HUMANE EDUCATION AND THE BIBLE:
UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT ANIMALS, THE ENVIRONMENT AND US
(A HANDBOOK FOR EDUCATORS OF HIGH SCHOOL, COLLEGE AND ADULT AUDIENCES)

An Independent Learning Project Presented by

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To

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education with a concentration in humane education.

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I would also like to acknowledge my family, friends and colleagues who, for years now have supported me in one way or another on this journey of learning.
ABSTRACT

Can we reconcile the teachings of the Bible with the values of humane education? This question can only be adequately addressed with an understanding of what, exactly, humane education is; as such we will review the three main tenants thereof, namely environmental protection, human rights and animal protection. We will then delve into a macro overview of how we came to have the scriptures known as the Bible, including interpretive license and finally, we will explore the apparent inconsistencies and misunderstandings between what the Bible teaches and what many people think it teaches.

I will show that the Bible can only be fully understood within a framework of this basic knowledge and in the historic and literary context it arose. The teachings, I will argue, are aligned with the principles of humane education however, over time the scriptures are often misunderstood, taken out of context which "the untaught and unstable distort… to their own destruction".¹

The foregoing research will be distilled into a handbook for educators of teens and adults and presented in a way that is fresh, hip and challenging. The hope is to create a learning tool and environment that challenges people to think critically by presenting differing points of view in manner that is contemporary and engaging without being preachy or authoritarian.

¹ 2 Peter 3:16
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Chapter One

Introduction

Rationale

I have long been bothered by what I have been taught (or not taught as the case may be) as a student in Ontario’s Catholic school system (as well as what is seemingly accepted as common knowledge) and what I, in my heart, feel would be the idyllic behavior and way of life modeled by the children of a loving God. Was I simply smarter, more insightful than most? Somehow I doubt it! Never-the-less, I was troubled by the seeming inconsistencies with the generalized teachings of my faith, the practice, and what I felt was consistent with the notion of a Godly state of being.

It occurred to me that many of the arguments in support of, and/or to justify contrary practices seem to be flawed, at least at first blush or prima facie. Even more troubling was the blind acceptance that things were the way they were and that, in and of it, should be sufficient to perpetuate the norms without question! The most obvious of these issues include the following:

- animals are here for us to do with as we please because, supposedly we were told that in the Bible;
- women are subject to male domination;
- “other” people (who may believe in a different faith for example) are subject to the might of the strong because God is on our side and war is an inevitable consequence necessary to further the agenda of Biblical teachings; and
- men are the crowning creation and everything created was for our use/misuse/abuse as we saw fit − although we like to euphemistically call it “dominion”.
The seeming division between the dogma of my religion (Catholic specifically but Christianity in general) and, in some cases, what the Bible actually says (in my humble reading of it) has oft times been something I have pondered but, to no end. For the most part we are not taught to read the good Book nor do we of our own volition we are simply told something, we are told the Bible supports whatever it is we were told and we, for the most part, accept without question or without going to the source to determine for ourselves the validity of the assertion made. This paper will be a success if this one suggestion is accepted and followed: find out for yourself – both the truth of what I argue herein and what is taught to you in general, be it from the pulpit or in the classroom. If this paper is to be disregarded by the reader, in whole or in part, I will be satisfied if the rejection is an informed one based on objective information supported by facts or sound argument to the contrary.

Peter Craige noted in the late 1970’s and little, if anything has changed since then, that Christian education is focused primarily on the young and impressionable and seems to have, as an over-arching mandate, the regulation of sexual behavior. Indeed, Christian education rarely delves into the realm of difficult and controversial topics such as oppression (of other humans, animals and the environment), war-mongering, violence and hate. It is interesting to note that Gandhi felt the worst violence of all was poverty (Mohandas Gandhi, n.d.) and, of course, the consequences that necessarily flowed from it such as loneliness and marginalization of persons in a society, yet in North America we seem to have a preoccupation with regulating sexual behavior to the exclusion of other, arguably more significant, issues such as the ravages of poverty and war. Horsley (2003), noted the modern day attempts (particularly in American evangelical movements) to depoliticize Jesus, to characterize Him as meek and gentle which suits, ironically a contemporary imperialistic agenda prevalent in the United States. In Horlsey's view,
Jesus' message was clearly anti-imperial (anti-Roman) and it resonated with the people, precisely because He championed the cause of the oppressed over the oppressor. The reality is there is little if any education for adults in a congregation; the narrow focus being on the prepubescent of the flock in order to address issues of concern related to sexual activity, presumably in a proactive manner. I do not intend to argue that this is not a worthwhile endeavor, in passing however I would simply suggest that some balancing of a broader range of concerns might provide for a more holistic understanding of the teachings of the Bible. I also am not suggesting that the education of a new generation is not a target group we should prioritize in the hopes of changing mindsets instead of perpetuating them. I wholeheartedly support and endorse this target group as being our best hope for significant change in the world; it is the limited curriculum I take issue with.

My research has helped me reconcile my faith with thematic values of humane education (environmental preservation, human rights, animal protection) and have allowed the two to live in harmony; not coexisting as separate schools of thought but rather, as complimentary and in support of one another. In short, my faith has been strengthened, my resolve honed and my desire to share this information forms the context of a framework for action. To my knowledge, there isn’t a definitive work that bridges the gap between the commonly understood misunderstood ideology of my faith and the values of humane education. My goal has been to present this information in a format that is easy to digest and, at once, is apparent to the reader that it does not threaten the tenants of Christian based religions or faith.

I fear the misunderstanding with what the Bible teaches will continue to be perpetuated if nothing is done to challenge minds to think; to not accept the status quo, but rather, to take what is taught as a starting point of learning and a springboard to satisfy oneself with reasonable,
objective evidence as to the truth of the matter. To this end, I propose a methodology to expose what I believe is untenable and inconsistent, but widely accepted – a contrary view. In this way, I hope that younger learners will be motivated to research for themselves rather than be content with being spoon-fed information that they simply commit to memory and regurgitate on command. I also hope that my work will spur those who find it objectionable to engage in debate on the merits of contrary views and as a consequence thereof facilitate a greater understanding of Biblical truth. In my view, this will help to confirm that humane education and Biblical truth are, in fact, consistent with one another.

**Goal**

I intend to develop a dynamic handbook of information on the nexus between humane education values and the Bible, taking shape in a Question & Answer (Q & A) format. It will be dynamic in the sense that I do not see this project as finite, but rather the corpus of the work will be constantly changing, growing and, as such, inherently and continually challenging. As the overarching theme is to encourage critical thinking and research, the work will inevitably change and grow. What the initial handbook will be, in essence, is the tossing down of the proverbial gauntlet in the hopes that others will accept the challenge and refute my work, support it or expand upon it – all of which is good. I am under no illusions about creating a resource that is static and indelibly etched with wisdom so profound as to be unassailable. On the contrary, this will be the opening salvo – this I recognize and accept.

My goal then, is to challenge traditionally held views of what is commonly thought to be Biblical truths and to show the correlation between humane education values and the teachings of scripture. To this end, readers will:

- understand and be able to define what humane education is and its constituent themes and outcomes;
be able to identify inconsistencies between the Bible and humane education and/or reconcile what the Bible actually teaches contrary to commonly held beliefs;

- be challenged to think critically about what we have been “led” to believe and consider other possibilities that are grounded in the intent of scripture through a purposeful and contextual view directly from the source for such beliefs; and

- be provided with resources and references that allow the reader to satisfy themselves of the legitimacy of a particular view and to be positioned to respond to, and/or challenge the status quo or assertion made masquerading as fact by finding answers through the authorities available and through a process of critical thinking which, I intend and hope to be an inevitable outcome for the reader. That is, the goal is not to create automatons that can go forth regurgitating the information contained herein, but to challenge the reader to think for themselves and to act as a catalyst to that end.

**Problem**

The problem addressed in this paper is a general information gap. Students, teachers, and education community members need to learn more about the genesis of the Bible and the context in which it arose, to better position them to understand what it actually says. With this basic understanding, coupled with the framework of humane education, the synergy realized will help to propel both disciplines as grounded in the same fundamentals as opposed to being mutually exclusive and contradictory. An understanding that the values espoused in humane education are founded in scripture will help to harness the potential of presenting a united education with each discipline supporting the other as opposed to expending time on perceived differences.

Within the Christian community such education would inevitably focus attention on the problems that ought to unite us as humans rather than those artificial ones that divide. In my
view, it necessarily follows that social issues and inequality may well be eliminated as a consequence of the synergistic output possible from such laudable undertakings and pursuits as focusing on a better world. Such tangible outcomes could only yield positive results and the betterment of life for all who inhabit this planet and indeed, the planet itself. At the very least, a generation of students (unlike myself) would be taught to satisfy themselves as to the truth of scriptures with a view to understanding that there is nothing inconsistent with the Bible and the values espoused in humane education. Imagine if you will, a generation of champions for change.

Moreover, the mundane way of accepting, unquestionably, everything that is said at the front of a class, does not help students to learn, it merely helps create a classroom of parrots. This passive acceptance of everything that is said must be eradicated and replaced with a model where it is understand that what is "taught" is the teacher's view of a topic and it is the students responsibility to confirm, refute, amend or supplant those views through their own research.

**Target Audience**

This paper should be the starting point for educators and teenaged or young adult students to re-examine their long-held views and beliefs – the things that have long been accepted as fact without a shred of research to confirm the truth of the matter or any thought to the contrary. This paper is not intended to subsume ideas with my own but rather to share the fruits of my meandering thoughts in the hope that others will confirm, refute, amend or supplant my views through their own research. Only in this way will we all begin the process of learning.

**Methodology**

I anticipate the scholarly literature touching on the matters I intend to cover may be esoteric and/or very specific in terms of the focus, limited in availability and not on all fours with
my subject matter. That said, part of the challenge will be to sift through the academic writings, as well as alternative source material, and weave together information that is both qualitatively relevant and quantitatively sufficient to cover the various heads of inquiry. Moreover, I will seek to have a golden thread running through the various subjects that ties them together under the banner of humane education.

After reviewing the literature and resources, as well as the scriptures, as they relate to animal protection, environmental preservation and universal human rights, I will begin to cobble together thematic groupings of issues where glaring inconsistencies are apparent and attempt to make sense of it all.

I will reach out to ministers and priests, as well as students and Christians and Jews to get a feel for issues that they have struggled with, insights into any reconciliation that they have engaged in and consider the issues raised through a lens of compassion and love.

I intend to use a written format to elicit responses from the above noted group and follow up with dialogue and supplemental questions where appropriate. When surveying the above, I will explore the following:

• What issues have you faced that seem contrary to what you thought the Bible teaches? How did you reconcile this difference?
• What parts of the Bible seem incongruent with what one would expect of a loving God? How do you justify this, or how do you reconcile the difference?
• Are there any issues raised in the Bible that you have not been able to reconcile with the ideal of a loving God?
• Do you feel the Bible ought to be read literally? Why?
• Do you feel the New Testament subsumed the Old thereby rendering most of the law in the Old Testament moot?
• Optional: How do you reconcile what appears to be God-granted free license to despoil the environment and use animals purely for human ends with the notion of a loving God?
• Optional: How do you reconcile what many feel is clear and unequivocal condemnation of homosexuality with the notion of a loving God?
• Optional: How do you reconcile what appears to be the granting of superiority to men over women with the notion of a loving God?

The responses and answers will help inform what and how I formulate and present the Q & A segment of this Independent Learning Project (ILP). That segment will be the heart of my ILP and will be the springboard for educators and interested stakeholders to rethink and reexamine what they have, in some cases, held to be fact. I also hope that readers will not accept, as fact, what is presented.

My intent is that readers be given cause to question instead of accept and challenged to delve deeper into the mysteries of the Bible and discover what is true for themselves and what aligns with their view of a loving God. The worse possible outcome would be for someone to simply ignore or discount what is proffered herein (or merely accept) without verifying the veracity of the information.

For me, there are inherent limits with such an endeavor that I must disclose upfront. While these obvious limits will be fodder for critics, they also lend certain credibility to the work as being offered by a Christian lay-person looking for truth in an increasingly confusing and secular world. To be clear:
• I am not an expert on the Bible;
• the subject matter proposed is, in a word, massive so there will necessarily be limitations on how much can be covered – to the extent possible I will try to;
• I have no special training when it comes to Biblical interpretation – I know little or nothing about etymology (where words come from) or hermeneutics (the study of interpretive theory); and
• this is a starting point; it is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all (or even most) of the inconsistencies one would face when reading the Bible.

I was a little nervous about this undertaking and thought long and hard about the possibility that what I found might challenge my basic beliefs and my faith might well be shaken to its very foundation what if I was wrong? Should women be subject to the dictates of man? Should homosexuals be killed? Should we go to war and kill, without thought or consideration, all who are not aligned with commonly held Biblical views? Is it acceptable to oppress and subject others to forced labor and slavery? What if God really did intend for us to indiscriminately raise animals in a barbaric manner and slaughter them without compunction of any sort? Was it better for me to remain blissfully unaware or uniformed, willfully blind as it were, rather than run the risk of being confronted by truths I might not be able to handle?

In the end, I resolved to forge ahead, tentative but with the anticipation inherent in exploring a new frontier, steeling myself to deal with the possible challenges and affront to my faith as I knew it. Thus, I began my research as a student with few preconceptions as to the outcome.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

Humane education is still finding its place within mainstream education. That said, as more people become aware of how humane values can be knitted together with contemporary modes of schooling the need for resources will be paramount. What became apparent as I researched this topic is the lack of material that met at the intersection of humane education and Christian based thought. This dearth of information on how both schools of thought can be merged and understood as complimentary was the genesis for this work.

I agree with the premise articulated by many, including Alvin Tofler's (1980) wave theory, that our school system was largely modeled on mass production factories of the industrial revolution era. This made sense of course at the dawn of the industrial revolution when the main objective of a school was to turn out (produce) people trained to find their place on the production line. To that end, schools employ rigid start and finish times – signaled by the bell. Breaks and recess are also designated by the bell, as is lunch. Learning is quite often rote preparing the future factory worker for the repetition of the assembly line. Maybe the most important lesson learned is to accept direction without question.

