Michael Welker
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(Eds.)

THE IMPACT

of RELIGION

on Character Formation, Ethical Education,
and the Communication of Values
in Late Modern Pluralistic Societies

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Part One
Christian Religion and Character Formation: Potentials and Risks

Part Two
Character Formation in Other Religious Traditions and General Morals

Part Three
Interdisciplinary and Ethical Perspectives on Societal Impacts of Religion

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Acknowledgments

In this book scholars from five continents and from different academic fields and religious traditions explore the impact of religion on character formation, ethical education, and the communication of values in late modern pluralistic societies. The fact that we focus on late modern pluralistic societies implies that special attention has to be given to Christian religious traditions in general and to Protestant traditions in particular.

This project started with a consultation in Heidelberg in the spring of 2018. Although the initial group had a broad international and interdisciplinary profile, we were aware of its limits and thus are most grateful that colleagues from Asia and from Jewish and Muslim traditions kindly agreed to participate. In several ways, this volume marks just a beginning. Volumes on the impact of the market, the impact of kaw and the impact of academic research on character formation, ethical education, and the communication of values in late modern pluralistic societies are in the making. Six more consultations are in the planning phase.

Heidelberg, Atlanta, Canberra, February 2020

M. W., J.W., S.P.

Preface to the Series

Character Formation and Moral Education in Late Modern Pluralistic Societies:
An Interdisciplinary and International Research Project

Five hundred years ago, Protestant reformer Martin Luther argued that "three estates" (*drei Stände*) lie at the foundation of a just and orderly society—marital families, religious communities, and political authorities. Parents in the home; pastors in the church; magistrates in the state—these, said Luther, are the three authorities whom God appointed to represent divine justice and mercy in the world, to protect peace and liberty in earthly life. Household, church, and state —these are the three institutional pillars on which to build social systems of education and schooling, charity and social welfare, economy and architecture, art and publication. Family, faith, and freedom—these are the three things that people will die for.

In the half millennium since Luther, historians have uncovered various classical and Christian antecedents to these early Protestant views. And numerous later theorists have propounded all manner of variations and applications of this three-estates theory, many increasingly abstracted from Luther's overtly Christian worldview. Early modern covenant theologians, both Christian and Jewish, described the marital, confessional, and political covenants that God calls human beings to form, each directed to interrelated personal and public ends. Social-contract theorists differentiated the three contracts that humans enter as they move from the state of nature to an organized society protective of their natural rights— the marital contract of husband and wife; the government contract of rulers and citizens; and, for some, the religious contracts of preachers and parishioners. Early anthropologists posited three stages of development of civilization—from family-based tribes and clans, to priest-run theocracies, to fully organized states that embraced all three institutions. Sociologists distinguished three main forms of authority in an organized community: "traditional" authority that begins in the home, "charismatic" authority that is exemplified in the church, and "legal" authority that is rooted in the state. Legal historians outlined three stages of devel-

opment of legal norms–from the habits and rules of the family, to the customs and canons of religion, to the statutes and codes of the state.

Already a century ago, however, scholars in different fields began to flatten out this hierarchical theory of social institutions and to emphasize the foundational role of other social institutions alongside the family, church, and state in shaping private and public life and character. Sociologists like Max Weber and Talcott Parsons emphasized the shaping powers of "technical rationality" exemplified especially in new industry, scientific education, and market economies. Legal scholars like Otto von Gierke and F.W. Maitland emphasized the critical roles of non-state legal associations (*Genossenschaften)* in maintaining a just social, political, and legal order historically and today. Catholic subsidiarity theories of Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI emphasized the essential task of mediating social units between the individual and the state to cater the full range of needs, interests, rights, and duties of individuals. Protestant theories of sphere sovereignty, inspired by Abraham Kuyper, argued that not only churches, states, and families but also the social spheres of art, labor, education, economics, agriculture, recreation, and more should enjoy a level of independence from others, especially an overreaching church or state. Various theories of social or structural pluralism, civil society, voluntary associations, the independent sector, multiculturalism, multinormativity, and other such labels have now come to the fore in the ensuing decades–both liberal and conservative, religious and secular, and featuring all manner of methods and logics.

