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THE RELIGIOUS JUSTIFICATION FOR MORALITY

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In a provocative and influential essay entitled, "Is Morality Logically Dependent On Religion?," William Frankena addresses what he perceives to be "one of the central issues in our cultural crisis...," that is, the relation of morality to religion (Frankena, 1973b: 295). Of the various claims that theologians make about the relationship between morality and religion, the one Frankena finds to be most interesting (and mistaken) is the claim that "...ethical judgments can be justified only by being logically inferred from theological ones, that is, they depend logically on religious beliefs for their justification" (Frankena, 1973b: 298). Since, furthermore, in that essay Frankena primarily addresses himself to rebutting arguments to the conclusion "...that the justification of any and every ethical principle depends on an appeal to premises of a theistic kind..." (Frankena, 1973b: 306), one might well describe his goal to be that of refuting the assertion that "If God is dead, anything goes." At least, he wants to show that morality is not logically dependent on religion or, as Klemke puts it in countering Bartley's claims regarding the supposed inseparability of morality and religion, that "...religion is not a necessary condition for morality" (Klemke, 1975: 45). However, Frankena also believes that he has shown that religious or theological beliefs are never sufficient to logically justify ethical principles (Frankena, 1973b: 304).

A number of Christian ethicists, including James Gustafson, have apparently found Frankena's arguments convincing in spite of the widespread or popular sentiment in favor of the positions he attacks (Gustafson, 1975: Chapter 4). Nonetheless, in this paper I want to argue that popular sentiment (not to mention the views of the Enlightenment deists and Nietzsche) is closer to the truth than is Frankena in seeing an intimate connection between religion and morality. Indeed, I want to maintain that the relationship between religion and morality is not merely genetic or motivational but is of much more fundamental nature. It seems to me that a convincing case can be made for the position that the moral enterprise rests or depends upon a religious foundation, specifically on the base of ethical monotheism (henceforth usually referred to as Western theism or theism for short). Furthermore, although I am sympathetic with both W. W. Bartley's and Andrew Greeley's efforts to show that religion serves as an anchor rather than as an

albatross for morality, I hope to avoid the vagueness and consequent vulnerability to criticism of these other authors by not tying moral activity to a (broadly understood) 'religious perspective' or 'view of the nature of things' (Bartley, 1971 and Greeley, 1972). Instead, I will try to meet Frankena closer to his own grounds and attempt to relate specific theistic beliefs about the nature of God and human beings to the moral enterprise.

To begin my argument, it seems to me that most of the recent writings on the relationship between morality and religion – unless they have purposely limited their scope to topics like "The Jewish Contributions To Morality" or "Can Ethics Be Christian?" – have been misleading in worrying in a general way about the possible direct logical ties between ethical judgments or utterances 'per se' and religious convictions. Furthermore, both those philosophers and theologians who maintain that religion and morality are interdependent and those who like Frankena, Nielsen and Klemke argue that religious convictions and moral judgments are quite separable have usually failed to be sufficiently clear about what it is that they wish either to link or separate. For example, this lack of clarity or precision is obvious in the writings of Bartley and Greeley. Frankena's criticism of so-called 'sophisticated theologians' who have overly broad or inclusive notions of what is involved in being religious seems to be right to the point and telling against both Greeley and Bartley. One can certainly wonder why one should identify having "a view of the nature of things" or "an inner quest" with being religious.[1] The connection of such views or quests to a belief in and commitment to a God who is the good and powerful creator and sustainer of all things is even less clear. Yet, if these thinkers arguing for a necessary connection between religion and morality have been somewhat imprecise or vague, their opponents have generally also not been as clear as one might wish. These philosophical critics are surely right in pointing out that there is no direct logical connection between such moral assertions as, "One should not murder babies," and religious convictions such as, "God created and loves us."[2] However, it is not clear why theologians who feel that theism justifies morality need to show that there is such a direct logical link, especially when attempting to show this would involve them in committing the so-called 'naturalistic fallacy' of moving from "is" to "ought." To require such a move on the part of these theologians assumes that the essence of morality consists in the making of such specific moral pronouncements. They might point out, however, that, 'contra' Frankena, this is not the essence of morality and that they are less concerned to justify particular moral pronouncements than to justify the activity of making moral pronouncements and engaging in moral actions – what Frankena would call taking the moral point of view.