To be fair, much has changed and the description above, although fairly accurate during my tenure at school in the latter 1960's into the 1970's, may be dated. Change is coming in the way we teach and the subject matter we teach. Thankfully, the focus of education over the last several decades has been to teach critical thinking, to encourage questioning of authority and the authorities. As a consequence, new material that touches on subject matter that has not fit neatly into the lesson plans of the past must be readied.
What follows is a review of the literature under the following humane education headings and how the subject is addressed Biblically. I start with a basic overview on biblical interpretation, followed by animal protection and environmental preservation. Human rights issues comprise the third category and, for ease of reference are broken into the sub-categories of sexual orientation, religious tolerance, gender equality and racial equality.

Interpretation

Russell (2011), a student of theology at Laurentian University, shared his thoughts with me on the apparent inconsistencies in the Bible. Below is an excerpt from that interview. A number of people were interviewed, however Russell seemed to have captured the essence of the debate in a manner that resonated with a layperson like myself and, as a consequence seemed more appropriate for inclusion in this work. Russell noted that the real problem arises when we approach the Bible as though it was written yesterday and fail to appreciate the richness of the messages and how meaning was conveyed. This is compounded by trying to make the scriptures fit our view of the world rather, by hearing but not understanding as it were.

Russell noted,

I'm not sure there are inconsistencies in the Bible which need to be explained. The fact that there are inconsistencies actually makes total sense. The Bible is a collection of stories, tribal regulations, poetry, music, liturgical instructions [the formulary of how a religious service is conducted] and even oral traditions that were recorded, redacted and reinterpreted by later generations over thousands of years literally from before the invention of writing until about 100 AD. How could a collection of documents of that scope and breadth not contain some inconsistencies?
Much hay has been made by critics of religion about the inconsistencies because that demonstrates the Bible is not the Word of God. It's not inerrant. How could it be? It has factual errors. It is not infallible, it is inconsistent. The poor fundamentalist has to resort to simply making stuff up to reconcile the divergent ideas in the Bible at times.

I once had a guy explain to me that the reason people lived to be 900 years old like renowned figures in the Old Testament was because the atmosphere afforded greater protection from the sun back then. I suppose that's one way to reconcile the idea that the inerrant and infallible Word says that something was the way it was... another might be to recognize that attributing an age like that to someone was a figurative way for a storyteller to convey to a reader (or rather a hearer as the Word was not yet written) of that story the importance of that figure in the community.

I'm okay with the definition of the Bible as a human product not a divine product. It's interesting that the Bible does not make the claims about itself that fundamentalist’s do. The notion of inerrancy is a reaction to enlightened criticism of Biblical authority as literally sound lamentably, an intellectually bankrupt position that the Church has been trying to undo for the better part of 150 years.

Most mainstream theology is no longer at odds with rational thought or science. Some fundamentalists are see Sunday morning TV but most bona fide theological thinkers are not. Unfortunately for most people, the exposure they
get to the Bible is from the Sunday morning guys who happen to get all the air time – clearly the slick presentations are more entertaining. The challenge for most theologians today is to understand the forms of the underlying passages (are we talking about poetry or tribal law?), then the cultural context and significance of the original work, then ask: how that relates to today [emphasis added].

William Barclay [referencing the great Presbyterian writer, 1907-1978] illustrates this in a piece he wrote about Lazarus. Basically, he said something like this: if Lazarus was literally raised from the dead, what's the point of the story? That Jesus did, at one point in time a long time ago, performs a magic act and did something that we simply don't see any more. What's the relevance for us today? Alternatively, if this is not about the literal but the figurative, i.e., Jesus can resurrect relationships, restore a person that was thought to be lost, heal that which was beyond all healing... then maybe there's something to this story that resonates through the ages. It's not a story about a magic trick back then but the real world I live in today.

And, when addressing theological questions it's worth asking from the outset, what is theology. Author, Lonergan [1971] defines theology as a mediator between religion and culture. Lonergan posits that theology is essentially a conduit that operates to infuse a culture with religion and serves to accentuate the degree of significance and purpose of religion within the framework of that culture.]
Finally, the pro-genocide biblical passages illustrate a couple things. First, how dependent interpretation is on a solid understanding of what was happening within the community when the material was written. Like the people that lived to 900 years, tales of genocide might have had a propaganda component...

Secondly, has our view of God changed over time? People often note that the Old Testament God seems the complete opposite of the God that Jesus calls Father. Is it God that has evolved over time or our human idea of God?

Consider the creation stories... two accounts have been woven together, The Priestly story that Genesis begins with, i.e., God hovering over the face of the earth, the poetic (probably liturgical) animating of the world beginning with light and ending with Man. Then there's the Yahwist's story God is described as walking with Adam in the Garden, a far less spiritualized account and far more anthropomorphic description of God; different Gods or different human ideas of the one true God?

So, eat meat or not? Any responsible, or humane, theological approach has to take into account a lot more than one isolated passage divorced of any meaningful context. There is much more in the Bible to support the stewardship argument.

Russell’s approach to understanding the Bible has been echoed by thinkers like Hornsby (1924) who, almost a century ago wrote an article on “Saint Augustine and Evolution” and premised his approach with the notion that the first “obvious rule” in interpretation “is not to give an author’s statement more than the words bear out”
As will be discussed in the context of various difficult passages, this becomes even more challenging when the “words” being ascribed meaning are translated, transliterated and interpreted with the end result being an obscurity of the original intent. The Bible is actually a collection of individual books and stories organized into (usually) sixty-six books compiled over thousands of years from the time of Abraham (approximately 1800 Before the Common Era or B.C.E. formerly referred to as Before Christ or B.C.) to about 90 C.E. (Common Era formerly referred to as A.D. Anno Domini – Latin for the Year of our Lord or colloquially, After [the] Death [of Christ]). An example of how interpretation can affect meaning is found in a unique examination of the "unusual clustering of donkey terms" found in Zechariah 9:9 as one noted Biblical scholar (Way 2010, p. 105) refers to it. The Hebrew text uses three terms to describe donkeys and all are found in this text. While it may appear to be overly technical, the study of this passage illustrates how translation to English can artificially create, what appears to be an inconsistency.

The prophecy in Zechariah 9 speaks to the mount that the Messiah will ride into Jerusalem on, fulfilled in scriptures when Jesus rode into Jerusalem. However, if one merely accepts the notion that the passage is referring to a colt or foal (as most versions of the Bible stipulate as Jesus' mount) there is a risk of creating a conflict with what is prophesized. The different terminology in Zachariah actually points to a very specific donkey. The donkey referred to is actually a jackass, "but not just any jackass" (Way 2010, para. 28). This “jackass” is a purebred whose purity is

While the majority of scholars agree on the number of books that make up the Bible (and which ones) there is not universal agreement. Russell (2011), on the subject asks: "Must we then admit that there is at least some element of human authorship or at least editorial at work?"
synonymous with royalty and peace. This is important as emblematic of the life and ministry of Jesus. The alternative and general interpretation, as commonly used, is consistent with military conquest and elitism, clearly not reflective of Jesus.

This conflict in texts, as outlined above, is largely lost on most; however I offer this interesting but perhaps esoteric example to illustrate how easily meaning can become distorted even when considering reasonably straightforward terms.

A final word on interpretation involves the societal influences on texts. The societal context of Western thought generally is founded on binary thinking. As Walker-Jones (2008, p. 292) ponders "…in Western culture there is a tendency to treat good and evil as two discrete, easily distinguishable entities. This feeds a Star Wars ethics where the forces of good and the forces of evil are easily distinguishable…". This duality approach, while great for a Hollywood movie involving heroes and villains, is not conducive to understanding concepts and ideas shrouded in things such as metaphor, allegory and historical and linguistic nuances that may be lost forever. I would suggest maintaining an open mind when considering texts, particularly the troublesome ones that give us pause.

To put the challenges of understanding Biblical text in perspective, consider also, the historical timeline and varying context involved in the books of the Bible, as follows.

Biblical Timeline - adapted from Biblical Timeline by Tang (n.d.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>18 century BCE</th>
<th>1300-1250 BCE</th>
<th>1000 BCE</th>
<th>960 BCE</th>
<th>933 BCE</th>
<th>587 BCE</th>
<th>538 BCE</th>
<th>515 BCE</th>
<th>500 BCE</th>
<th>332 BCE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham Exodus</td>
<td>Moses &amp; Exodus</td>
<td>David conquers Jerusalem</td>
<td>Solomon builds the Temple</td>
<td>Nation divides: Judah &amp; Israel</td>
<td>Jerusalem falls to Nebuchadnezzar</td>
<td>people exiled to Babylon</td>
<td>Babylon falls Jews ret’n &amp; rebuild Temple</td>
<td>Roman Republic est’d Alexander the Great conquers Jerusalem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(continued on next page)
Animals and the Environment

The Book of Genesis (Genesis, Chapter 1, versus 26-30) contains writings that have been interpreted as supporting the view that humans, as the pinnacle of creation, enjoy free reign to use (abuse) the earth and all that inhabit it, to their ends without regard. The key passages usually referenced in support of this notion are as follows:

"Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”"

"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

"God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”"

"Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you [note: meat was not originally given as food];"

"and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food”; and it was so."
Clearly, humans have been put in charge, as it were. The key words that deserve a closer examination in the aforementioned text are *rule* and *subdue*, also referred to as “dominion” (i.e., the right to rule; govern; or hold sway and control over the environment and non-human animals). A purposive hermeneutic approach would entail a consideration of how these words are used and treated thematically throughout the Bible. In so doing, a reasonable rendering of Genesis 1:26-30 can be stitched together; one that is consistent with the notion of a loving God who, upon reflection “… saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good…” (Genesis 1:31).

Interestingly, we find in Leviticus 25 the notion of the Biblical *rule* as a special kind of rule that clearly implies responsibility. Leviticus 25 consists of a number of commands issued by God to Moses for the edification of the Jewish people. The chapter opens up with the command that even the land must be given a sabbatical every seventh year! Say what you will about subduing the land for human use, it be not without limits. In the sabbatical year the land is not to be sown nor are the vineyards to be pruned. Amongst the direction given in Leviticus 25, rule requires the exercise of power to be tempered with compassion with special attention for the marginalized in society. The ruler is not given carte blanche to rule indiscriminately; indeed, according to Leviticus (and echoed throughout the Bible) a ruler is better defined as being imbued with the responsibility of a fiduciary – acting in the interests of all that has been put under the ruler’s charge without regard to personal gain.

From a Biblical viewpoint, nature itself is God’s creation. As Johnson (2000) pointed out, nature exists for God’s pleasure, and therefore any act, be it deliberate or through omission, that runs contrary to the best interests of nature, in strict Biblical terms, amounts to contempt for God’s creation, and indeed, for God. The converse is equally true; human acts that preserve and
enhance nature show respect for God and are consistent with God’s view of creation. To this end Genesis 1:31 notes that upon completion of all we know to be nature, God opined that it was “very good” – not just good, but very good. It would seem to be an absurd outcome to interpret anything in the Bible as supportive of the notion that humans have permission to neglect or destroy anything that God created and decreed “very good”. Indeed, the Bible (Matthew 10:29) tells us that even a sparrow will not fall without God knowing or giving permission for it to fall (depending on the translation). Given this concern for His creation, is it possible to argue that the notion of rule and subdue can support an interpretation that means anything less than a relationship with nature that is both caring and supportive of creation?

Animal Protection

Many of the ancient prophets of the Old Testament tried to right the wrongs associated with commonly held views about the value and necessity of animal sacrifice by speaking out against such pursuits. Hyland (2000) suggests that warnings against animal sacrifice “continued to coexist with a priestly power structure that was still developing complex rituals for slaughter.” This is viewed as a “great strength of the Old Testament” as it exemplifies the ongoing struggle between opposing values [and] provide[s] a continuous, if selective, chronicle of a nation’s spiritual journey” (pp. 5-6).

In this way, the Old Testament tells the story, without sanitizing it. The good, the bad and the ugly of the spiritual growth of a nation are all included to illustrate the need for growth within ourselves. Indeed, it is oft times only when reflecting on the past can we see the error of our ways (20/20 hindsight) – this is also true of the spiritual journey which is the story of the Old Testament. A case in point, Hyland argues, is the story of how Jacob deceived his brother Essau out of his birthright. The book of Genesis does not paint this atrocity as particularly
blameworthy; however hundreds of years later the Bible does (Jeremiah 9:4 and Hosea 12:3). The same deferral of condemnation is evident with respect to the sacrifice of animals.

The prophets who spoke out against the gratuitous slaughter of animals emphasized the need to put into practice sacrifice that was of the self-seeking wisdom and guidance; expressing gratitude and thanksgiving rather than the bloodletting rituals that had become so commonplace. The advocates of this rectification of what was really needed by God is a veritable who’s who of Old Testament prophets including Isaiah (1:11, 14-16, 11:4, 6-9); Hosea (2;18-19, 8:11-13); Jeremiah (7:3-4, 6-7, 21-25); Amos (5:21-22, 24-25); and Micah (4:2-4, 6:6-8). Hyland summarized it thusly, “[s]peaking in the name of God, the prophets let the people know that it was time for the world to once again reflect on the qualities that God had ordained at the Creation – love, compassion, and mercy for all creatures” (p. 14).

Indeed, Whitekettle (2008) illustrates how Psalm 50 refutes the former belief that God needed and demanded animal sacrifice and that favour could be curried by humans in this way. Whitekettle noted the speech in Psalm 50 begins with a “call to listen” (p. 404), then an acknowledgement of the animal sacrifices made, followed by three reasons why the necessity of such sacrifices (even for food) is not required as follows: “[t]here are three expressions in Ps. 50:9-11 used to describe the relationship of God to animals: [םיינכט] ([they] belong to me; verse 10a); [יודע] (I know [them]; verse 11a); [יונש] ([they] are mine; verse 11b)…” (p. 405). It begs the question: why would God want what was already His?

In summary, Psalm 50 (attributed to King David), as is evident throughout the Bible, contains a condemnation of animal sacrifice as it is not something desirable by God instead we find a call to be grateful for God’s blessings (Ps. 50:14). What God wanted was for us to be grateful, from the heart not by the proxy slaughter of innocent lives – gratitude was not to be
found in the ritual bloodletting of rote sacrifice. Centuries later, Jesus echoed the direction of the prophets demanding “compassion not sacrifice” (Matthew 9:13).

Scully (1998, p. 38) notes that “[h]unters in the Bible are folks like Nimrod and Esau, who tend to have trouble living peaceably among their fellow human beings, too. Indeed, if we take Genesis at its word, among the first instructions to man in the Garden were to keep his mitts off the critters (and vice versa) and be content with the herbs and the trees. And this comes just after we've been given dominion.”