Pluralism of all sorts is now a commonplace of late modern societies. At minimum, this means a multitude of free and equal individuals and a multitude of groups and institutions, each with very different political, moral, religious, and professional interests and orientations. It includes the sundry associations, interest groups, parties, lobbies, and social movements that often rapidly flourish and fade around a common cause, especially when aided by modern technology and various social media. Some see in this texture of plurality an enormous potential for colorful and creative development and a robust expression of human and cultural freedom. Others see a chaotic individualism and radical relativism, which endangers normative education, moral character formation, and effective cultivation of enduring values or virtues.

Pluralism viewed as vague plurality, however, focuses on only one aspect of late modern societies–the equality of individuals, and their almost unlimited freedom to participate peaceably at any time as a respected voice in the moral reasoning and civil interactions of a society. But this view does not adequately recognize that, beneath the shifting cacophony of social forms and norms that constitute modernity, pluralistic societies have heavy normative codes that shape their individual and collective values and morals, preferences and prejudices.

The sources of much of this normative coding and moral education in late modern pluralistic societies are the deep and powerful social systems that are the

pillars of every advanced culture. The most powerful and pervasive of these are the social systems of law, religion, politics, science/academy, market, media, family, education, medicine, and national defense. The actual empirical forms of each of these powerful social systems can and do vary greatly, even in the relatively homogeneous societies of the late modern West. But these deeper social systems in one form or another are structurally essential and often normatively decisive in individual and communal lives.

Every advanced society has a comprehensive legal system of justice and order, religious systems of ritual and doctrine, a family system of procreation and love, an economic system of trade and value, a media system of communication and dissemination of news and information, and an educational system of preservation, application, and creation of knowledge and scientific advance. Many advanced societies also have massive systems of science, technology, health care, and national defense with vast influence over and through all of these other social systems. These pervasive social systems lie at the foundation of modern advanced societies, and they anchor the vast pluralities of associations and social interactions that might happen to exist at any given time.

Each of these social systems has internal value systems, institutionalized rationalities, and normative expectations that together help to shape each individual's morality and character. Each of these social spheres, moreover, has its own professionals and experts who shape and implement its internal structures and processes. The normative network created by these social spheres is often harder to grasp today, since late modern pluralistic societies usually do not bring these different value systems to light under the dominance of just one organization, institution, and power. And this normative network has also become more shifting and fragile, especially since traditional social systems like religion and the family have eroded in their durability and power, and other social systems like science, the market, healthcare, defense, and the media have become more powerful.

The aim of this project on "Character Formation and Moral Education in Late Modern Pluralistic Societies" is to identify the realities and potentials of these core social systems to provide moral orientation and character formation in our day. What can and should these social spheres, separately and together, do in shaping the moral character of late modern individuals who, by nature, culture, and constitutional norms, are free and equal in dignity and rights? What are and should be the core educational functions and moral responsibilities of each of these social spheres? How can we better understand and better influence the complex interactions among individualism, the normative binding powers of these social systems, and the creativity of civil groups and institutions? How can we map and measure the different hierarchies of values that govern each of these social systems, and that are also interwoven and interconnected in various ways in shaping late modern understandings of the common good? How do we negotiate the boundaries and conflicts between and among these social systems when

one encroaches on the other, or imposes its values and rationalities on individuals at the cost of the other social spheres or of the common good? What and where are the intrinsic strengths of each social sphere that should be made more overt in character formation, public education, and the shaping of minds and mentalities?