To put this last point in a slightly different way, it is moral activity itself, the participation in this peculiarly human 'form of life' of making moral judgments and engaging in moral actions that some theologians wish to justify by means of religious convictions of a theistic sort. In brief, such a theologian wants to maintain that the question, "Why be moral?," has an answer, specifically a theistic answer. Thus, theologians are not merely trying to find a way to legitimate their being

religious (as might a Kantian) when they point to the ties between morality and religion but, rather, aim to provide a ground or basis for precluding nihilism. Perhaps they are motivated in these efforts by the suspicion that nihilism is not as therapeutic for us moderns as Nietzsche apparently thought it was. In any case, they see moral activity as being distinctively human and view nihilism as providing at best but a subhuman mode of existence. The question, "Why be moral?" has in their eyes a certain primacy over the related question, "What is moral?" Consequently, it is the making of moral judgments rather than the particular judgments that are made that seems to them to be the essence of moral enterprise and most in need and capable of religious justification. This very crucial point is one that otherwise sophisticated philosophers like Frankena for some reason or other have tended to overlook.

Plato's influential discussion in the *Euthyphro* is undoubtedly in large part responsible for the fact that most philosophers and many theologians have failed to disentangle the "What is moral?" question from the "Why be moral?" question when considering the relation between theism and morality. As one philosopher recently put it when discussing this relation, "...the issue discussed in the *Euthyphro* is the most significant philosophically" (Young, 1977: 154). But the Euthyphro question is precisely the question, "*What* is moral – that which the gods command or that which the gods themselves would choose?" And however one answers *this* question, for example, whether one believes that what is moral can be discovered via autonomous reason or whether one affirms some variant of the Divine Command theory of morality, the "Why be moral?" question still awaits an answer. Surprisingly enough, philosophers have been quick to point out that theologians who opt for the Divine Command answer to the Euthyphro question still need to address the question, "Why should one do what God commands?" They have been less quick to note that "Why should I do what an impartial and rational agent would do?" is also a legitimate question when asked of someone who puts his or her faith in human reason.

It should be noted that the "Why be moral?" question is no longer brushed off as senseless or useless in the manner of an earlier generation of philosophers. Indeed, in some of the more influential books on ethics the topic is reserved for the last chapter, in which the authors address it as a serious request for reasons which might justify one in living a moral life (taking the moral point of view) even if this mode of life does not appear to be in one's obvious self-interest (cf. Baier, 1963; Frankena, 1973a; Gert, 1973). In brief, the question asks for a justification for morality – for the reasons why one should be moral no matter how the content of that morality is derived. What is most striking about many of these recent discussions of the justification for the moral life, the moral point of view, or the fundamental principle(s) of morality is their inability to provide persuasive answers to the "Why be moral?" question. Even the most thorough of these discussions tend in the end to be circular appeals to the superior rationality or the obvious desirability of the mode of life which, for example, reason or moral intuition helped these authors to discover (cf., for example, Donogan, 1977 and

Gewirth, 1978).

What, then, is it that we have in mind when we talk about morality or the moral enterprise? A number of things can be viewed as important elements of the moral enterprise, but fundamental to or underlying all of these things seems to be the doing of one's duty or the discharging of one's obligations toward both other persons and oneself. The contemporary ethicist, Errol Harris, seems to have something like this point in mind when he asserts that "...each and every person is of intrinsic worth as the ultimate source and vehicle of all the values that society aims at realizing..." and that this fact is the "...ground of our obligation to respect persons as such..." (Harris 1966: 119). The theologian, Paul Tillich, seems to be making a similar point when he claims that "...the moral imperative demands that man become actually what he is essentially, a person within a community of persons..." and that we "...acknowledge every potential person as a person" (Tillich, 1963: 36, 38). Both Harris and Tillich see the Christian concept of love (or agape) as an expression of the ultimate moral principle that we have "...duty to be concerned about the welfare of any and every person, for no other reason than that he (or she) is a person and thus has intrinsic worth;..." (Harris, 1966: 114). Alan Donagan's systematic exploration and defense of traditional Hebrew-Christian morality likewise maintains that persons (understood as rational agents) are intrinsically worthy of respect (Donagan, 1977: 232–234). Furthermore, Frankena's own description of the 'moral point of view' suggests that judging persons (and various aspects or attributes of those persons) in terms of how they affect the welfare of other sentient beings lies at the heart of morality (Frankena, 1973a: 113). In brief, there seems to be a rather clear consensus that whatever specific duties or obligations may flow from adopting the moral point of view or from participation in the moral community the basic or root concept of morality, the very heart of moral activity, consists of what may well be described as respect for persons – whether those persons are other people in our environment, ourselves or (even) God.[3]

Discovering, asserting and arguing for particular duties or obligations (and formulating principles which express or embody those particular duties or obligations) are obviously related to this most fundamental of moral activities which we will call (following Harris) respect for persons. Furthermore, it might be best for our present purposes to follow the not uncommon practice of referring to such related activities as the doing of ethics. In this sense, then, someone who engages in the work of ethics proper has already adopted the moral point of view or (to put it yet another way) has appropriated the metaprinciple of respect for persons.