In the idyllic world that was the Garden of Eden, God never intended for humans to consume animal flesh. To be clear, the dominion over all living beings on the earth that was entrusted to humans, chronologically appears in Genesis 1:28, then God tells us what we shall eat in verse 29: “I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you.” In the perfect world, a world before sin had entered into it, humans were to live in peace and eat a vegan diet.

The consumption of meat was not permitted in the Bible until after the great flood, the time of Noah. The antediluvian diet was permitted, some suggest, because there was no vegetation left being destroyed in the flood that annihilated the earth and all that was upon it. There are other tenable arguments that the sinfulness of, and the contrary nature of early humans, eroded the perfectness of the world to such a degree as to be bordering on depraved.

Indeed, Genesis 9:3 outlines the change from the natural order of creation as witnessed at the beginning of creation to the dawning of a dark era shrouded in violence and blood – an era ushered in and hallmarked with “the fear and terror of you on every beast”. Writing in the U.S. Catholic, Camille (2008, p. 40) noted that “…the mood is dark, and the new code of violence doesn't finish with the relationship between animals and us: "For your own lifeblood I will surely
require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life. Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed…” (Genesis 9:5-6). In this way, it is evident that consuming meat was certainly a retrograde move from the world first created in the beginning “and in the direction of a more brutal and adversarial existence. Permission to eat the animals, then, sounds like a divine acknowledgment that humankind has chosen a bloody path. … We are, in this sense, what we eat: a species at peace with killing.”

Johnson (1996, pp. 90-91), a conservative Catholic argued that "God allowed us to live off the beasts of the fields and the forest because there was no other way," but that advances in technology now provide for alternatives that modern humans ought to avail themselves of. "Gradually this realization will take hold of us. The rise of factory farming, whereby food producers cannot remain competitive except by subjecting animals to life-cycles of unspeakable deprivation, has hastened this process. The human spirit revolts at what we have been doing." Indeed, Johnson opined that “[g]reat saints like St. Francis, St. Cuthbert and St. Philip Neri, who were particularly close to animals, and specially [sic] sensitive to the way in which they manifested God’s will and love, saw this coming and were ahead of their times”. Johnson, went on optimistically, observing that “[w]e are beginning to understand [animals]” and extrapolating that with this understanding a greater appreciation for animals will translate into better treatment.

Pope John Paul II (1982) may have summed up the present day need best. In praising St. Francis of Assisi on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the saint’s passing, the Pope stated that it was both “necessary and urgent” that we look to St. Francis as an example and “…
abandon inconsiderate forms of domination, capture and custody [of] all creatures” ("think differently" website).

Numbers 11 records an interesting time when the Israelites, after receiving many blessings from God begin to complain because God has only provided them with manna (bread from heaven) to stave off starvation. Interestingly, it would appear to be a classic example of viewing the glass as half empty instead of half full. God provided sustenance for the people in the wilderness following their emancipation from the hands of the tyranny in Egypt. However, as Edwards (2008, p. 277) noted, the Israelites “… complaining about having nothing to eat but manna, "fell a lusting” after “flesh” (Numbers 11:4). The upshot of the “lusting for flesh” was that God provided a large number of quail to fall from the skies and then struck the greedy and unappreciative who gorged themselves on the fallen quail with a plague while “the meat was still between their teeth”.

It could be argued that the people were punished for their greed and, in part, that may be a sound rationale. It is interesting to note however, that the food God had provided to the Israelites during their sojourn in the wilderness was plant based (consistent with the food provided in the Garden of Eden) and the eating of meat was associated with greed and punished accordingly.

Environmental Preservation

Pope John Paul II (1991), in an encyclical (a Papal letter sent to all Bishops) describing a disordered relationship with the natural world stated, "Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray. Instead of carrying out his role as a cooperator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in
place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him”.

This unfortunate and misguided idea of the role humans ought to be playing in the world is as a result of our unchecked “desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow” according to the Pope. The Pope also noted that the widespread phenomenon of “senseless destruction” is a direct result of the fact we desire to create (recreate) the world and in the result have forgotten “…God’s prior and original gift of the things that are” (para. 37).

Bergant (2008, pp. 16-17) in the U.S. Catholic points out a number of Biblical passages that support the assertion that caring for the environment and all of creation is indeed part of God’s agenda for humans. The list, with commentary included:

I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you: all the birds and the various tame and wild animals that were with you and came out of the ark. (Genesis 9:9)

27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Being in covenant with the earth, we are part of nature's mysterious and delicate balance. It takes place around us and within us. We are participants in the workings of nature. We did not weave the web of life – we are but a strand in it.

We experience awe looking at a star-filled sky: "I see your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you set in place" (Psalm 8:4).

We feel calm walking through the woods: "Let all the trees of the forest rejoice" (Psalm 96:12). We become attached to animals: "Bless the Lord, all creatures" (Psalm 103:2). Is this not because we have a deep and abiding affinity with the rest of creation?

Genesis 1:1-2:4a – The first creation story shows the interdependence of natural creation and identifies human beings as "images of God."

Genesis 2:4b-23 – The second creation story emphasizes human beings as made of the sub-stance of the earth, as are all other living creatures. The human creature is placed in the garden to serve (the same verb as "till") and-guard it

Hosea 2:20 – The prophet offers a poetic description of the reestablishment of the
covenant after it was broken by human sin,

Romans 8:19-22 – Paul says the final transformation will include all of creation, not take place apart from it.

Revelation 21:1-5a – The vision of the future indicates that at the end, the earth will be transformed not destroyed.

The natural order may have changed post flood but we can still find God’s will in the scriptures. Genesis 2:15 placed a responsibility on humans, when placed in the Garden of Eden, “to cultivate it and keep it” – to care for and protect it. Moreover God promises (the promise was not limited to humans, it included all living creatures) never to destroy creation again (Genesis 9:9-12 and 9:15-17). “My bow in the cloud (rainbow set in the sky) … shall be a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth” (Genesis 9:13) takes the covenant one step further to include the earth as well.

The vegetarian life is inextricably associated with environmentalism and it has been suggested by many (and appears on popular T-shirts) that there is no such thing as an environmentalist who is not vegetarian. Father John Dear (n.d.), a Catholic priest in New York City noted in his booklet, *Christianity and Vegetarianism – Pursuing the Nonviolence of Jesus*, “the harsh reality is that raising farm animals for food is steadily polluting and depleting our land, water and air” (p. 11). The links between animal production for food and the degradation of the environment is well known and adds yet another compelling reason to explore the twin heads of concern that are animal protection and environmental protection.

In his balanced critique of the *Green Bible*, Jacobs (2009, p. 22) expresses the sentiment that we may be tiring of environmental issues, in part from the overuse and misuse for ulterior motives employed by some in furtherance of goals that are not always so “green” unless by green one means making money as in the case of industry strategies to “green-wash” products to
appeal to consumers concerned with environmental concerns. Jacobs cited a recent Pew Forum survey of the political priorities of white evangelicals and white non-Hispanic Catholics and noted that environmental issues was number 12 out of 13 priorities – the only lower priority for white evangelicals was gay marriage – issues surrounding the economy was the number 1 priority. Jacobs also points to a Lake Superior State University's annual "List of Words to Be Banished from the Queen's English for Misuse, Overuse, and General Uselessness" – tabulated from readers' submissions – *green* has just come in first” (p. 22).

It seems clear that concern for animal welfare and the environment has Biblical support; it is also clear that fundamentalists may cherry-pick passages to support continued cavalier use and in some cases outright misuse of the earth. Moreover, the seeming lethargy, which is pervading environmental causes, may act as a catalyst for complacency. More than ever it is of great import to not merely accept issues at face value but to delve deep into scriptures and align this with the over-arching question of what make sense in a world created by a loving God.

*Human Rights: Sexual Orientation*

The Bible, particularly the Old Testament, contains many verses that at first blush appear to condemn any sexual behavior that deviates from what is considered “the norm.” That is, the normative in Western society of being married and heterosexual. Leviticus in particular contains the following phrase: “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination” (Leviticus18:22). In modern times, enlightened Christians have found this verse extremely troublesome to modern sensibilities it constitutes an unacceptable dichotomy of treatment based on a very personal and private matter for an individual. That said, the verse has also been embraced by those who seek to further an agenda of hate against gay people and validate their bigotry with reference to divinely endorsed sanctions.
There have been a number of efforts to interpret this verse in ways that resonate more closely with the views of both ends of the spectrum; from acceptance to condemnation. For example, some scholars have argued that the verse only forbids homosexual sex in a pagan temple or in the bed of a woman, some suggest that taking the entire chapter in context, it seems to suggest, again, that what is being frowned upon generally are acts of moral turpitude including sex with animals, sex with your wife’s sister or daughter, your uncle or aunt, your mother or father and, of course, you should not offer up your children as human sacrifices.

Trying to understand one isolated verse, such as Leviticus 18:22, plucked out of its historical context and divorced from the gist of the entire chapter (which primarily concerns itself with acts that are deemed “unclean” and incest) is compounded further when considering the difficulties inherent in moving from the original Hebrew to a transliteration (writing a word from one language using the closest corresponding letters of another language) and then considering the exact meaning. The exact meaning of the verse is “And with a male you shall not lay lyings of a woman” (Cannon, 2005).

Leviticus 18:22 is, as they say, an enigma seemingly wrapped in a conundrum when it comes to deriving meaning for the purposes of the modern English reader. Suffice to say it appears to have been interpreted as a condemnation of homosexuality specifically. Interestingly, the word “homosexual” did not come into the English lexicon until approximately 100 years ago and the word made its Biblical debut in the Revised Standard Version of 1946. On the other hand, from a plain reading of it one could argue that the Hebrew text is not necessarily a prohibition against homosexuality but rather that men ought to be circumspect as to where they engage in such sexual activity. That is, men should not have sex with other men in a woman’s
bed ("lyings of a woman"), as a woman’s bed is consecrated to the higher goal of procreation and this is not achieved outside of a heterosexual union.

The Old Testament scholar, Greenspahn (2002), has suggested that the Biblical account about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is not about God’s wrath played out on the population of those cities because of the propensity these people had to engage in alternative sexuality, but rather other sins. To ancient Jews, Greenspahn posits that the emphasis of the Sodom and Gomorrah story was not on the unchecked lusts and homosexual tendencies of the citizenry, but rather on their lack of hospitality to outsiders and their practice of rape.

Whatever else can be said about proscriptions of sexuality in the Old Testament, it would surely be a hermeneutic stretch to claim that the Old Testament accords the same level of respect of homosexuality as it does to heterosexuality. Indeed, one of the first directions given to humans was to go forth and multiply – this is only possible between a man and a woman. That said, nowhere does the Bible suggest that sex is exclusively a means to this end. One suggested answer as to why sex outside a heterosexual union may have been discouraged was the promotion of an objective such as a culture – limiting sexual activity to married heterosexuals enhances the prospects for procreation within the framework of a nuclear family unit. While this may have been a specific means to perpetuate a species, a culture, a race, etc., it was not a general prohibition or condemnation of alternative sexuality. This means to an end is not without precedent, even in modern times. In Canada, the Province of Quebec provided baby bonus cheques to encourage families to have babies in the hopes of ensuring the French culture and language was not subsumed by the majority Anglophones in Canada. Indeed, Quebec has long thought of itself as a distinct society and this is implicitly acknowledged by the majority of Canadians, if not enshrined in law.
Moreover, from the perspective of modern liberal societies, no form of sexuality is now considered normative to the exclusion of another. When weighing in on sexuality, the Liberal Minister of Justice for Canada, as he was then (and later Prime Minister), Pierre Elliot Trudeau (1967) said “the state has no business in the bedrooms of the nation” in response to media questions regarding individual rights, including sexual behavior. Indeed, it is also clear that throughout the Old Testament sex was not limited to married couples and this seems to have been sanctioned. The list includes sex with concubines, sex with temple prostitutes, etc.

The Christian approach to the problems with sexuality as it arises in the Old Testament is rather simple; if the New Testament and Jesus make the old Jewish law obsolete, then the New Testament simply supplants the Old Testament. In this way the Old Testament is maintained as a historical reference point under which the new covenant, made possible through Christ, comes into force and effect. For all intents and purposes, Jesus was silent on the issue of sexual preferences. As such, it is reasonably argued that laws respecting how to treat a person in a camp who has a "nocturnal emission" (Deuteronomy 23:10) for example, and other aspects of the ancient Mosaic (Jewish) covenant (covering some 613 proscriptions) are subsumed by the covenant of the New Testament. As such, alternative sexual preferences cease to be discriminated against save and except as may be prohibited at law. Certainly, there are good reasons to still have laws against incest and the like but as between consenting adults, there seems to be little concern of there being a dearth of morality such as was described in the Old Testament, or indeed in the City of Corinth during the time of Paul the Apostle. In sum, Jesus advocated for forgiveness instead of agreeing that the appropriate response was to stone [to death] a woman caught in the very act of adultery. He suggested that he who was without sin should cast the first stone. No one did (John 8:7).
It is fair to note that Jesus may not have directly addressed the issue of alternative sexual lifestyles; however he did associate with known prostitutes, sinners and tax collectors. Jesus noted that it was not the healthy that needed a physician, it was the sick. Thus, most times he found Himself in the company of those most in need of healing. Indeed, in his first letter to the faithful in the City of Corinth (after Christ’s crucifixion), the Apostle Paul wrote in response to a letter from the church there addressing numerous questions about marriage, food, worship, the resurrection, divisions within the church and immorality. In 1 Corinthians 6:9 Paul enumerates a list of moral concerns that should be avoided. Among the concerns listed are excessive drinking, covetousness, homosexuality, adultery and even being effeminate.

The problem with reading a verse in isolation of the historical context in which it arose, as well as the rest of the chapter or book, is the potential for a skewed meaning. One only needs to continue reading to realize that Paul’s condemnation is not so specific as it is general. The concern being addressed was that “the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord…” (1 Corinthians 6:13). The fact is Paul panned any sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage. As noted by Ryrie (1978), the Church at Corinth was troubled with all the immorality in the city. Corinth was a bustling port city with numerous drinking establishments (archeologically confirmed) that could boast athletic games second only to the Olympics and was home to the temple of Aphrodite and its one-thousand prostitutes. The Greek term, *Kornthiazomai*, translated as “to act the Corinthian” actually meant to regularly engage in fornication. It is against this backdrop that Paul encourages the church to be morally diligent and stringent in adhering to moral precepts (p. 1726).