These are some of the guiding questions at work in this project and in this volume. Our project aims to provide a systematic account of the role of these powerful normative codes operating in the social spheres of law, religion, the family, the market, the media, science and technology, the academy, health care, and defense in the late modern liberal West. Our focus is on selected examples and case studies drawn from Western Europe, North America, South Africa, and Australia, which together provide just enough diversity to test out broader theories of character formation and moral education. Our scholars are drawn from across the academy, with representative voices from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences as well as the professions of theology, law, business, medicine, and more. While most of our scholars come from the Protestant and Catholic worlds, our endeavor is to offer comparative insights that will help scholars from any profession or confession. While our laboratory is principally Western liberal societies, the modern forces of globalization will soon make these issues of moral character formation a concern for every culture and region of the world—given the power of global social media, entertainment, and sports; the pervasiveness of global finance, business, trade, and law; and the perennial global worries over food, health care, environmental degradation, and natural disasters.

In this volume, we focus in on the role of religion in shaping character development, ethical education, and the communication of values in late modern pluralistic societies.

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Introduction to the Present Volume

Michael Welker

This book investigates the impact of religion on the formation of character and the communication of values in late modern pluralistic societies. Scholars from five continents and many different academic fields are involved. Since the focus lies on the impact of *religion in pluralistic societies*, the concentration on Christian traditions in the West is predominant. We are all the more grateful to the colleagues with Jewish, Muslim, and Chinese backgrounds for their willingness to participate in this challenging enterprise.

The book offers a rich variety of thematic concentrations as well as academic, ethical, and religious perspectives. Some of the contributions welcome and embrace the rich polyphonic individualism, the wealth of lively civil societies, and the healthy multisystemic configuration of normativities in late modern societies in the West. They associate these configurations not only with personal, moral, and political freedom but also with a religious and theological appreciation of the creativity of the multimodal divine spirit. Other contributions are more concerned with models of integration and synthesis, models that aim at providing clear orientation in complex social and cultural environments. We trust that both approaches with their diverging and yet partly complementary perspectives will prove to be helpful for our readers.

Part one deals with "potentials and risks" in the character-shaping impact of Christian religion. *Michael Welker* ("Comfort, Freedom, Justice, and Truth: Christian Religion, The Formation of Character, and the Communication of Values") launches the conversation with critical comments on widespread forms of an empty liberal piety and theology in the West, a piety and theology that abstract from the divine spirit and God's supporting, saving, judging, elevating, and ennobling powers and activities. These empty religious forms produce and defend what could be called cheap devotion in connection with mostly appellative moral communication. The longstanding fixation on a merely intellectual understanding of the human spirit, as valuable as it was and still is for many developments, could not do justice to the emotional, ethical, aesthetic, and religious powers of the divine and the human spirit. Investigations in early childhood development clar-

ify the strengths and weaknesses of such reductionistic understanding and show the false dualism of spirit and body, even the ignorance of bipolar thinking in general. A deeper look at the breadth of human existence opens the eyes not only to its cognitive, emotional, volitional, and communicative powers but also to the potential influence and effects of the divine spirit. The divine spirit bestows energy and hope in persons who are oppressed by feelings of futility and impotence. This spirit provides orientation and strength with respect to the values of justice, freedom, truth, peace, and love.

The extremely rich understanding of "comfort" in the Heidelberg Catechism integrates many dimensions of the character-shaping powers of the divine spirit: "comfort" conveys the notions of security, confidence, trust, courage in life, and hope. It is equated with enduring reliability, help, support, and counsel; with saving, reassurance, and repose; with strength, backing, shielding, and protection; but also with sympathy, empathy, and encouragement. Welker's contribution unfolds this richness with respect to an understanding of "the love of neighbor" and human benevolence which are not confined to individual and person-to-person experiences, and which can draw on a multitude of inspirations provided by Christian and other religious spiritual sources.

Gregor Etzelmüller's contribution ("Anthropology and Religious Formation") expands these insights by reflecting on the "shift from natural evolution to cultural development" in general and by reflecting on the fascinating lessons about child development through processes of imitation and overimitation, even among toddlers. An abundance of cultural resources is created and addressed by these processes and the cultural and historical variability they generate. The enormous human plasticity gains orientation not only by cognitive training and ethical communication but also by religious education.