Should anyone even momentarily doubt the centrality of the notion of respect for persons to the moral enterprise, one might reflect on the fact that every important system of ethics so far devised, for example, Plato's self-realization doctrine, Nietzsche's call for self-affirmation, Christian love ethics, Kantian and Millian ethics, and Natural Law Theory, calls for fulfilling one's obligations or doing one's duty with regard to persons affected by one's actions. This is the case

even in systems of ethics where the very word, "duty," is seemingly anathema. That fact should not, however, be cause for surprise, because it is persons that constitute the moral community. It is persons who have rights and duties that need to be respected if moral activity is to be engaged in, and it is persons who are the subjects and objects of both moral actions and judgments.

It seems to me that those theologians are correct who maintain that these very basic facts about the moral enterprise to which I have just referred have not been given sufficient attention by their philosophical critics. Had there been more attention focussed on the fact that respect for persons lies at the heart of the moral enterprise, then it might have appeared obvious that the effort to justify this respect for persons underlying moral activity is more relevant to understanding the relationship between religion and morality than are the efforts to justify particular ethical judgments we make - actions which I want to claim are best viewed as part of doing ethics. Again, I would not want to say that these two activities are not intimately related, for particular moral judgments are usually but ways of expressing our respect for persons.

But if respect for persons is a (if not *the*) fundamental notion underlying the moral enterprise, then clearly the philosophy of persons is a very relevant discipline to discussions of religion and morality. It is by now almost common knowledge that Immanuel Kant viewed the question, "What is Man?," as *the* fundamental question of philosophy – a question which for him presumably underlies the doing of ethics and other philosophical activities. In any event, his call in his writings on ethics for the autonomy of every man and for treating others as ends in themselves seems but another way of putting our claim that respect for persons is fundamental to the moral enterprise. And more than a century before Kant, John Locke worried at length over the nature and/or identity of persons. According to Locke, such an exploration into the topic of personal identity was a necessary prerequisite for doing ethics since, as he puts it in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, "... 'person' ...is a forensic term appropriating actions and their merit; and so belongs to intelligent agents capable of a law of happiness and misery" (Locke, 1924: 198). For Locke, the making of moral judgments assumes the ability to identify persons, that is, the appropriate objects of such judgments.

I believe that we can agree with Locke (and by extension with Kant) that the concept of persons is essentially a normative concept and that the most important issue underlying the question(s) of personal identity is the issue of what that is to which we ascribe such features as character, duties, rights, praise, blame, lovability. And it is entities to which we can ascribe such things that possess a certain dignity and are, in our broadened sense of the phrase, worthy of respect. This perhaps now obvious fact was for a long time obscured by philosophers obsessed with trying to discover the 'composition' of those beings (persons) to which we ascribe certain mental and moral properties. However, recent developments in the philosophy of persons indicate a reawakening to the fact that the questions, "What is a person?" and "How do we identify persons?" and the question "What has rights and obligations, is capable of praise and blame, and is worthy of respect?" are intimately

related (perhaps even different versions of the same question) (Williams, 1976). Again, identifying something as a person is intimately related to recognizing that that entity has certain rights and obligations which need to be respected.

To briefly recapitulate, the concept of persons is essentially a normative concept in that achieving the status of personhood involves the acquisition of rights and obligations and becoming the appropriate object of moral praise or blame. In turn, the moral enterprise is based upon or is essentially a matter of respect for persons, that is, it involves an acknowledgement of the rights and obligations of personal beings or 'treating them as persons.' From this, I believe we can conclude that justifying morality (not necessarily moral pronouncements but, rather, this peculiarly human form of life) comes down to justifying our respect for persons – justifying our treating certain beings as if they had peculiar rights and responsibilities and, therefore, treating them as if they were the appropriate objects of moral praise or blame. While the ethicist may well make it his primary concern to discover how one might justify making certain moral pronouncements, the justification of morality 'per se' (which seems to me to take precedence over that other activity) is primarily the 'justification' of this peculiarly human form of life.

