writer of Wisdom in his fifteenth chapter contents himself with the negative assertion that Jews do not do such evil things. What is even more important, however, is that the concept of "virtues" as such is hardly native to the Old Testament: the Pentateuchal legislation does not often take the positive form, while Hebrew writers generally prefer to depict the goodness of a man by concrete instances rather than by cataloguing his benevolent qualities.

In fact about the only New Testament list in which we can be certain of a purely Jewish origin is the Beatitudes. There are eight terms: *πτωχοί*,¹⁸ *πενθύντες*, *πραεῖς*, *πεινῶντες*, *ἐλεήμονες*, *καθαροί*, *εἰρηνοποιοί*, *δεδιωγμένοι*. And it is interesting to observe that not one of these recurs in another New Testament catalog of the kind.¹⁹ In fact, apart from non-technical references to "peace," only two of the eight terms reappear at all as describing virtues, *πραῦς*,²⁰—although almost always in its substantive form—and the very obvious *καθαρός*; both words, of course, are as much Greek as Jewish-Greek.

Or, to put the matter differently, the true lists of virtues in the New Testament may be taken as Galatians 5 22–23, 2 Corinthians 6 6–7, Ephesians 6 14–17, Philippians 4 8, Colossians 3 12–14, 1 Timothy 3 2–3, 6 11, Titus 1 7–8, James 3 17, 2 Peter 1 5–8. Of the approximately forty-six terms in these lists twelve are not found in the Greek Old Testament at all outside of 3 and 4 Maccabees: *ἄμαχος*, *ἀνέγκλητος*, *ἀνεπίλημπτος*, *ἀφιλάργυρος*, *διδακτικός*, *εὐπειθής*, *εὐφημος*, *νηφάλιος*, *σώφρων*, *ταπεινοφροσύνη*, *φιλαδέλφια*, *φιλόξενος*. Eight more are of very rare occurrence: *ἀδιάκριτος*, *ἀνυπόκριτος*, *ἐπιεικής*, *κόσμος*, *μακροθυμία*, *προσφιλής*, *σεμνός*,

¹⁷ Enumeration of Jewish religious privileges is another matter.

¹⁸ In a highly technical sense.

¹⁹ 2 Timothy 3 10—"persecutions"—is not a true ethical list.

²⁰ And the Beatitude that contains it—a mechanical citation of Psalm 37 9 b—is textually insecure.

φιλάγαθος. It may be noted moreover that the use of *ἐγκρατής* and *ἐγκράτεια* is practically confined to Sirach, and that in the Books representing the Hebrew Old Testament *εὐσέβεια* appears only four times. In other words just about half of the terms employed in the lists above are practically absent from the Biblical vocabulary of Hellenistic Judaism.²¹

There is nothing surprising about this. The Greeks had brought ethical terminology to a state of high development, but Jews were of two minds about employing it. Some of them had no hesitation; the writer of 4 Maccabees, for instance, is fond of *ἀγνός*, *ἀρετή*, *σεμνός*, *φιλαδελφία* and above all of *εὐσέβεια*; this last noun he uses no less than forty-seven times, although it does not at all describe the Jewish attitude toward religion. But Christians found the Greek terminology most congenial; since Gentile converts were already familiar with it, missionaries were saved an immense amount of labor. Accordingly Paul uses without hesitation terms so technically Greek as *αὐτάρκεια*²² and *ἐγκράτεια*²³ and is not afraid to exhort his readers in such unmistakably Hellenistic language as Philippians 4 s. And it is quite natural that when the writer of 1 Timothy catalogs the qualifications of a bishop he parallels strikingly what Tacitus Onosander²⁴ lays down as the proper endowments of a general: *φημὶ τοίνυν αἰρεῖσθαι τὸν στρατηγὸν . . . σὺφρονα, ἐγκρατῆ, νήπτην, λιτόν, διάπονον, νοερόν, ἀφιλάργυρον, μήτε νέον μήτε πρεσβύτερον, ἂν τύχη καὶ πατέρα παίδων, ἱκανὸν λέγειν, ἔνδοξον*; "I say then that the general should be chosen as . . . soberminded, self-controlled, temperate, frugal, hardy, intelligent, no lover of money, not (too) young or old, if it may be, the father of children, able to speak well, of good repute." Dibelius points out here that the list in 1 Timothy has really nothing more to do with the special duties of a bishop than that in Onosander has to do with those of a general: both lists represent rhetorical

²¹ In the lists of vices apart from Romans 1 29-31 and 2 Timothy 3 2-4 the only "non-LXX" words are *αἰσχροτήης* and *εὐτραπέλεια* in Ephesians 5 4 and such compounds as *οἰοφλυγία*, *αἰσχρολογία*, etc.