Religious education can "turn out to be a training ground of pro-social orientations, which see their task in advocacy on behalf of the weak and which support the culture of benevolence" (Sigrid Roßteutscher). Etzelmüller demonstrates that biblical law traditions–which connect justice and mercy with worship on one hand and table fellowship on the other–develop powerful combinations of religious ethos, family ethos, and neighborhood ethos, with huge impacts on character formation and ethical education in the communication of life-furthering values.

Under the title "'Values of the Gospel': The Formative Role of Christian Values for Social Cohesion in Modern Societies," *Friedrike Nüssel* examines reflections and discourses on values in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She shows that only recently have ecclesial and ecumenical bodies reconciled with the discourse of secular value, even speaking of "values of the gospel" or "values of the kingdom" with a strong focus on justice, peace, and the protection of the environment. Subtle differences between Protestant and Roman Catholic public statements do not negate agreement that there are "basic values" "rooted in the Chris-

tian spiritual heritage," such as "peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation, and solidarity."

Nüssel shows the fruitful coinciding of, on one hand, impulses in the churches to contribute to the European unification and, on the other hand, subtle reflections on the potential of "canon law to give ecumenism a legally legitimized space and framework" in important processes of political and moral transformations. She also argues for a not only ecumenical but also multidisciplinary cooperation in the discovery that "narrativity" is essential for the "formation of perception and emotion" in the processes of shaping ethical development and the communication of religiously inspired values.

A voice of warning comes in the contribution of *Peter Carnley* on "The Fallacy of 'Individual Autonomy' and Moral Value in the Community of Christ." He uses hero images from the first part of the twentieth century to illuminate the cultural rise of a strong individualism, supported not only by Enlightenment philosophy but also by the growing influence of electronic media. His concern is ignited by the growing support of the legalization of "assisted suicide" based on an ambivalent defense of the exercise of "individual autonomy," in particular by recent political developments in the State of Western Australia but also elsewhere. Carnley asks: "Who would agree with the contention, for example, that we could justifiably act upon a request for assistance in injecting a person with heroin on the ground that he or she wished to exercise his or her 'individual autonomy'"? He respects the concern to alleviate anticipated protracted pain and suffering. But he argues that we should not confuse a "quality-of-life argument" with an unqualified recourse to individual autonomy.

He sees the responsibility of religious education and practice to nurture the communication of values "defined by the human virtues for living well in community with others." He asks for visions of moral growth from "less self-concerned and more caring, less prone to racism and more accepting and respectful of human diversity, not just awkwardly tolerant of difference, but positively embracing it as an enrichment to community life, that is not defensive and self-justifying of their own behavior and more open and forgiving of others." Deeper notions of freedom have to be communicated than the concept of individual autonomy can provide.

William Schweiker ("Should Religion Shape Character?") challenges the naïve view that religion and moral communication are intrinsically good. He discerns different sources, traditions, and perspectives in religious and theological attempts to shape human ethics. He proposes to use the orienting power of "theological humanism" in order to offer resistance against "manipulation by time, place, and language." He challenges theology and theological ethics to engage "critically and imaginatively [with] . . . religious interpretations of reality." In these interpretations of reality, the concept of virtue has played a dominant role. Schweiker shows that this concept drew together other concepts important in eth-

ical reflection, especially "reason, desire, conduct, and valuing." He also opens the eyes to the importance of goods as motivations for actions—"bodily, social, reflective, local, and above all moral goods."

Substantial reflections on the polyphony of virtue ethics allow a nuanced understanding of "character," namely "the moral and mental qualities that distinguish an individual self." This understanding allows Schweiker to test theological and anthropological "sources of normativity." In his view it is crucial to place all these considerations in a realistic awareness of the normative picture of pluralistic environments which do not offer a "'master discourse' or a 'master narrative,' orchestrating the reflexive interrelations that constitute a (late modern) society." In its aim to contribute to character formation and ethical education, religion should not dream of a totalitarian orientation. It should not try to resituate ancient ideas of "an isomorphism between the character or soul of the individual and that of the social community." Schweiker argues for a differentiated defense of individual human dignity and the social common good against all sorts of "system-paternalism" (*Habermas*), and this requires a self-critical stance of religion over against its own normative powers.