Moreover, Paul also summarized the most important thing the Corinthians should strive for; the over-arching theme of his letter was to strive for love. Not romantic, erotic or physical
love which would have been characterized by the Greek word *eros*, nor the love inherent in friendship, *phileo*, but the word used in the original Greek text was *agape*, the word for the love of God – unselfish esteem for the thing loved. In 1 Corinthians 13 we find that lacking in the love of God is synonymous with being morally bankrupt.

Johnson (2007) noted that the intransigence of some over the issue of same sex unions has little to do with sex and much to do with resistance to change that is seemingly inherent in a flock imbued with what they believe is Divine fiat to judge others while at the same time ignoring themselves. "The current crisis in Christian denominations over homosexuality has little to do with sex. The relatively few same-sex unions are singled out for moral condemnation but the vast pandemic of sexual disorder among heterosexuals is ignored, suggesting that the [victimizing] of homosexuality relates to perceived threats to the authority of scripture and the church" (para. 2).

The values inculcated in humane education transcend the type of hypocritical judgment that seemed to irk Jesus so much during His ministry. It seems to me that humane education on this point is clearly aligned with the teachings of the Bible insofar as acceptance of people without judging is concerned, which is certainly consistent with Jesus' exhortation "do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned" (Matthew 7:1).

*Human Rights: Tolerance of Religious Difference*

1 Samuel 15:1-35 contains an exhortation to Saul to kill the Amalekites, including the children and animals of this tribe. Leviticus contains a similar passage, one in which the Israelites are ordered to kill the Canaanites. These passages can be used to argue that the Bible
does not tolerate religious difference – that, in fact, the Bible is even prepared to endorse genocide based on religious intolerance.

There are, however, a number of ways to interpret and contextualize these passages in ways that lead to different readings. First, the fate of the Amalekites and the Canaanites cannot be held to be a part of living theology; these events are historical. They represent God’s thinking at a certain point in time; and, of course, God evolves throughout the Bible – as do humans.

During Noah’s days (Genesis 6), God is fed up with humanity and prepares to exterminate all of creation through a flood because of the evil. At the time, God saw Noah and his family as the only people worth sparing this fate. Exodus 32:9-14 relates another one of these shifts in God’s thinking as it takes place during a conversation with Moses; this passage is clear proof that the God of the Bible becomes more tolerant over time and is open to persuasion:

9 The LORD said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people.

10 “Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.”

11 Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, “O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

12 “Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, ‘With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people.

13 “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’”

14 So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.

The God portrayed in the Bible is capable of being swayed. As such, it is certainly possible to argue that the vengeful and intolerant God of the Old Testament gives way to the God of love
and compassion in the New Testament. In this hermeneutic approach, there was indeed a
direction to kill the Canaanites and Amalekites, however the genocide ordered by Divine decree
can be understood as an artifact of God’s thinking at the time.

As God’s thinking changes (evolves) from the Old Testament to the New, we see a very
different line of thinking emerge as evidenced by Matthew 22:35-40. Here Jesus makes it clear
that the two greatest commandments, upon which all other deeds ought to be premised and will
flow as a natural consequence, are commandments of love. The love of God and the love of
others: love your neighbor as yourself. Clearly, Matthew 22 and other passages from the Gospels
are inconsistent with the Old Testament’s commands for the destruction of the Canaanites and
the Amalekites, as these people were the neighbors of Israel at the time. If this approach is taken,
it can be understood that the Old Testament’s harsh treatment of the non-Jewish neighbors of
Israel is no longer relevant today.

Another way of looking at the command to eliminate the Amalekites and the Canaanites
is metaphorically. It is well understood that the Bible is rife with metaphor and some scholars
suggest that this is one such example. The focal point of what must be eliminated is not a people
per se but rather, it is the evil in our lives that must be eliminated; the Amalekites and the
Canaanites are used metaphorically as a reference to this evil. When understood this way, it
resonates with the notion of a loving God and the values of humane education that what we
should rid ourselves of, completely, is the evil in our lives. To take this one step further, the
admonition is directed at the individual, not a race of people. That is, we are, each of us
individually, directed to root out the evil in ourselves, as that is what we have control over.

A reading of the stories in the context of a metaphor makes sense and does not require
leaps of logic as may be the case. In this regard, we are instructed of the need to utterly destroy,
in its entirety, everything evil within us. A reading of the stories that suggests we kill an entire race of people, children and animals included would not be a result that is consistent with a purposive approach to the scriptures within a framework of compassion and love – on the other hand, being admonished to do what we can to rid evil from within does.

*Human Rights: Gender Equality*

The ancient Jewish tribes, like most societies of the time, were a patriarchal society. Jewish power was concentrated among men, typically older men. Patriarchy remained a way of life in much of the world until at least the middle of the twentieth century. The last fifty or so years have seen gender equality emerging across much of the world to greater or lesser degrees depending on the region. Within that framework we find 1 Timothy 2:9 and 11-15, a particularly troubling series of verses:

9 Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing…

11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.

12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

13 For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.

14 And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

15 But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

The above passages are found in the Apostle Paul’s first letter to Timothy, the Gentile pastor of the young Christian church in Ephesus. This letter, along with the second letter to Timothy and the one to Titus are referred to as the Pastoral Epistles as they contain advice to the pastors of the early churches. Interestingly, as emphasized above, the advice being dispensed is not claimed to be Divine dogma, but rather what Paul does and what presumably works for him.
Paul seemingly is arguing that a woman was first deceived in the Garden of Eden so man, (Adam) is exempt from blame for following along! Indeed, while the Bible tells us that the woman (Eve) was deceived by a creature that was “more crafty than any beast” (Genesis 3:1) and she ate of the forbidden fruit because she saw that it was “good for food… a delight to the eyes, and… [made] one wise” (Genesis 3:6), Adam ate it, according to the Bible, simply because Eve gave it to him. Contrary to Paul’s take on the original sin, Genesis 3 tells us that God was not as forgiving of man as Paul and cursed the serpent, as well as Eve and Adam.

Keeping a contextual understanding of scriptures is important to remember. In this letter packed with advice and good intentions, Paul dispenses his thoughts on how to manage the flock of the young church – the One Minute Manager (1982) for the early church, as it were. The thematic heads in the letter as they relate to the management of the church include expectations in the house of God, the law, prayer, activities for women, and qualifications for members of the church hierarchy, the last days, care for widows and the use of money.

Any suggestion that the advice given then is frozen in time and ought not to change is ridiculous. Take for example the instruction given to slaves in the letter, that they ought to respect and honor their masters is one thing (of note there is no reciprocal expectation that a master respect a slave in this letter however, Paul did request the release of the slave Onesimus in his letter to Philemon) but to instruct slaves that they ought to accord even greater respect and serve them all the more if the master is also a believer is, in today's world, an oxymoron at best. It seems an absurdity to accord greater respect to a master, an owner of another human being, because he the master is a believer but apparently that was acceptable at the time. Begs the question, what did the master believe in? That said, by today's standards it is equally absurd and seemingly indicative of flawed thinking to apportion blame solely to women for engaging in the
original sin when the man was possessed of free will and made his own culpable decision to eat the forbidden fruit.

Davidson (1998) has argued that Paul was speaking in a specific context; he was addressing a church that had come to believe that woman had been created before man or, at least, simultaneously, and that notion promoted a form of gender inequality favoring women, that Paul sought to correct. Apparently, the Christians at Ephesus were promoting a form of Goddess worship that had existed in the region long before Christianity and, is supported in the original Hebrew, in particular as it is found in the creation passage in Genesis 1:26-27. In Genesis, the Hebrew word *Elohim* is used and this word is translated as God. The interesting thing is that *Elohim* is used throughout the Bible to denote both a male and a female God – it is used interchangeably or androgynously.

That being the case, Paul seems to have presented a defense of the relative rights of men. Of course, over the intervening centuries, this context is lost; the lay reader knows nothing of the historical time in which Paul was speaking, but rather approaches Timothy as a defense of patriarchy. Moo (1981) noted there is a long history of misinterpretation and/or misunderstanding of this passage, and concludes that Paul’s words were aimed at aligning the balance between the sexes rather than setting out a universal criterion for female behavior and male superiority.

According to Davidson (1998) the Bible may actually be more in line with gender equality and the values of humane education than might appear at first instance. Davidson argues that the creation sequence in Genesis supports this assertion. The creation of a woman (Eve) is God’s final handiwork in the context of all the activity culminating in the world. God begins with the basics—e.g., darkness is created, then light, water, and land—on and on to the
penultimate creation. In other words, arguably, God’s latter work is nobler. If Adam (man) is God’s crowning creation (at the time) and Eve (woman) follows Adam in the creation sequence then one might posit that Eve—that is, woman—is God’s most perfect creation. Interestingly, the Bible records no other creation after Eve and Genesis 1:31 tells us that only after Eve’s creation did God pause and review all “that He had made” and declare that “it was very good”.

There are other indications in Genesis that women have a role that is just as important as that of men. For example, Davidson (1998) calls attention to Genesis 2:18: “Then the Lord God said it is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” The idea of a helper implies, in English, a kind of subordinate or assistant. Many prominent Christian theologians, including Calvin, have viewed Genesis 2:18 as supporting the subordinate view of a woman’s role, relative to man. In countering this view, Davidson points out that the Hebrew word ezer which is employed to indicate that woman is man’s “helper” must be viewed as it is commonly used throughout the scriptures. The word ezer does occur elsewhere in the Bible, for example in Exodus 18:4, in which God is described as being an ezer to Israel. Thus, in Hebrew, an ezer is not necessarily subordinate to the person being helped; in fact, judging on the basis of Exodus, the ezer in referring to God is actually in a superior ontological position. With this reading in mind, it is easy enough to argue that God created men and women in a relationship of equality.

A closing thought and another perspective on how Biblical scriptures and humane education principles both view gender equality as self-evident. Trible (2006, pp. 46-52, 76-77) points out that the creation story in Genesis has been subject to androcentric (male-centered) interpretation that has resulted in lost meaning. Relying on the Hebrew text, Trible notes that the story is actually kind of amusing in that the “… text says that “Lord God formed adam [ adam],
pronounced a-DAHM, from ha-adamah [הָאָדָם]. In Hebrew that’s a pun. It’s very difficult to take a pun and translate it into another language. Traditionally the verse is translated, “Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground”. You lose the pun when you do that…”

"Why don’t we translate it preserving the pun? “God created the human from the humus” or “God created the earthling from the earth”? Already we’ve made a tremendous difference in how we conceive the story, and we are more faithful to the Hebrew."

"… There is not a word in the story about sexuality until the woman appears. It is when the woman (ishah) appears that the man (ish) appears. Sexuality is simultaneous for male and female."

This understanding of the creation story, the fact that the Hebrew word used in the Bible to describe God (Elohim) is both female and male and the notion that the reference throughout the Bible to God and woman as ezer seems to provide a substantive basis challenging the traditionally held views of male superiority. Moreover, these three points on their own, I would suggest support an equality view, perhaps even more persuasive, but at least as prevalent as that embraced within the framework of humane education principles. It would be hard to argue that gender equality is not supported by scripture when it seems that it is, in point of fact, embodied in Elohim, Herself!

**Human Rights: Racial Equality**

Racial equality in the Bible is an oft-misunderstood topic, particularly given the seemingly contradictory views between the Old Testament and the New. Again, the problem with not understanding scripture in a historical context is that it leaves the reader with what appears to be a smorgasbord of views on a subject matter along a continuum. The reader merely
has to latch onto a particular passage that appears to support their position on a topic and constantly reference the same passage(s) again and again in support of a particular view.

In the Old Testament, there is some evidence of what might be considered preferential treatment on the basis of race in favor of Israel. Israel as a state represents the unification of the twelve Jewish tribes and is privileged in God’s eyes and considered the chosen ones, God’s people. It has been suggested that this divine preference may actually be the outgrowth of Israel’s choice of God rather than the other way around. In other words, a reciprocal relationship is at play here: Israel chooses God, consequently God chooses Israel. However, evidence can be gleaned throughout the Old Testament to support the notion that God’s reasons for choosing Israel runs deeper than heavenly reward for an obedient and appropriately pious people. Consider that Israel, on a literal reading of the scriptures, is the only nation that is given Divine fiat to annihilate and utterly destroy other nations (as in the case of the Canaanites and the Amalekites). Indeed there is also a higher degree of tolerance apparent when it comes to Israel’s contrary behavior, relative to other nations as is evidenced throughout the Old Testament. Nowhere is this more pronounced than during the 40 years the chosen nation wanders in the desert after being led by Moses from the bonds of slavery in Egypt. The account is a tale rife with acts of disobedience in the face of miracles performed on their behalf by God. The incident involving the worship of a golden calf stands (Exodus 32:4) out as an example of stunning defiance, yet God spares the nation.

By the time the eight or so writers authored the New Testament, it is clear that God is no longer exclusively the God of Israel. The conduit to God’s love and favor is through acceptance of Jesus, and Jesus is manifestly accessible to all people. Being a Jew requires a specific set of circumstances, including circumstances of birth and ritual worship. Christianity on the other
hand, is a personal experience without limiting constructs save and except that the believer accepts Jesus as savior. A Christian enters fellowship with all other Christians with the only common denominator being the acceptance of Jesus into their lives. What emerges in the circumstances then is a new kind of racial equality, manifested as a result of the uncoupling of religion and race. Religion without borders or other superficially defining features is the outcome.

Interestingly, of the three great religions that can trace their early histories to the Old Testament and the time of Abraham, Judaism and Islam both espouse and promote the idea of tribal privilege. Being Jewish is more than a religious affiliation; it is a link to a continuum of Hebraic culture and history stretching back for centuries, whereas to be a Muslim is to accept the liturgical superiority of the Arabic language. Christianity however, stands alone among these religions, whose seminal moments are shared, and accords no special status by virtue of race, tribal membership, linguistic characteristics or culture.