If the above is a correct description of what justifying morality essentially amounts to, then the theist's assertion that human persons are 'created in the image of God' (that among other things, they possess sufficient intellect and freedom to make moral judgments about them reasonable) constitutes an effort to justify treating such persons with respect, holding them morally responsible (clearly a major way of showing respect) and, ultimately, for engaging in moral activity. Again, the theist maintains that human persons are created in the image of and have social interactions with the ultimate examplar or paradigm of personhood. Their likeness to God and their relationship to the Deity are for the theist what constitutes human beings as persons and bestows upon them their peculiar worth and dignity. In this way, or on the basis of such convictions, the theist justifies (in a proper sense of that term) our respect for human persons, our treating them as moral beings, that is, our engaging in moral activity as members of a moral community. Again, it is not particular duties or obligations that are directly justified in this way, but the very 'oughting' or 'dutying' or (better) 'respecting of persons' are justified by the theist's convictions.

Whether the holding of those convictions about God and human beings and their relationships is itself a justifiable activity may (as Frankena points out) still be an open question. Some philosophers, for example, Bernard Williams, have gone so far as to say that if God existed morality might well be justifiable on religious grounds but that the very incoherence of the concept of God precludes such religious justification (Williams 1972: 78). A more common argument, used by both Frankena and Thiroux, is that even if religion founds morality the impossibility of proving God's existence conclusively makes religion a very weak (or even dangerous) foundation for ethics (Thiroux, 1977: 13). However, I seriously doubt that anyone has as yet successfully shown that theism is, in fact, an unreasonable or unjustifiable position.

At this point it might be objected that I have stretched the term, "justification," beyond all recognition in arguing that theism justifies morality. After all, "respect for persons" does not obviously follow logically from "God exists." However, even Frankena grants (especially when he himself tries to justify the moral point of view) that "justification" includes much more than, e.g., "proposition B follows logically from proposition A" (Frankena, 1973a). In fact, 'ways of life' or 'points of view' could hardly be justified in this narrow, logical, sense. And if one grants that something like respect for persons might be justified (in a broader sense of that term) if it can be shown that respect for persons is a reasonable stance in light of certain beliefs about reality, then I want to maintain that theism provides just this sort of justification.

However, before even this broadened notion of justification can be applied to the relationship between religion and morality, it should be noted that theism is not just the bald belief that God exists. Rather, theism involves (at the minimum) the conviction that a personal God exists, that human beings were created in God's image (are also persons), and that an individual's relationship to this personal God governs or is even constituted by that person's relationship with other persons. The conviction of the theist that this is the way things are seems to me to provide him or her with sufficiently good reasons for subscribing to morality (understood in the sense of respect for persons) to constitute a rational justification for morality.

Hence, it seems to me that one can readily grant Frankena the point that morality is not in his sense logically dependent on theism. Nonetheless, theism (fully understood) does provide the theist with sufficient grounds or reasons for adopting the moral point of view, that is, it provides a justification for morality if morality is understood in terms of respect for persons. The theist does appear to have a reasonable answer to the question, "Why be moral?"

Perhaps the really interesting question at this point is whether any non-theistic beliefs about persons and their status in the world provide as good a justification for respect for persons as does theism. It is not at all clear that Frankena and other non-theistic moralists are capable of providing us with such an equivalent or better justification for morality. As was noted above, non-theistic justifications of morality tend toward circularity; they tend to argue that moralities discovered by autonomous reason are such that alternatives are unthinkable or that the moral life is obviously preferable to one seeking to live a moral life (see Donaga, 1977; Frankena, 1973a; Gert, 1973). In other words, you ultimately can not justify morality to one who does not value it or the methods employed for discovering *what* is moral. If that is the case, then the non-theistic moralists seem hard-pressed to provide even a sufficient reason for the moral enterprise. And if after many years of trying to provide a sufficient justification for morality the secular ethicists are seen as failing in this task, one can hardly blame religious ethicists for claiming that the connection between religion and morality is a necessary one. All they mean by this claim is that the dream of a complete ethical system without the belief in a personal God seems to be unrealizable if a *complete* ethical system includes a rational justification for adopting this particular ethical system (Thiroux, 1977:

15). In any event, the religious ethicist is certainly justified at this point in the debate over religion and morality in maintaining (contra Nielsen, Scriven, Thiroux, etc.) that theism provides a philosophical as well as psychological foundation (a rationale as well as a rationalization) for morality. In brief, theism does apparently provide a sufficient foundation for morality, and it seems to me to still be an open question whether it is also a necessary foundation for morality.