Jennifer Herdt develops a different line of argumentation in her chapter on "The Dialectic of Religious Formation." In contrast to the positions and voices presented in the "Foreword" and in the other contributions of Part one, she argues that "there are negative lessons to learn from Weber's understanding of the differentiation of social spheres," and "positive lessons to take from the longstanding Christian doctrine of the orders of creation, with its roots in natural law discourse." While she regards Weber as "exaggerat(ing) the autonomy of the various social spheres," she finds a "fluidity" in the conception of the orders of creation, dismissed by its critics.

I am grateful for her gracious attempt to integrate positions held by Oliver O'Donovan and myself, as "contemporary critics of natural law discourse," into a broader scheme that might reconcile our views. At the heart of our differences, I see different concepts of God. In her understanding, God is the final good, whereas I grasp God as living and (not predominantly natural) life-giving spirit. This different approach generates partly differing and partly overlapping perspectives on "Cultivating the Virtues in Late Modernity." We can easily agree that "human beings do not live well on a diet of thin abstractions." But we will also compete in our differing evaluations of the meaning of "thin abstractions" or helpful orienting insights. Jennifer Herdt's contribution offers a bridge to many concerns raised in the second part of this book.

Part two ("Character Formation in Other Religious Traditions and General Morals") presents alternatives and fruitful challenges to religious, theological, and other academic attempts to affirm and constructively deal with late modern pluralistic public textures. The contributions explore the powers of personalistic "I-Thou thinking," intergenerational learning, inspirations by classic religious and

secular literature, and the combination of theological, moral, neurological, and practiced leadership perspectives.

Admiel Kosman ("Buber vs. Weber: Future Sociological Research According to Buber's Proposal–The I-Thou Relationship in Scholarly Research") joins Herdt's reservation against a Weberian spirit. He argues with Buber that all perceptions and insights have to "pass through the researcher's unique personality." In order to reach truth-bound insight and valid ethical orientation, however, the individual has "to be connected to the nature of these everyday encounters within the flow of life" in all personal, societal, and political spheres. This can be reached only in an encounter with "the spirit of the 'Eternal Thou.'"

Buber demands a "loving science," a "true philosophy as a loving philosophy," which opens the researcher "to the unconditional mystery which we encounter in every sphere of our life." In this attempt, every person can become a "vessel for the resting of the spirit," every person can become enabled to encounter the "Absolute" and to hear the voice of truth. A loving attentiveness to "the Thou" in all cognitive and ethical orientation is the key to "discern the enigmatic countenance of the universe."

Raja Sakrani ("Elements of Religious Socialization in Islamic Cultures: How to be a 'Good' Muslim in Europe?") analyzes the complex processes in which Muslim communities in Europe experience "religious socialization . . . as an indispensable avenue for transmitting values to future generations." She describes the "players" and institutional locations of these intergenerational activities and their impacts on communicative and collective memory. She explains difficulties in preserving "ethnocultural belonging," in communicating the experiences, the traumas, and the ritual practices of the parents, and in overcoming all sorts of prejudices in the cultural and political environments.

With respect to very different significant foci of attention (the active participation of women in public life; the role of circumcision; conversion; and the problem of prisons) she highlights important transformations, continuities, and partly ambivalent attractions of Muslim religious socialization. "Islam is a powerful attractor given its current position in the world and its status as a subculture. It gives dignity to those who feel oppressed . . . and it mobilizes the values of the strong in the sense of virility." Many tensions within the will to belong to "a common shared culture"–tensions between the traditional and the contemporary as well as between family history and the dominant European environment–have to be dealt with. The educational challenges on all sides are enormous.