The early Christians embraced the revolutionary nature of Jesus’ message, and accepted all into the community of faith. The first Christians were primarily Jewish, which was natural enough given that even Jesus was born a Jew, lived and died in Israel. As such, Christianity got a foothold in the region, spreading throughout the world at the dawn of the Common Era, gaining adherents from every race and social class. Osborne (1988, p. 282) points out that the theology of Christianity and historical evidence supports the notion that Christianity is open to all without traditional bars such as race and social standing. Indeed, the countervailing criterion for a Christian is not steeped in circumstances largely beyond an individual’s control; it amounts to acceptance and choice for the individual. Osborne opines that “the arguments Paul presented for
the final salvation of Israel are valid if they apply to all mankind… everyone has an objective knowledge of God which leads ultimately to salvation”.

Summary

The Bible, a collection of books, is divided into two parts or Testaments, the Old and the New. For Christians, the New Testament is, in many ways, an abrogation of the Old, rescinding and replacing many of the dated laws and principles of the Old Testament. Luke 22:20 tells us that the New Testament is the record of the New Covenant, supplanting the Mosaic Covenant of the Old Testament. The arrival of Jesus is, in both the Biblical and historical sense, a defining moment that serves to demark the departure from the law of rigidity and order to the law of love and compassion.

As I have demonstrated in this essay, the God of the Old Testament is not yet fully bonded to His creation by love; this only happens with the passage of time. Indeed, on a number of occasions, the Old Testament records God’s frustration with humans and His subsequent deliberation as to whether or not to destroy humanity, either in whole or in part.

Conversely, the New Testament is the record of God’s new relationship with humans, a more inclusive relationship. As John 3:16 famously states, God’s love for the world is such that a new era was unfolding based on forgiveness and compassion; an era for all to enjoy and embrace. The appearance of Jesus relegates many aspects of the archaic Jewish law obsolete, not in defiance of the old law but in deference to it and in fulfillment of it. The Old Testament predicted the coming of the Messianic age and Jesus was the embodiment and fulfillment of those predictions.

In the person of Jesus and the dawning of a new age, previous distinctions are erased and a level playing field emerges providing the basis for a radical equality among all human beings –
the notion of all people being created equal finally has traction. As Peterson (2002, p. 96) noted, “Jesus is the one sent by the Father to replace the customs and feasts of Judaism. Jesus does this by bringing in the blessings of the messianic era...By cleansing the temple, he further revealed himself as the one sent to replace the institutions of the Mosaic covenant”.

At once it is apparent that the Old Testament contains principles that are not homologous with the values of humane education. That said, as has been shown in this paper, a number of apparent inconsistencies arise from misunderstanding and/or misinterpretation. Moreover, the New Testament abrogates the former rigidity and harsh consequences and lays the foundation for a new covenant, the cornerstone being love and compassion. If we read the Bible holistically, the New Testament provides a radical restatement of the humane that can be used as a springboard for education. Indeed, historically speaking, many movements towards progressive and egalitarian principles have been inspired directly by the Bible, including the abolition of slavery, principles of justice and the formation of liberal democracies. In this sense, the secular paradigm of the humane is deeply indebted to Christianity, and Christianity should by no means be thought of as inimical to any of the principles of humane education.

In sum, the Old Testament revealed the holiness of God through the standard of the law and promised a savior, a redeemer. The New Testament reveals the love of God as manifested in Jesus and the New Covenant with humans.

On the other hand, certainly principles presupposed to exist in the Old Testament could, upon further inspection, be exposed as misinterpretations or hermeneutical mistakes. For example, the impression that the Biblical doctrine of dominion over nature implies some kind of callous anti-environmentalism can be easily dispelled by taking a closer look at the Biblical paradigm of rule and subdue, and thus understand dominion in the context of stewardship and
fiduciary. As previously discussed, if we accept the premise of a loving God then a purposive approach to scripture means any interpretative outcome that is inconsistent with that premise is an absurdity and demands further analysis.

By employing these methods when approaching scripture: (a) recognizing that the Messianic Covenant of the New Testament subsumes and supplants aspects of Old Testament law that, upon reflection, seem inhumane and/or not grounded in love, compassion and forgiveness; (b) re-reading the source texts with a view to alternative meanings and context; (c) asking oneself if what one reads makes sense and is consistent with one’s view of God; and (d) how does it apply today – I would suggest that it is readily apparent that the Bible has often been misunderstood and is, in fact, a sound foundation for, and consistent with humane principles of education.

In fairness, there are not always clear-cut answers to the Bible's, and indeed, life's most perplexing questions. Perhaps nowhere is this better demonstrated than by Gordon's (2006, pp. 40-41) excellent look at a debate that took place on the eve of the civil war in the United States over what the Bible said about slavery. The debate raged on for eight hours a day and lasted four days with no obvious resolution. In the end, the antebellum view was largely decided by the victor. "The evangelical Protestant churches had a problem because the mere fact of trusting implicitly in the Bible was not solving disagreements about what the Bible taught concerning slavery. The country and the churches were both in trouble because the remedy that finally solved the question of how to interpret the Bible was recourse to arms. The supreme crisis over the Bible was that there existed no apparent biblical resolution to the crisis. It was left to those consummate theologians, the reverend doctors Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman, to decide what in fact the Bible actually meant."
It remains, I believe, to give one final view on the difficulties one faces trying to make sense of the Bible and, in the end, what is likely the best advice in this regard. A particularly difficult passage in the Bible can be found in the Book of Numbers, Chapter 5:11-31. It is unclear even to the most ardent of scholars whether the passage is addressing a woman's adultery or a man's unfounded jealousy. The view that the passage is about the woman's adultery is rife with oppression, according no rights at all to the woman in the story – clearly not a view embraced by many enlightened people at the advent of the 21st Century. Perhaps Biblical scholar, Briggs (2009, pp. 315-316) said it best while grappling with the passage, concluding that invariably he was left with a question rather than an answer. Biggs suggested that the "…question is this, regarding the moral and ethical value of biblical texts in Christian (or, perhaps, Jewish) theology: Will the text stretch or will it break? It is not clear that a programmatic answer can be given short of taking each text in turn and seeing what might be expected of it."

And seeing what might be expected of it, indeed.
Chapter Three

Project

What follows in this chapter is my project, an educator's handbook entitled:
"Understanding What the Bible Teaches about Animals, the Environment and Us (A Handbook for Educators of High School, College and Adult Audiences)". I have preserved the font styles but made other changes to accommodate inclusion herein.
UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT ANIMALS, THE ENVIRONMENT AND US

(A HANDBOOK FOR EDUCATORS OF HIGH SCHOOL, COLLEGE AND ADULT AUDIENCES)

By: Garth B. Knox
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**Introduction**

In his book *The Third Wave*, Alvin Tofler (1980) points out that our school systems are modeled on the mass production factories of the industrial revolution. This made sense at the dawn of the industrial revolution when the main objective of a school was to turn out (produce) graduates trained for the production line. To that end, schools employed rigid start and finish times signaled by the bell; break (recess) and lunch by the bell. Learning is quite often rote; preparing the future factory worker for the repetition of the assembly line. Maybe the most important lesson learned is to accept direction without question.

Humane education tends to challenge the status quo and, as such, is still finding its place within mainstream education. Thankfully, the focus of education over the last several decades has been to teach critical thinking, to encourage questioning of authority and the authorities – to learn for one's self.

This handbook provides a basic overview on biblical interpretation, followed by a "biblical" look at humane education themes. The topics covered include animal protection and environmental preservation, as well as human rights issues such as sexual orientation, religious tolerance, gender equality and racial equality.

**About the Author...**

My name is Garth Knox; I am a lawyer and Manager of Employee & Labor Relations at the City of Toronto where I have worked for over 20 years. My interest in the subject matter of this handbook was born out of my own experiences in the Catholic Separate School Board
system in Ontario and crystallized as I was working on my Masters of Education with a specialization in humane education.

It is not my intention to have my views or ideas accepted carte blanche; rather I hope to stimulate debate and spur on critical thinking as it relates to the issues presented herein.
What is Humane Education?

It is imperative to understand, first and foremost, what humane education is, in order to understand the nexus with Biblical/Christian studies and values.

The Institute for Humane Education’s website (n.d.) defines humane education thusly:

Humane education not only instills the desire and capacity to live with compassion, integrity, and wisdom, but also provides the knowledge and tools to put our values into action in meaningful, far-reaching ways. Humane education enables us to find solutions that work for all by approaching human rights, environmental preservation, and animal protection [emphasis mine] as interconnected and integral dimensions of a healthy, just society.

Humane education includes 4 elements (Institute for Humane Education website, n.d.):

- Providing accurate information about the issues of our time so that people have the information they need to understand the consequences of their decisions as citizens.

- Fostering curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking, so that people can evaluate information and solve problems.

- Instilling reverence, respect, and responsibility, so that people have the motivation to face challenges and to act with integrity.

- Offering positive choices that benefit oneself, other people, the animals, and the Earth, and tools for problem solving so that people are empowered to create a more humane world.
The key areas of study in humane education are, as noted above, human rights, environmental issues and animal protection. With these principles or themes in mind this handbook will seek to challenge commonly held Biblical/Christian beliefs and/or teachings and attempt to reconcile them with the principles noted.

Without arguing the point extensively, I am basing this handbook on the assumption that these principles are indeed laudable, and ought to form the basis of a just and caring society; and further, they are consistent with the actual teachings of the Bible and Christianity. In essence, I am accepting this as self-evident fact and this will be the contextual framework and backdrop against which, this work is presented. In reality, answering that assumption alone would likely encompass an entire handbook on its own.

In short, humane education concerns itself with the goal of teaching a generation of students to become “solutionaries”, armed to tackle the woes of the world as Zoe Weil (2011), author, visionary and President of the Institute for Humane Education so aptly puts it in her TED speech.
Interpretation & the Inerrant Word...

Isn't the Bible the word of God and without error?

Ah... the rich diversity that is Christianity, we don’t even agree on how many or exactly which books constitute the inerrant words that make up the Bible! (Love your tone!) Most submit that there are 66 books in the Bible, but not all agree. Most agree on what books should be included in the Bible, but again, not all. Surely if this is the case, as a basic premise then, it must follow that there is at least some element of human authorship or alternatively, at least human editorial work involved in what we accept as the Bible.

That said, perhaps it is conceivable then that there is room for error – but let's not jump to conclusions.

Hmmmmmm... interesting assignment idea? What are the main differences are in terms of number of books and which ones? Research the origins of the Bible we have today, from oral traditions handed down over generations to the recorded word and subsequent translations.

A theology student, Russell (2011), pointed out that the Bible is a collection of stories, tribal regulations, poetry, music, liturgical instructions [the formulary of how a religious service is conducted] and even oral traditions that were recorded; redacted and reinterpreted by later generations over thousands of years – literally from before the invention of writing until about 100 years after the crucifixion of Jesus. How could a
collection of documents of that scope and breadth not contain some inconsistencies?

Many scholars agree and accept that the Bible is a human product not a divine product. It's interesting that the Bible does not make the claims about itself that fundamentalists do. The notion of inerrancy is probably best characterized as a reaction to constructive criticism of reading the Bible literally.

Russell argues that the challenge for most theologians today is to understand the forms of the underlying passages (are we talking about poetry or tribal law?), then the cultural context and significance of the original work, then ask: how that relates to today [emphasis added].

In referring to the works of William Barclay (a Presbyterian writer) Russell illustrates this in a piece he wrote about Lazarus being raised from the dead. If Lazarus was literally raised from the dead, what's the point of the story? What’s the relevance for us today? If this story is read figuratively rather than literally there is timeless relevance. That Jesus can resurrect relationships, restore a person who is lost, heal someone who is beyond all healing... then maybe there’s something to this story that resonates through the ages. It's not a story about a magic trick back then but rather, it's a story about the redemptive power of God today, and always.

Almost a century ago W. L. Hornsby (1924) wrote an article on “Saint Augustine and Evolution” noted that the first “obvious rule” in interpretation “is not to give an author’s statement more than the words bear out”. As will be discussed in the context of various difficult passages, this becomes even more challenging when the “words” being ascribed meaning are translated, transliterated and interpreted with the end
result being an obscurity of the original intent.

For example, in Zechariah 9:9 the Hebrew text uses three terms to describe donkeys. While it may appear to be overly technical, the study of this passage illustrates how translation to English can artificially create, what appears to be an inconsistency.

The different terminology in Zachariah actually points to a very specific donkey in prophesying the mount Jesus will ride into Jerusalem on just prior to the crucifixion. The donkey referred to in Zechariah is actually a purebred jackass whose purity is synonymous with royalty and peace. This is important as emblematic of the life and ministry of Jesus. The alternative interpretation, as commonly used, is a donkey consistent with military conquest and elitism, clearly not reflective of Jesus. If that isn't enough, when we read the four Gospels, Matthew mentions two donkeys, yet the other Gospel writers only mention one!

**Hmmmmm… interesting assignment idea?** How do you reconcile the differences between the Gospel accounts? (There are many ways to do so…)

A final word on interpretation involves the societal influences on texts. The societal context of Western thought generally is founded on binary thinking. Walker-Jones (2008) ponders "…in Western culture there is a tendency to treat good and evil as two discrete, easily distinguishable entities. This feeds a Star Wars ethics where the forces of good and the forces of evil are easily distinguishable…" (p. 292). This duality approach, while great for a Hollywood movie involving heroes and villains, is not conducive to understanding concepts and ideas shrouded in things such as metaphor, allegory and historical and linguistic nuances that may be lost forever. I would suggest maintaining an open mind when considering texts, particularly the troublesome ones.
that give us pause.

To put the challenges of understanding Biblical text in perspective, consider also, the historical timeline and varying context involved in the books of the Bible, as follows.