²² 2 Corinthians 9 s. The word is not found in the LXX, although there are a few scattered instances of *αὐτάρκεις*.

²³ Galatians 5 23; compare Acts 24 25.

²⁴ Ca. A. D. 50. I owe the reference to Dibelius' *Pastoralbriefe*, 2nd ed. (1931), p. 100.

formulas which could be applied with more or less appropriateness to any responsible walk in life.

We may consequently take for granted that the New Testament lists of virtues have a direct relation to corresponding catalogs current among contemporary Stoic teachers. But how far did the Christian writers modify these lists so as to adapt them to the needs of the new religion?

In Philippians 4 8 and Titus 3 1-2 there is no attempt at modification of any sort; the lists are used exactly as they might have been by Greek moralists treating of elevated thoughts or of the duties of good and obedient citizens. 1 Timothy 3 2-3 and Titus 1 7-8 are likewise used unchanged from the non-Christian form, but in each case a religious touch is added by what follows in the subsequent discussion. In James 3 17 an introductory clause makes the virtues all fruits of "the wisdom that is from above;" the adjectives themselves, however—"pure, peaceable, forbearing, easily entreated, merciful, fruitful, harmonious, unhypocritical"—are not all specially characteristic of "wisdom." And all three of these lists amass their terms in no particular sequence.

Much the same is true of 1 Timothy 6 11, but the writer here has made a beginning at Christianizing his list by introducing *πίστις*²⁵ and the specifically Christian *ἀγάπη*. In 2 Peter 1 5-8 the process has gone farther; now *πίστις*²⁶ is the first term and *ἀγάπη* the last, thus the six miscellaneous virtues that intervene—they might equally well have been any six others—are made to begin with the fundamental requirement of Christianity and to culminate in its highest achievement.

In 2 Corinthians 6 6, however, the catalog is only an incident in a larger and definitely religious context, and the terms are thoroughly adapted to their purpose of describing Paul's faithful ministry; in this way "love" and "the Spirit" are not afterthoughts but are integral parts of the whole. The terms in Galatians 5 22-23 and Colossians 3 12-14 likewise are carefully selected as giving typical examples of the Christians' brotherly duties toward one another. In the first of these, moreover, the virtues are described as "fruits of the Spirit" and are introduced by "love" and—typically

²⁵ Yet perhaps used in the sense of "fidelity"; compare Galatians 5 22.

²⁶ Here undoubtedly meaning "faith."

Pauline—"joy," while in the second the duties are those of "God's elect," "love" is the climax, and the list is continued by a purely religious exhortation. Finally, in Ephesians 6 14-17 ethical and religious terms are thoroughly interwoven,²⁷ and the list closes with the splendid climax, "the sword of the Spirit."

The utility of such lists in teaching a genuinely Christian ethic depends consequently on the ability of the teachers who draw them up. In skilled hands the catalog method can be made highly fruitful and inspiring. The danger in the New Testament period lay in appropriating current Stoic formulas as satisfactory ends in themselves. Jesus' ethical achievement was his centering the moral life around the supreme virtue of love, from which all other virtues derive their meaning. Hence in teaching by means of lists of virtues there was a constant peril of sacrificing this principle of unity and so of splitting up the moral vision into fragments. In a list everything has equal weight, so that "love" and (for instance) "self-control" are coordinated. So the neophyte, bewildered as term after term was reeled off by his teacher, could very well satisfy his conscience by selecting and concentrating on virtues which especially appealed to him. This was bad, but matters could be made worse by the Stoic origin of many of the concepts and the special Stoic sense that still more of them could assume. Undoubtedly any virtue could be given some Christian meaning, but not usually when taught in a list; there was a constant temptation—all the keener because it was not recognized as a temptation—to be satisfied with the traditional Stoic content of a term. This is one very real reason why throughout early Christian history men laid extraordinary stress on the cultivation of moral qualities that have little to do with the teaching of Jesus.

²⁷ Compare Romans 12.