"Chinese Family Education and Spiritual Intervention: Voluntary and Involuntary Moral Actions from Neurological and Theological Perspectives"–under this topic *Milton Wai-Yiu Wan* and *Renee Lai-Fan Ip* deal with moral education in late modern pluralistic societies in interdisciplinary reflections. They address the important relation of the human will to "moral desire," a mobilizing and motivating power. And they deal with neurological roots that stimulate and balance in-

voluntary and voluntary actions, the mechanisms of "habit functioning and habit formation." A crucial question is how to change and to build new "habit loops." They see strong resources to support these transformations in Chinese family education, a tradition now more than two thousand years old.

Two paths have to be discerned, namely "the development of moral character and virtue" and "the successful social adjustment and the building of interpersonal relations . . . , interdependence, cooperation, collaboration." Pious and respectful relations to parents and elders are crucial, as are the careful choice of friends and the cultivation of trustworthy, understanding, and discreet behavior. Family education aims at a "self-cultivation" with a "strong sense of self-demand, of self-discipline with training of willpower." This self-cultivation is correlated with impulses from the Christian ascetic tradition. The goal is a "spiritual victory" over the "powerlessness weakened by the sinful nature." Neurologically induced habit loops, traditional family education, and impulses from Christian spirituality interact in the gradual transformation of the "old self" into a new person with a good moral character.

Waihang Ng ("Literary Form, Paideia, and Religion: Comparing Case Studies from the Ancient Greek, Traditional Chinese, and Early Christian Contexts") intends to contribute orientation from ancient moral and religious traditions to "the platform for competition among values and beliefs" in modern pluralistic societies. For this purpose, he investigates key ideas in Homer's *Iliad*, Luo Guanzhong's *Three Kingdoms*, and the Gospels from the New Testament. He is particularly interested in the connection between aesthetics and ethical education (cf. Auerbach, *Mimesis*).

In the *Iliad*, Ng sees central topics in the role of anger, the defense of honor, and an ineluctable human fate, all of which condition processes of education, paideia. *Three Kingdoms*, "one of the four classical novels in Chinese literature," centers on three political and military power blocs, and in this context on cases for and against revenge, heavenly providence, the higher duties of righteousness, and selfless friendship over against an orientation toward prudence and success. Ng contrasts these models of paideia with the discussion of anger and "holy anger" (of Jesus) in the Gospels. He concludes from his investigation that it is important to control and overcome anger and to develop a democratized "aristocratic ethic" (Gerd Theissen), empowering every single individual life. In the three texts he examines, Ng sees examples of "religious underpinnings of literary works from different traditions" that can stimulate the "communication and negotiation of value differences" in pluralistic societies.

Martyn Percy ("Humility, Humiliation, and Hope: An Extended Homily on the Crucible for Authentic Character in Leadership"), in a "homiletic tone," explores character qualities in human political and economic leadership. Quoting Jim Collins, Percy observes "a paradoxical mixture of personal humility and professional will" in successful leaders. He looks for analogous constellations in biblical tra-

ditions and influential literature (Charles Dickens, Arthur Miller) and finally re-
fers to personal experiences in his own career.

For Christians, God's revelation in Jesus Christ opens the eyes to the trans-
formation of "notions of omnipotence and omniscience . . . by kenosis"—"a term
that generally refers to the 'self-emptying' of Christ, . . . an aspect of the doctrine of
the Incarnation." In religious, social, and professional praxis, the exercise of hu-
mility results, according to Percy, in "kindness"—and a "culture of kindness . . .
can have a positive energizing effect, creating improved interpersonal relations
and increasing commitment. Moreover, it is infectious." An invitation to practice
kindness is a sum of reflections on character formation, ethical education, and the
communication of values—not only in late modern pluralistic societies.