**Biblical Timeline – the story started before writing...**

*adapted from Biblical Timeline by Tang (n.d.)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>18 century BCE</th>
<th>1300-1250 BCE</th>
<th>1000 BCE</th>
<th>960 BCE</th>
<th>933 BCE</th>
<th>587 BCE</th>
<th>538 BCE</th>
<th>500 BCE</th>
<th>332 BCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Moses &amp; Exodus</td>
<td>David conquers Jerusalem</td>
<td>Solomon builds the Temple</td>
<td>Nation divides: Judah &amp; Israel</td>
<td>Jerusalem falls to Nebuchadnezzar people exiled to Babylon</td>
<td>Babylon falls Jews ret’n &amp; rebuild Temple</td>
<td>Roman Republic est’d</td>
<td>Alexander the Great conquers Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>167-164 BCE</td>
<td>63-37 BCE</td>
<td>21 BCE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desecration of Temple</td>
<td>Pompey conquers Jerusalem</td>
<td>Herod the Great rules Temple</td>
<td>Herod begins rebuilding Temple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>O -6 CE</td>
<td>30? CE</td>
<td>46-60 CE</td>
<td>66-70 CE</td>
<td>70 CE</td>
<td>130 CE</td>
<td>132-135 CE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus of Nazareth born</td>
<td>Jesus crucified</td>
<td>Apostle Paul’s journeys</td>
<td>Jewish war</td>
<td>Temple destroyed</td>
<td>Jerusalem rebuilt as a Gentile city</td>
<td>Revolt defeated; Jews leave Jerusalem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Animals & the Environment

Just to underscore the issues with interpretation, it is generally believed that the concept of "crisis" when written in Chinese characters as above (from Wikipedia), involves 2 characters, the character for danger and the one for opportunity. This however, is hotly debated as any search of the internet will bear out. In any event, I am going to run with it as an illustrative analogy…

We are both at the center of the environmental crisis and its unwitting victim. It is incumbent upon us to seek out the opportunities to resolve the dangers of continued environmental degradation – to realize our role in the crisis and the outcome for us; such is the goal of humane education and is supported in the scriptures. We are, after all, part and parcel of the environment. As part of creation we are not a separate entity – a stand-alone creation, the environment and all that encompasses is creation and that includes the myriad of animal kingdoms, of which we humans belong. We can no longer afford to stand by idly, deluding ourselves that we are on the periphery, as though we were outside looking in – it is not a thing outside; it is us and we are it.

The Book of Genesis (Genesis, Chapter 1, versus 26-30) contains writings that have been interpreted as supporting the view that humans, as the pinnacle of creation,
enjoy free reign to use (abuse) the earth and all that inhabit it, to their ends without regard. The key passages usually referenced in support of this notion are as follows:

26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

29 Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you [note: meat was not originally given as food];

30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food”; and it was so.

Clearly, humans have been put in charge, as it were. The key words that deserve a closer examination in the aforementioned text are rule and subdue, also referred to as “dominion” (i.e., the right to rule; govern; or hold sway and control over the environment and non-human animals). A purposive hermeneutic approach (interpretive; explanatory) would entail a consideration of how these words are used and treated thematically throughout the Bible.

Interestingly, we find in Leviticus 25 the notion of the Biblical rule as a special kind of rule that clearly implies responsibility. Leviticus 25 consists of a number of commands issued by God to Moses for the edification of the Jewish people. The chapter opens up with the command that even the land must be given a sabbatical every seventh year! Say what you will about subduing the land for human use, it is not without limits. In the sabbatical year the land is not to be sown nor are the vineyards to
be pruned. Amongst the direction given in Leviticus 25, rule requires the exercise of power to be tempered with compassion with special attention for the marginalized in society. The ruler is not given carte blanche to rule indiscriminately; indeed, according to Leviticus (and echoed throughout the Bible) a ruler is better defined as being imbued with the responsibility of a fiduciary – acting in the interests of all that has been put under the ruler’s charge without regard to personal gain.

Genesis 1:31 notes that upon completion of all we know to be nature, God opined that it was “very good” – not just good, but very good. It would seem to be an absurd outcome to interpret anything in the Bible as supportive of the notion that humans have permission to neglect or destroy anything that God created and decreed “very good”. Indeed, the Bible (Matthew 10:29) tells us that even a sparrow will not fall without God knowing or giving permission for it to fall (depending on the translation). Is it possible to argue that the notion of rule and subdue can support an interpretation that means anything less than a relationship with nature that is both caring and supportive of creation?

Hmmmmm… interesting assignment idea? How do various stakeholders interpret "dominion" in order to support their view?
Animal Protection

Many of the ancient prophets of the Old Testament tried to right the wrongs associated with commonly held views about the value and necessity of animal sacrifice by speaking out against such pursuits. Hyland (2000) suggests that warnings against animal sacrifice “continued to coexist with a priestly power structure that was still developing complex rituals for slaughter.” This is viewed as a “great strength of the Old Testament” as it exemplifies the ongoing “struggle between opposing values [and] provide[s] a continuous, if selective, chronicle of a nation’s spiritual journey” (pp. 5-6).

In this way, the Old Testament tells the story, without sanitizing it. The good, the bad and the ugly of the spiritual growth of a nation are all included to illustrate the need for growth within ourselves. Indeed, it is oft times only when reflecting on the past can we see the error of our ways (20/20 hindsight) – this is also true of the spiritual journey which is the story of the Old Testament. A case in point, Hyland argues, is the story of how Jacob deceived his brother Essau out of his birthright. The book of Genesis does not paint this atrocity as particularly blameworthy; however hundreds of years later the Bible does (Jeremiah 9:4 and Hosea 12:3). The same deferral of condemnation is evident with respect to the sacrifice of animals.

The prophets who spoke out against the gratuitous slaughter of animals emphasized the need to put into practice sacrifice that involved seeking wisdom and guidance; expressing gratitude and thanksgiving rather than the bloodletting rituals that had become so commonplace. The advocates of this rectification of what was really
needed by God is a veritable who’s who of Old Testament prophets including Isaiah (1:11, 14-16, 11:4, 6-9); Hosea (2:18-19, 8:11-13); Jeremiah (7:3-4, 6-7, 21-25); Amos (5:21-22, 24-25); and Micah (4:2-4, 6:6-8). Hyland summarized it thusly, “[s]peaking in the name of God, the prophets let the people know that it was time for the world to once again reflect on the qualities that God had ordained at the Creation – love, compassion, and mercy for all creatures” (p. 14).

Psalm 50 refutes the former belief that God needed and demanded animal sacrifice and that favour could be curried by humans in this way. Psalm 50 (attributed to King David), as is evident throughout the Bible, contains a condemnation of animal sacrifice – instead we find a call to be grateful for God’s blessings (Ps. 50:14). What God wanted was for us to be grateful, from the heart not through the proxy slaughter of innocent lives – gratitude was not to be found in the ritual bloodletting of rote sacrifice. Centuries later, Jesus echoed the direction of the prophets demanding “compassion not sacrifice” (Matthew 9:13).

Scully (1998) noted that “[h]unters in the Bible are folks like Nimrod and Esau, who tend to have trouble living peaceably among their fellow human beings, too. Indeed, if we take Genesis at its word, among the first instructions to man in the Garden were to keep his mitts off the critters (and vice versa) and be content with the herbs and the trees. And this comes just after we’ve been given dominion” (p. 38).

In the idyllic world that was the Garden of Eden, God never intended for humans to consume animal flesh. To be clear, the dominion over all living beings on the earth that was entrusted to humans, chronologically appears in Genesis 1:28, then God
tells us what we shall eat in verse 29: “I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you.” In the perfect world, a world before sin had entered into it, humans were to live in peace and eat a vegan diet.

The consumption of meat was not permitted in the Bible until after the great flood, the time of Noah. The antediluvian diet was permitted, some suggest, because there was no vegetation left; having being destroyed in the flood that annihilated the earth and all that was upon it. There are other tenable arguments that the sinfulness of, and the contrary nature of early humans, eroded the perfectness of the world to such a degree as to be bordering on depraved.

Johnson (1996), a conservative Catholic argued that "God allowed us to live off the beasts of the fields and the forest because there was no other way," but that advances in technology now provide for alternatives that modern humans ought to avail themselves of. "Gradually this realization will take hold of us. The rise of factory farming, whereby food producers cannot remain competitive except by subjecting animals to life-cycles of unspeakable deprivation, has hastened this process. The human spirit revolts at what we have been doing". Indeed, Johnson opined that “'[g]reat saints like St. Francis, St. Cuthbert and St. Philip Neri, who were particularly close to animals, and specially [sic] sensitive to the way in which they manifested God’s will and love, saw this coming and were ahead of their times". Johnson, went on optimistically, observing that “[w]e are beginning to understand [animals]” and extrapolating that with this understanding a greater appreciation for animals will translate into better
Pope John Paul II (1982) may have summed up the present day need best. In praising St. Francis of Assisi on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the saint’s passing, the Pope stated that it was both “necessary and urgent” that we look to St. Francis as an example and “… abandon unadvisable forms of domination, the locking up of all creatures” ("think differently" website).

Numbers 11 records an interesting time when the Israelites, after receiving many blessings from God begin to complain because God has only provided them with manna (bread from heaven) to stave off starvation. Interestingly, it would appear to be a classic example of viewing the glass as half empty instead of half full. God provided sustenance for the people in the wilderness following their emancipation from the hands of the tyranny in Egypt. However, as Edwards (2008) noted, the Israelites “… complaining about having nothing to eat but manna, "fell a lusting” after “flesh” (Numbers 11:4). The upshot of the “lusting for flesh” was that God provided a large number of quail to fall from the skies and then struck the greedy and unappreciative who gorged themselves on the fallen quail with a plague while “the meat was still between their teeth” (p. 277).

It could be argued that the people were punished for their greed and, in part, that may be a sound rationale. It is interesting to note however, that the food God had provided to the Israelites during their sojourn in the wilderness was plant based (consistent with the food provided in the Garden of Eden) and the eating of meat was associated with greed and punished accordingly.
 Hmmmmm... interesting assignment idea? Find stories in the Bible where non-human animals interact with humans and how. Can you explain the story (e.g., talking mule, Jonah in the whale, etc.)?
Environmental Preservation

Pope John Paul II (1991), in an encyclical (a Papal letter sent to all Bishops) describing a disordered relationship with the natural world stated, "Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray. Instead of carrying out his role as a cooperator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him."

This unfortunate and misguided idea of the role humans ought to be playing in the world is a result of our unchecked “desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow” according to the Pope. The Pope also noted that the widespread phenomenon of “senseless destruction” is a direct result of the fact we desire to create (recreate) the world and in the result have forgotten “…God’s prior and original gift of the things that are” (para. 37).

The natural order may have changed post flood but we can still find God’s will as it relates to the environment in the scriptures. Genesis 2:15 placed a responsibility on humans, when placed in the Garden of Eden, “to cultivate it and keep it” – to care for and protect it. Moreover God promises (the promise was not limited to humans, it included all living creatures) never to destroy creation again (Genesis 9:9-12 and 9:15-17). “My bow in the cloud (rainbow set in the sky) … shall be a sign of a covenant
between Me and the earth” (Genesis 9:13) takes the covenant one step further to include the earth as well.

The vegetarian life is inextricably associated with environmentalism and it has been suggested by many (and appears on popular Tee-shirts) that there is no such thing as an environmentalist who is not vegetarian.

Father John Dear (n.d.), a Catholic priest in New York City noted in his booklet, *Christianity and Vegetarianism – Pursuing the Nonviolence of Jesus*, “the harsh reality is that raising farm animals for food is steadily polluting and depleting our land, water and air” (p. 11). The links between animal production for food and the degradation of the environment is well known and adds yet another compelling reason to explore the twin heads of concern that are animal protection and environmental protection.

It seems clear that concern for animal welfare and the environment has Biblical support; it is also clear that fundamentalists may cherry-pick passages to support continued cavalier use and in some cases outright misuse of the earth. More than ever it is of great import to not merely accept issues at face value but to delve deep into scriptures and align this with the over-arching question of what make sense in a world created by a loving God.
Human Rights: Sexual Orientation

The Bible, particularly the Old Testament, contains many verses that at first blush appear to condemn any sexual behavior that deviates from what is considered “the norm” That is, the normative in Western society of being married and heterosexual (although, with a 50% divorce rate it may be difficult to argue this is the norm anymore). Leviticus in particular contains the following phrase: “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination” (Leviticus18:22).

Leviticus 18:22 – Cannon (2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Exact Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>לֹא תִשֵּׁקַע וְאֵלָךְ</td>
<td>V'et zachar lo tishkav mishk'vey eeshah toeyvah hee.</td>
<td>And with a male you shall not lay lyings of a woman.</td>
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There have been a number of efforts to interpret this verse in ways that resonate more closely with the views of both ends of the spectrum; from acceptance to condemnation. For example, some scholars have argued that the verse only forbids homosexual sex in a pagan temple or in the bed of a woman, some suggest that taking the entire chapter in context, it seems to suggest, again, that what is being frowned upon generally are acts of moral turpitude including sex with animals, sex with your wife’s sister or daughter, your uncle or aunt, your mother or father and, of course, you should not offer up your children as human sacrifices.

Trying to understand one isolated verse, such as Leviticus 18:22, plucked out of its historical context and divorced from the gist of the entire chapter (which primarily concerns itself with acts that are deemed “unclean” and incest) is compounded further
when considering the difficulties inherent in moving from the original Hebrew to a transliteration (writing a word from one language using the closest corresponding letters of another language) and then considering the exact meaning.

Leviticus 18:22 has been interpreted as a condemnation of homosexuality. Interestingly though, the word “homosexual” did not come into the English lexicon until approximately 100 years ago when “homosexual” made its Biblical debut in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible in 1946. On the other hand, from a plain reading of it one could argue that the Hebrew text is not necessarily a prohibition against homosexuality but rather that men ought to be circumspect as to where they engage in such sexual activity. That is, men should not have sex with other men in a woman’s bed (“lyings of a woman”), as a woman’s bed is consecrated to the higher goal of procreation and this is not achieved outside of a heterosexual union.

Indeed, it has been suggested that the Biblical account about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is not about God’s wrath played out on the population of those cities because of the propensity these people had to engage in alternative sexuality, but rather other sins. A closer reading of the story seems to suggest that the destruction which rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah was not divine retribution for unchecked lusts and homosexual tendencies of the citizenry, but rather for their lack of hospitality to outsiders and their practice of rape.

Whatever else can be said about proscriptions of sexuality in the Old Testament, it would surely be a hermeneutic stretch to claim that the Old Testament accords the same level of respect of homosexuality as it does to heterosexuality. Indeed, one of the
first directions given to humans was to go forth and multiply – this is only possible between a man and a woman. That said, nowhere does the Bible suggest that sex is exclusively a means to this end. One suggested answer as to why sex outside a heterosexual union may have been discouraged was the promotion of an objective such as a culture – limiting sexual activity to married heterosexuals enhances the prospects for procreation within the framework of a nuclear family unit. While this may have been a specific means to perpetuate a species, a culture, a race, etc., it was not a general prohibition or condemnation of alternative sexuality.