Part three ("Interdisciplinary and Ethical Perspectives on Societal Impacts of
Religion") begins with South African perspectives. *Piet Naudé* ("The Impact of Re-
ligion on Shaping Values in Pluralistic Societies: A Case of Opposing Interpreta-
tions and Unintended Consequences?") offers two case studies. First, he reviews
the misuse and use of Karl Barth's theology, first in the co-opting of that leading
Protestant theologian to defend the apartheid system, and later in his reception as
a "modern and critical social voice" even under apartheid and beyond its rule.
Naudé uses this example to demonstrate the massive political, moral, and educa-
tional impact of readings and their interpretations of influential theological texts.

The second case study starts with the "advent of a cluster of liberation theol-
ogies" in general and Gustavo Gutierrez's publications on "the option for the poor"
in particular, based on humanitarian and biblical-ethical insights and spreading
from Latin American Catholicism into ecumenical discourse. Naudé impressively
shows that the book *A Theory of Justice,* by the political philosopher John Rawls, is
based on similar ethical principles. These are further developed by the economist
and Nobel Prize–recipient Joseph Stiglitz in his works on globalization and "fair
trade for the poor" and the defense of "so-called noneconomic values such as so-
cial justice, the environment, cultural diversity, universal access to health care,
and consumer protection."

Like Naudé, the Australian *Stephen Pickard* ("Optimal Environments for the
Formation of Character: Challenges and Prospects for Religion") argues that the
evident "capacity of religion to remain a source and power for the shaping of char-
acter, moral vision, and values both for individuals and societies" requires the
self-critical examination of these potentials. It also requires a careful analysis of
what he calls "the corrosive powers of host cultures." With John Fitzmaurice,
Alasdaire MacIntyre, and others he critiques the infectious "growth mantra of the
market economy."

Pickard sees a correlation between decline in many churches in the West and
the deep influence "by the modern competitive market economy with an empha-
sis on material and corporate success and growth." The complexity of late modern
pluralistic societies—with their competing hierarchies of values but above all with

spiritual resources such as the presence of Christ in the power of his spirit and the present and coming reign of God—offers orientations both demanding and inspiring. "Long-distance runners know how critical it is to pace themselves in order that they will have sufficient energy and stamina to finish and can respond to unforeseen contingencies on the way (Hebrews 12:1–2)." Pickard asks for a theologically circumspect and wise pacing in ecclesial cultural orientation.

Bernd Oberdorfer offers a German perspective following the great nineteenth-century theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher ("'*With* Religion, not *from* Religion': Christian Antimoralist Moralism and Its Impact on Moral Formation"). He shows that Schleiermacher counters the widespread identification of Christianity with a more or less rigid moralism—whether moralism affirmed or critiqued. Oberdorfer offers a nuanced approach to this position. On one hand, "something like a Christian ethos . . . does actually *include* moral norms." On the other hand, this ethos "develops sensitivities for the destructive consequences of enforcing norms" in forms of moralism, and it "entails specific forms of dealing with deviance." Already the biblical law traditions emphasize "the crucial relevance of mercy and forgiveness."

Oberdorfer speaks of "second-order values," which cannot be enforced but are crucial when legal and first-order moral communication reaches its limits and even becomes impotent. Character formation, ethical education, and the communication of values on this second-order level are operative in various religious forms. Oberdorfer names forms of liturgical life, exemplary authentic experiences of reconciliation, the work of diaconia (cf. the contribution of *Johannes Eurich*), and public advocacy (cf. the examples presented by *Piet Naudé*).

An even stronger critique of a moral theology with normative claims is offered by *Philipp Stoellger* ("Formation as Figuration: The Impact of Religion—Framed by Media Anthropology"). He cautiously suggests that "the normative interest of theology can appear as an outdated model." He proposes a "metaethical" approach that tries to "order things in the name of the extraordinary," an ethos of "*passions* and *fruitful passivities.*" He sees a strong Christological and pneumatological position supported by the insight that "Christ is the epitome of prenormativity . . . , the embodiment of a singular passion for the neighbor—not just a value maker."

The claim of a prenormativity, of course, should not be one of the many familiar religious strategies to bring religion into a comfortable, all-overmastering attitude. Stoellger argues that religion is a "medium of communication," a symbolic, deictic, and medial power in *framing* communication. It derives its framing powers from "God in Christ by the Spirit." Godself is the decisive medium and reveals this power as a "soft power in all communication." This media power is the "decisive presupposition for formation (of character, education, sociality, etc.)." In Protestantism, he argues, those soft media powers come in the forms of *speech*, *living images* (potentially a prenormative root for image critique) and "spe-

cific modes of *institutionalizing,* that is, *orders*" in the light of the "extraordinary." A passion for the "crucial difference between salvation and morality" inspires Stoellger's strong stance over against "outdated" models of theological and moral communication.

The final contributions on the areas of diaconia and law deal with problems and sources rooted in extremely long religious and ethical traditions (documented by witnesses already more than four thousand years ago). These traditions had and still have strong normative impacts on Protestant religion and its surrounding political, legal, and medical environments. They are loaded with dimensions of the extraordinary and with all sorts of passion. Yet by no means could they be termed "old" in the sense of "outdated."

Johannes Eurich ("Learning to Care for the Whole Person: The Significance of Body and Soul for Diaconal Work") starts with historical examples of organized diaconal care for the poor, the marginalized, and the sick in nineteenth-century Europe. He illuminates the struggles to improve organized physical help and at the same time to search for a deeper understanding between physical illness and spiritual needs—on the side of the care receivers and the caregivers. He then turns to contemporary intensified concentration on "corporeality as a mode of existence." He also deals with new investigations of the biblical witnesses that stress the high importance of bodily existence and do not support its downplaying and downgrading.

He addresses processes of theological and diaconal learning that intensify the awareness of the "vulnerability and fragility of the body," including deeper reflections on physical dimensions of human dignity, human suffering, and death. He concludes with reflections on phenomena in contemporary cultures such as "body cult and body oblivion," the body as "primary medium of self-presentation," body styling, and marketing of the body. In Eurich's view, new explorations in these areas are necessary, as are "rediscoveries of the spiritual dimension of the physical." Multidisciplinary investigations and developments of innovative practices of comprehensive care should reenforce each other.

The book concludes with *John Witte's* contribution, "The Uses of Law for the Formation of Character: A Classic Protestant Doctrine for Late Modern Liberal Societies?" He sets out with the observation that "religion is also present in all kinds of spaces and specialties that would seem to be hermetically and hermeneutically closed to religion." His contribution explores a set of "distinct repositories of tradition, wisdom, and perspective"—what is known as the teaching of the "threefold use of the law of God," also called the "uses of the moral law." The teaching of the uses of the law has roots in the biblical traditions and in patristic and scholastic thought, but it comes to a culmination in the Protestant Reformation. The doctrine differentiates the morally and legally active *civil or political use of the law;* the *theological use of the law* in revealing human sin and lostness and driving towards

intensive search for God's saving grace; and the *educational use of the law*, "enhancing the spiritual developments of believers."

Witte shows that the theological doctrine of the three uses of the law did not die with the great reformers. It was maintained and further developed in the following centuries, up through leading theological positions in the twentieth century. Its continued radiating creativity and its unquestionable role in "character formation, ethical education, and the communication of values" in contemporary societies and cultures can be demonstrated with respect to "the legal doctrine of the purposes of criminal law and punishment." The criminal law has a *deterrent function, a retributive function, and a rehabilitative function.* Although it would be "too strong to say that the Protestant theological doctrine . . . was the source of the modern legal doctrine," one could observe "ample doctrinal cross-fertilization" between them. Witte concludes with the observation that the United States Federal Sentencing Act can be seen in these traditions, and he illustrates that the "criminal law of the state is directly involved in character formation, moral education, and the communication of values in late modern societies." The hard normative stipulations are accompanied and expanded by softer strategies of "nudging and legal channeling" which—beyond the impulses of law and religion—need the support and interplay of the other social systems of pluralistic societies, such as family, education, academic research, media, politics, and health care—social systems which will also be addressed in this series of investigations.