If the New Testament and Jesus make the old Jewish law obsolete, then the New Testament simply supplants the Old Testament. In this way the Old Testament is maintained as a historical reference point under which the new covenant, made possible through Christ, comes into force and effect. For all intents and purposes, Jesus was silent on the issue of sexual preferences. As such, it is reasonably argued that laws respecting how to treat a person in a camp who has a "nocturnal emission" (Deuteronomy 23:10) for example, and other aspects of the ancient Mosaic (Jewish) covenant (covering some 613 proscriptions) are subsumed by the covenant of the New Testament. As such, alternative sexual preferences cease to be discriminated against save and except as may be prohibited at law. Certainly, there are good reasons to still have laws against incest and the like but as between consenting adults, there seems to be little concern of there being a dearth of morality such as was described in the Old Testament, or indeed in the City of Corinth during the time of Paul the Apostle. In sum, Jesus advocated for forgiveness instead of agreeing that the appropriate response was
to stone [to death] a woman caught in the very act of adultery, He suggested that he who was without sin should cast the first stone. No one did (John 8:7).

In his first letter to the faithful in the City of Corinth (after Christ’s crucifixion), the Apostle Paul wrote in response to a letter from the church there addressing numerous questions about marriage, food, worship, the resurrection, divisions within the church and immorality. In 1 Corinthians 6:9 Paul enumerates a list of moral concerns that should be avoided. Among the concerns listed are excessive drinking, covetousness, homosexuality, adultery and even being effeminate.

The problem with reading a verse in isolation of the historical context in which it arose is the potential for a skewed meaning. One only needs to continue reading to realize that Paul’s condemnation is not as specific as it is general. The concern being addressed was that “the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord…” (1 Corinthians 6:13). The fact is Paul panned any sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage. As noted by Ryrie (1978), the Church at Corinth was troubled with all the immorality in the city. Corinth was a bustling port city with numerous drinking establishments (archaeologically confirmed), it held athletic games second only to the Olympics and was home to the temple of Aphrodite and its 1000 prostitutes. The Greek term, Kornthiazomai, translated as “to act the Corinthian” actually meant to regularly engage in fornication. It is against this backdrop that Paul encourages the church to be morally diligent and stringent in adhering to moral precepts (p. 1726).

Moreover, Paul also summarized the most important thing the Corinthians should strive for; the over-arching theme of his letter was to strive for love. In 1
Corinthians 13 we find that lacking in the love of God is synonymous with being morally bankrupt and that love in action was the greatest blessing.

The views over same sex unions may have little to do with sex and much to do with resistance to change. The values in humane education transcend the type of hypocritical judgment that seemed to irk Jesus so much during His ministry. It seems to me that humane education on this point is clearly aligned with the teachings of the Bible insofar as acceptance of people without judging is concerned, which is certainly consistent with Jesus' exhortation "do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned" (Matthew 7:1).

**Hmmmmm... interesting assignment idea?** Principles, espoused in the Bible, particularly in the New Testament, such as respect, equality, and love for others form the basis for liberal democracies the world-over. This manifestation is part of the evolution of Christianity in action. Whether one believes in the Bible or not, it is hard to deny the influence it has had on the world. (Where is the question in this assignment?)
Human Rights: War Mongering & Tolerance of Religious Difference

1 Samuel 15:1-35 contains an exhortation to Saul to kill the Amalekites, including the children and animals of this tribe. Leviticus contains a similar passage, one in which the Israelites are ordered to kill the Canaanites. These passages can be used to argue that the Bible does not tolerate religious difference—that, in fact, the Bible is even prepared to endorse genocide based on religious intolerance.

There are, however, a number of ways to interpret and contextualize these passages in ways that lead to different outcomes. First, the fate of the Amalekites and the Canaanites cannot be held to be a part of living theology; these events are historical. They represent God’s thinking at a certain point in time; and, of course, God evolves throughout the Bible as do humans (I hope).

Exodus 32:9-14 is a good example of one of the shifts in God’s thinking. It takes place during a conversation with Moses; this passage provides clear proof that the God of the Bible becomes more tolerant over time and is open to persuasion:

9 The LORD said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people.

10 Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.”

11 Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, “O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

12 “Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, ‘With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people.

13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’”
So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people. The God portrayed in the Bible is capable of being swayed. As such, it is certainly possible to argue that the vengeful and intolerant God of the Old Testament gives way to the God of love and compassion in the New Testament. In this hermeneutic approach, there was indeed a direction to kill the Canaanites and Amalekites, however the genocide ordered by Divine decree can be understood as an artifact of God’s thinking at the time.

As God’s thinking changes (evolves) from the Old Testament to the New, we see a very different line of thinking emerge as evidenced by Matthew 22:35-40. Here Jesus makes it clear that the two greatest commandments, upon which all other deeds ought to be premised and will flow as a natural consequence, are commandments of love. The love of God and the love of others: love your neighbor as yourself. Clearly, Matthew 22 and other passages from the Gospels are inconsistent with the Old Testament’s commands for the destruction of the Canaanites and the Amalekites, as these people were the neighbors of Israel at the time. If this approach is taken, it can be understood that the Old Testament’s harsh treatment of the non-Jewish neighbors of Israel is no longer relevant today.

Another way of looking at the command to eliminate the Amalekites and the Canaanites is metaphorically. It is well understood that the Bible is rife with metaphor and some scholars suggest that this is one such example. The focal point of what must be eliminated is not a people per se but rather, it is the evil in our lives that must be eliminated; the Amalekites and the Canaanites are used metaphorically as a reference to
this evil. When understood this way, it resonates with the notion of a loving God and the values of humane education that what we should rid ourselves of, completely, is the evil in our lives. To take this one step further, the admonition is directed at the individual, not a race of people. That is, we are, each of us individually, directed to root out the evil in ourselves, as that is what we have control over.

A reading of the stories in the context of a metaphor makes sense and does not require leaps of logic as may be the case. In this regard, we are instructed of the need to utterly destroy, in its entirety, everything evil within us. A reading of the stories that suggests we kill an entire race of people, children and animals included would not be a result that is consistent with a purposive approach to the scriptures within a framework of compassion and love – on the other hand, being admonished to do what we can to rid evil from within does.

**Hmmmmm... interesting assignment idea?** It has been suggested that modern Christianity (esp. US evangelical sects) have portrayed Jesus as gentle and mild mannered to further an imperialistic political agenda. Was Jesus meek and mild as many suggest or does the Bible suggest something different-- a champion of the oppressed?
Human Rights: Gender Equality

Women: There's Something about Mary…

Jesus was surrounded by women throughout his ministry. In fact, aren’t they the only ones that hang around whenever things go really bad; the only eye witnesses both to the crucifixion and the resurrection? Moreover, every time women are rebuked by men, doesn’t Jesus point out that they actually “get it”? The adulteress, the Samaritan woman, and don’t get me going on Mary of Magdala. And lest we forget Mary, the Mother of God, whose faithfulness and courage made the incarnation happen. Zeus gave birth to his kids. The one true God turned to a woman.

Hmmm... interesting assignment idea? Who are the women Jesus came into contact with and what are their stories?

The ancient Jewish tribes, like most societies of the time, were a patriarchal society. Jewish power was concentrated among men, typically older men. Patriarchy remained a way of life in much of the world until at least the middle of the 20th Century. The last 50 or so years have seen gender equality emerging across much of the world to greater or lesser degrees depending on the region. How then do we reconcile 1 Timothy 2:9 and 11-15, as follows?

9 Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing…

11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.

12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

13 For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.
And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

The above passages are found in the Apostle Paul’s first letter to Timothy, the Gentile pastor of the young Christian church in Ephesus. This letter, along with the second letter to Timothy and the one to Titus are referred to as the Pastoral Epistles as they contain advice to the pastors of the early churches. Interestingly, as emphasized above, the advice being dispensed is not claimed to be divine dogma, but rather what Paul does and what presumably works for him.

Paul seemingly is arguing that a woman was first deceived in the Garden of Eden so man, (Adam) is exempt from blame for following along! Indeed, while the Bible tells us that the woman (Eve) was deceived by a creature that was “more crafty than any beast” (Genesis 3:1) and she ate of the forbidden fruit because she saw that it was “good for food... a delight to the eyes, and... [made] one wise” (Genesis 3:6), Adam ate it, according to the Bible, simply because Eve gave it to him. Contrary to Paul’s take on the original sin, Genesis 3 tells us that God was not as forgiving of Adam (man) as Paul and cursed the serpent, as well as Eve and Adam.

Keeping a contextual understanding of scriptures is important to remember. In this letter packed with advice and good intentions, Paul dispenses his thoughts on how to manage the flock of the young church – the One Minute Manager (1982) for the early church, as it were. The thematic heads in the letter as they relate to the management of the church include expectations in the house of God, the law, prayer, activities for
women, and qualifications for members of the church hierarchy, the last days, care for widows and the use of money.

Any suggestion that the advice given then is frozen in time and ought not to change is ridiculous. Take for example the instruction given to slaves in the letter, that they ought to respect and honor their masters is one thing (*note:* there is no reciprocal expectation that a master respect a slave in this letter) but to instruct slaves that they ought to accord even greater respect and serve them all the more if the master is also a believer is puzzling. It seems an absurdity to accord greater respect to a master, an owner of another human being, because the master is a believer but apparently that was acceptable at the time. Begs the question, what did the master believe in? That said, it is equally absurd to apportion greater blame to women for engaging in the original sin when the man was possessed of free will and made his own culpable decision to eat the forbidden fruit as well.

Another view is that Paul was addressing a church that had come to believe that woman had been created before man or, at least, simultaneously, and that notion promoted a form of gender inequality favoring women, that Paul sought to correct. Apparently, the Christians at Ephesus were promoting a form of Goddess worship that had existed in the region long before Christianity. In Genesis, the Hebrew word *Elohim* is used and this word is translated as God. The interesting thing is that *Elohim* is used throughout the Bible to denote both a male and a female God – it is used interchangeably or androgynously.
That being the case, Paul seems to have presented a defense of the relative rights of men. Of course, over the intervening centuries, this context is lost; the lay reader knows nothing of the historical time in which Paul was speaking, but rather approaches Timothy as a defense of patriarchy.

Consider the creation sequence in Genesis. The creation of a woman (Eve) is God’s final handiwork in the context of all the activity culminating in the world. God begins with the basics—e.g., darkness is created, then light, water, and land—on and on to the penultimate creation. Interestingly, the Bible records no other creation after Eve and Genesis 1:31 tells us that only after Eve’s creation did God pause and review all “that He had made” and declare that “it was very good”.

There are other indications in Genesis that women have a role that is just as important as that of men. In Genesis 2:18: “Then the Lord God said it is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” The idea of a helper implies, in English, a kind of subordinate or assistant. Many prominent Christian theologians, including Calvin, have viewed Genesis 2:18 as supporting the subordinate view of a woman’s role, relative to man. In countering this view, Davidson (1998) points out that the Hebrew word ezer which is employed to indicate that woman is man’s “helper” must be viewed as it is commonly used throughout the scriptures. The word ezer does occur elsewhere in the Bible, for example in Exodus 18:4, in which God is described as being an ezer to Israel. Thus, in Hebrew, an ezer is not necessarily subordinate to the person being helped; in fact, on the basis of Exodus, the ezer is God.
With this reading in mind, it is easy enough to argue that God created men and women in a relationship of equality.

A closing thought and another perspective on how Biblical scriptures and humane education principles both view gender equality as self-evident. The noted Biblical scholar, Trible (2006) points out that the creation story in Genesis has been subject to androcentric (male-centered) interpretation that has resulted in lost meaning.

"... There is not a word in the story about sexuality until the woman appears. It is when the woman (isha) appears that the man (ish) appears. Sexuality is simultaneous for male and female" (pp. 46-52, 76-77).

The creation story, the fact that the Hebrew word used in the Bible to describe God (Elohim) is both female and male and the notion that the reference throughout the Bible to God and woman as ezer seems to provide a basis for rethinking the idea that the Bible supports gender inequality. It would be hard to argue that gender equality is not supported by scripture when it seems that it is, in point of fact, embodied in Elohim, Herself!
Human Rights: Racial Equality

Racial equality in the Bible is an oft-misunderstood topic, particularly given the seemingly contradictory views between the Old Testament and the New.

In the Old Testament, there is some evidence of what might be considered preferential treatment on the basis of race in favor of Israel. Israel as a state represents the unification of the twelve Jewish tribes and is privileged in God’s eyes – considered the chosen ones, God’s people. It has been suggested that this divine preference may actually be the outgrowth of Israel’s choice of God rather than the other way around. In other words, a reciprocal relationship is at play here: Israel chooses God, consequently God chooses Israel.

Evidence can be gleaned throughout the Old Testament to support the notion that God’s reasons for choosing Israel runs deeper than heavenly reward for an obedient and appropriately pious people. Indeed there is also a higher degree of tolerance apparent when it comes to Israel’s contrary behavior. Nowhere is this more pronounced than during the 40 years the chosen nation wanders in the desert after being led by Moses from the bonds of slavery in Egypt. The account is a tale rife with acts of disobedience in the face of miracles performed on their behalf by God. The incident involving the worship of a golden calf stands (Exodus 32:4) out as an example of stunning defiance, yet God spares the nation.

By the time the eight or so writers authored the New Testament, it is clear that God is no longer exclusively the God of Israel. The conduit to God’s love and favor is
through acceptance of Jesus, and Jesus is manifestly accessible to all people. Being a Jew requires a specific set of circumstances, including circumstances of birth and ritual worship. Christianity on the other hand, is a personal experience without limiting constructs save and except that the believer accepts Jesus as savior. A Christian enters fellowship with all other Christians with the only common denominator being the acceptance of Jesus into their lives. What emerges in the circumstances then is a new kind of racial equality, manifested as a result of the uncoupling of religion and race. Religion without borders or other superficially defining features is the outcome.

The early Christians embraced the revolutionary nature of Jesus’ message, and accepted all into the community of faith. The first Christians were primarily Jewish, which was natural enough given that even Jesus was born a Jew, lived and died in Israel. As such, Christianity got a foothold in the region, spreading throughout the world at the dawn of the Common Era, gaining adherents from every race and social class. Christianity is open to all without the traditional bars such as race and social standing.

** Hmmmmm... interesting assignment idea? ** How does one become a Christian - what does the Bible say is required?
Summary

The Bible, a collection of books, is divided into two parts or Testaments, the Old and the New. For Christians, the New Testament is, in many ways, an abrogation of the Old, rescinding and replacing many of the dated laws and principles of the Old Testament. Luke 22:20 tells us that the New Testament is the record of the New Covenant, supplanting the Mosaic Covenant of the Old Testament. The arrival of Jesus represents the departure from the law of rigidity and order to the law of love and compassion.

The God of the Old Testament is not yet fully bonded to His creation by love; this only happens with the passage of time. Indeed, on a number of occasions, the Old Testament records God’s frustration with humans.

The New Testament is the record of God’s new relationship with humans, a more inclusive relationship. The appearance of Jesus relegates many aspects of the archaic Jewish law obsolete, not in defiance of the old law but in deference to it and in fulfillment of it. The Old Testament predicted the coming of the Messianic age and Jesus was the embodiment and fulfillment of those predictions.

In the person of Jesus and the dawning of a new age, previous distinctions are erased and a level playing field emerges providing the basis for a radical equality among all human beings – the notion of all people being created equal finally has traction.
At once it is apparent that the Old Testament contains principles that are either a result of misunderstanding or are simply inconsistent with the values of humane education. The New Testament supplants the former rigidity and harsh consequences and lays the foundation for a new covenant, the cornerstone being love and compassion. If we read the Bible holistically, the New Testament provides a radical restatement of what is humane and that can be used as a springboard for education. Indeed, historically speaking, many movements towards progressive and egalitarian principles have been inspired directly by the Bible, including the abolition of slavery, principles of justice and the formation of liberal democracies. In this sense, humane principles in secular settings are deeply indebted to Christianity.

In sum, the Old Testament revealed the holiness of God through the standard of the law and promised a savior, a redeemer. The New Testament reveals the love of God as manifested in Jesus and the New Covenant with humans.

On the other hand, certainly principles presupposed to exist in the Old Testament could, upon further inspection, be exposed as misinterpretations or hermeneutical mistakes. For example, the impression that the Biblical doctrine of dominion over nature implies some kind of callous anti-environmentalism can be easily dispelled by taking a closer look at the Biblical paradigm of rule and subdue, and thus understand dominion in the context of stewardship and fiduciary.

If we accept the premise of a loving God then a purposive approach to scripture means any interpretative outcome that is inconsistent with that premise is an absurdity and demands further analysis.
By employing these methods when approaching scripture: (a) recognizing that the Messianic Covenant of the New Testament subsumes and supplants aspects of Old Testament law that, upon reflection, seem inhumane and/or not grounded in love, compassion and forgiveness; (b) re-reading the source texts with a view to alternative meanings and context; (c) asking oneself if what one reads makes sense and is consistent with one’s view of God; and (d) how does it apply today - I would suggest that it is readily apparent that the Bible has often been misunderstood and is, in fact, a sound foundation for, and consistent with humane principles of education.

I offer one final view on making sense of the Bible and, in the end, what is likely the best advice in this regard. A very difficult passage in the Bible can be found in the Numbers, Chapter 5:11-31. It is unclear even to the most ardent of scholars whether the passage is addressing a woman's adultery or a man's unfounded jealousy. The view that the passage is about the woman's adultery is rife with oppression, according no rights at all to the woman in the story - clearly not a view embraced by many. Perhaps Biblical scholar, Briggs (2009) said it best while grappling with the passage. Biggs suggested that the "...question is this, regarding the moral and ethical value of biblical texts ... Will the text stretch or will it break? [we must examine] each text in turn... seeing what might be expected of it" (pp. 315-316).

Seeing what might be expected of it, indeed.
References & Resources

References


Dear, Father John (n.d.). Christianity and vegetarianism – pursuing the nonviolence of Jesus. PETA, Norfolk, VA.


Resources


Tom Regan and Peter Singer have great books on animal protection issues.

Web sites:

All religions views on animals: http://www.nansealove.com/Quotes.html


Humane Religion: http://www.all-creatures.org/hr/index.html
Chapter Four

Summary and Conclusions

The Issue

I scarce know where to begin with this chapter. For so long I have been engrossed in this journey, researching, tapping into other's ideas and suggestions, discussing and debating the issues and eventually, putting pen to paper as it were. On a certain level, I don't want to finish so I take some solace in the fact that the handbook, the progeny of this paper is intended to be a living document, subject to dynamic growth and change.

I had the opportunity to research my topic in many ways. This included the classical academic/library research, literature and book review, discussions and interviews with various people with varying views, sitting in on classes, watching videos, listening to audio presentations and joining internet discussions. The deeper I delved into the subject matter the more it became apparent that acceptance of positions and views on certain issues was fairly ensconced without being subject to any kind of analysis or critical thinking. It seems that many people accepted as fact whatever they were told provided it came from a "trusted" source. Now, to be fair, I am not suggesting the sources were not trustworthy. In fact, I would suggest that for the most part the sources were sincere in their beliefs with no intention to mislead or misrepresent what they felt was the articulation of Biblical truth.

Unfortunately, there is at first blush a dearth of contrary views or alternate interpretations of Biblical passages either by design or perhaps as an outgrowth of a confused sense of what faith means to a believer. Christian faith is summarized in Hebrews 11:1 as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen". To this end, Christians have wrongly (in my view) applied this passage to mean acceptance without question and then taken it to extremes;
accepting almost anything as truth without independent verification as to the veracity of the claim, position of view. While I agree there are times when this kind of blind faith is necessary as there are no logical answers however, it is incumbent upon us as believers to seek answers, to confirm our understanding of what the Bible is telling us whenever possible. This means questioning traditionally held views or views that simply seem inconsistent with what a loving God would want for creation, including but not limited to us.

It was most gratifying for me to have discussions with folks with very entrenched ideas and beliefs and to experience those "aha" moments when a new idea, contrary to a long held view started to resonate. I think this was most successful when existing views were not assailed but rather the new idea was simply presented as a possibility. Perhaps I enjoyed this part of the process most because I too had those moments when I was confronted with a different and refreshing way of looking at things; in a way it was quite liberating and freed me of trying to cram all of my beliefs into a very restrictive space. Often I felt like I was attempting to pound the square peg into the round hole.

A good example of this eye opening way of looking at things anew was the seeming exhortation from God to kill the evil people who worshipped a different god and had different beliefs. The wholesale slaughter of people has never been something that I could reconcile with a loving God but taken metaphorically, as a tale to encourage the eradication the evil within us, makes perfect sense to me.

What became apparent to me is there are a lot of people "out there", imminently more qualified than me, who have spent much time and expertise looking at troubling passages in the Bible. What also was evident is the need to be diligent with any review of Biblical passages and look for debate, discussion and contrary views to satisfy oneself as to the truth of the matter.
Moreover, having a differing point of view is not wrong; it is simply a different point of view that resonates with a person's own personal relationship with God. Respect for different points of view consistent with different relationships people have with God is the beginning of an openness that manifests into acceptance and tolerance – a Godly attribute if ever there was one!

For me personally, I was ecstatic to be able to reconcile my convictions and dedication to a humane life, living those humane values and knowing that I did not have to leave my faith behind. For me, I had made the connection between what the Bible teaches about animals, the environment and us.

*The Handbook*

Originally my intention was to develop a simple question and answer (Q & A) educator's resource. That morphed into a handbook which presents ideas and viewpoints that differ from the generally accepted view of what the Bible says. It seemed to me a more useful tool to have the ideas presented in a more fulsome manner so as to flush out more questions and possibilities for research and subsequent debate. While the plan changed over time I believe the change resulted in a better work product. My biggest fear was that a Q & A format might be accepted simply as *prima facie* fact – a substitution of one pat answer for another.

The goal did not change, rather the vehicle or means of achieving that goal did. I feel it is worth restating what the goal of the handbook was as I reflect and summarize.

The handbook will be dynamic in the sense that I do not see this project as finite, but rather the corpus of the work will be constantly changing, growing and, as such, inherently and continually challenging. As the overarching theme is to encourage critical thinking and research, the work will inevitably change and grow. What the initial handbook will be, in essence, is the tossing down of the proverbial gauntlet in the hopes that others will accept the challenge and
refute my work, support it or expand upon it – all of which is good. I am under no illusions about creating a resource that is static and indelibly etched with wisdom so profound as to be unassailable. On the contrary, this will be the opening salvo – this I recognize and accept.

My goal then, is to challenge traditionally held views of what is commonly thought to be Biblical truths and to show the correlation between humane education values and the teachings of scripture.

And so begins the next chapter if you will. I have completed the handbook and shared it. With a little luck people will begin the process of challenging it, of chipping away and refining it, of making it more relevant the more people use it to spur debate and challenge beliefs. In the end result, I hope this work challenges people to satisfy themselves that the way they live their lives is consistent with what they believe in and if not, to embark on the same journey I took and make an informed decision as to how to address this anomalous situation.

Scully (2002) noted that it is "trite but true that the greatest enemy of the cruel is [the] informed" (p.389). In closing I paraphrase a quote attributed to Gandhi (although I don't know where this comes from, perhaps the 1982 film chronicling his life) in saying do not be passive about learning and finding your place in this world – I have never recommended passive anything.
REFERENCES


Dear, Father John (n.d.). *Christianity and vegetarianism – pursuing the nonviolence of Jesus*. PETA, Norfolk, VA.


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Professional Experience

CITY OF TORONTO 1998 to Present

Manager, Local 79 Operations – Employee & Labour Relations (base position)
Manager, Special Projects – Solid Waste Management Services (seconded October 2010 – present)
Manager (A), Dispute Resolution Local 416 – Employee & Labour Relations (October 2008 – December 2009)
Senior Human Resources Consultant – Employee & Labour Relations

• Responsible for team of labour relations professionals providing service to departments with "inside workers"
• Bargaining team, co-spokesperson for bargaining for collective agreement expiring 2011
• Responsible for ensuring contract compliance with respect to contracting out issues and service delivery options in Solid Waste Management Services Division
• Responsible for all aspects of labour relations for Solid Waste Management & Support Services and Parks, Forestry & Recreation, including staff relations, training, mentoring, grievance hearings, arbitration, mediation and relevant research
• Proactive measures to resolve issues with a win-win philosophy were developed and supported
• Utilized interest based approach to problems and settlements
• Responsible for the supervision and development of labour relations staff and the development of operations staff
• Developed productivity standards, reporting procedures and attendance management program
• Lead negotiations to introduce a four day work week in Collections Unit (estimated annual cost savings to the City of Toronto: $1 million)
• Harmonized and developed Human Resource policies and expectations for staff within Division
COMERFORD KNOX, CONSULTANTS 1995 to 2007

*Partner*

- Consultants in all areas of Organizational Effectiveness & Development; Training and Labour Relations
- Services provided include facilitation, training, mentoring, coaching, mediation, grievance and arbitration preparation, negotiations, collective agreement interpretation and administration and general labour relations advice

KOSKIE MINSKY, BARRISTERS & SOLICITORS September 2002 to July 2003

*Articling (on leave from the City of Toronto)*

- Assist with client preparation for trial and arbitration
- Attend and argued at motions and examinations; attend pre-trials, arbitration and mediations
- Conduct client interviews and investigations, as well as negotiate with opposing counsel
- Conduct legal research and prepare memoranda of law
- Contributor to firm publications
- Managed and had carriage of a number of files in both litigation and labour matters
- Articling student’s representative during negotiations with the firm, successfully negotiated a new collective agreement for articling students

MUNICIPALITY OF METROPOLITAN TORONTO June 1989 to January 1998

*Senior Human Resources Consultant – Employee & Labour Relations*

*Labour Relations Coordinator – Employee & Labour Relations*

*Labour Relations Supervisor – Works Department*

- Created, designed and delivered various customized training programs for the Works Department
- Committee Chair, responsible for the development and implementation of an attendance management program, (eventually the Works Department had the best attendance in the Corporation, subsequently adopted by Parks Dept.)
- Developed a successful Substance Abuse Policy; and provided training and support
- Fostered proactive working relationships between management and the union - grievances were reduced by approximately 63% between 1989-1998
- Supported the negotiation process for Municipality in general
- Part of bargaining team during negotiations of 1\textsuperscript{st} collective agreement for part-time unit and in support of all Corporate Bargaining
Manchester Plastics, Plating Division, Peterborough
January 1989 to May 1989

Industrial Relations Manager

• Established union/management committees to deal proactively with concerns and enhance communication
• Responsible for the recruitment and selection of new staff; involved in health and safety audit and assisted counsel in Workers’ Compensation appeals
• Initiated preparations for negotiations

Carling O’Keefe Brewery, Toronto
October 1984 to December 1988

Brewer Worker and Union Representative 1984-1988 inclusive

• Involved in disposition of grievances, arbitrations, negotiations and training
• Workers’ Health & Safety Representative

Education & Professional Designations

Master of Education (M.Ed. Humane Education),
Cambridge College/Institute for Humane Education
June 2011

Call to the Bar (Law Society of Upper Canada)
July 2003

J.D. (LL.B.), York University, Osgoode Hall Law School
2002

Mediation, Fall Term 2000:
• Actively involved in mediation services at Small Claims Court.
• Co-mediator with highest rate of success in class. Achieved both settlements and transformations.

Parkdale Community Legal Services, Winter Term 2001
• Managed approximately 30 files, conducted client interviews and intake, researched legal issues,
prepared witnesses for hearings, attended and advocated for client in various labour/employment law forums.
• Successfully utilized alternative dispute resolution strategies and employed a pro-active approach to situations to help ensure a desired end result and empowerment of the client.
Mentor (Law School), 2000-2001
Mentored two ‘mature’, first year law students

Bachelor of Administrative Studies & Certificate in Human Resource Management,
York University (in progress/on hold)
- Scholarship: awarded 1999, for maintaining high academic standard.

Certificate in Labour Studies (with honours), Humber College (1987)

Canadian Bar Association, Member

Professional Development

Effective Collective Bargaining
Cornell University – Industrial Relations School

Commanding Presence (Presentation Skills for Lawyers)
Personal Performance Group

Program on Negotiation – Negotiating Labour Agreements
Harvard Law School

Annual Labour Relations Conference – Ongoing
Lancaster House & the University of Toronto Centre for Industrial Relations

Advanced Project Management
MICA Management

Human Rights in the Unionized Workplace
Canadian Bar Association of Ontario

Innovative/Creative Thinking
Jane Adams Consulting

Bryan M. Downie Symposium on Alternative Dispute Resolution
Queen’s University

Annual Fall Industrial Relations Seminar
Queen’s University

Equal Employment Opportunity, Human Rights, and Race Relations, Kingswood
Residential Module – The Municipality of Metro Toronto