Now, one might well concede that in some abstract or general way morality is essentially tied up with respect for persons and that such respect for persons is justified by basic theistic beliefs about God and God's creatures and still be puzzled about what relevance all this has to the actual making of moral judgments or pronouncements like "you ought not to kill him" and to the actual engaging in morally relevant activities like killing people or not killing them. What bearing, in other words, does our discussion have on our effort to understand what is going on in those situations in which we most clearly see ourselves as moral agents? It does not seem too much to ask that a so-called justification of morality (religious or otherwise) somehow shed some light on those concrete situations in which we make recognizably moral judgments and perform morally relevant actions, for it is in those situations that we most clearly recognize ourselves as moral beings and, hence, as persons.

The relevance of our religious justification to concrete moral situations can, I believe, be seen once we realize that in confronting real moral dilemmas, for example, those related to war/civil rights/abortion/punishment/distribution of resources/euthanasia, we are best off replacing our instinctive, "What ought I to do?," with the two-part question, (a) "Am I dealing with a being or beings that (as a person/persons) has or have certain inalienable rights and duties?" and (b) "What are my duties or obligations with respect to that being or those beings?" Many of our most pressing moral problems seem to me to be on the way to a resolution – the moments or experiences of indecision and pain begin to disappear – once the first part of the question is answered for the moral agent. At the least, an answer to part (a) of our question often makes answering part (b) relatively easy. Cases in biomedical ethics, for example, often center around our ability to answer this first question. Thus, one often comes across debates over whether fetuses are persons or whether severly retarded and comatose patients have basic human rights.

The priority of the first part of the two-part question which I suggested might usefully replace the traditional, "What ought I to do in this situation?," is undoubtedly due to the fact that the traditional question is well answered with the general advice, "Fulfill the obligations and respect the rights due to persons affected by your actions!" Furthermore, it is a sociological commonplace that the moral community to which persons belong (perhaps their church, state, city or family) usually prescribe for them what the particular rights and obligations of persons are in various situations. Only in times of social turmoil, in times when both current religious and secular notions of the rights and duties of persons are seriously questioned, is the answer to part (b) of our question an extremely

difficult one. More commonly, "What ought I to do in this situation?," (which as I have just indicated seems to be a telescoping of at least two distinct though related questions) is on the way to being answered once the question, "To what extent am I confronted with or affecting persons in this situation?," has found an answer. Thus, questions concerning what counts as a person and how we recognize and identify persons clearly have an obvious relevance and even priority in resolving moral dilemmas. The fact that anti-abortion groups see themselves as defending the rights of 'innocent babies' while pro-abortionists commonly talk about the rights of mothers over against those of 'fetuses' strikes me as an appropriate illustration of the way questions of personal identity have a certain priority in moral dilemmas.

It should be noted that the preceding comments are not to be construed as either a defense of ethical relativism or as denying that many of our most pressing moral conflicts involve competing claims or rights with which different persons present us. Rather, these remarks were intended to underscore the importance of the "What is a person?" question for resolving moral conflicts. Theism's contribution to this latter question, again, is the view that persons are rational and moral agents who are worthy of respect because they have been created in the image of God.

The recognition that different moral communities assign different rights and obligations to persons who perform different roles in those communities (or are of different ages, etc.) should not be surprising nor should it be taken as evidence for ethical subjectivism or relativism. Which individuals count as persons (as rational moral agents created in the image of God) does not, according to the theist's convictions, vary among moral communities. Religiously and morally irrelevant criteria such as sex and race absolutely can not be grounds for withholding respect – including, for example, respect for one's right to the fullest personal development that a fair distribution of available resources makes possible.

Theism as such does not, as far as I can see, help all that much in resolving conflicts between claimed rights of different persons. It does seem to suggest the guideline "equal rights and equal respect for equal persons." While for the many religious ethicists who claim Kant as their philosophical mentor this implies that *we* ought not to distinguish among persons in such situations of conflict, I am inclined to believe that in situations of directly conflicting moral claims we have little choice but to think in terms of degrees of personhood and, hence, variations in the strength of moral claims — as long as such distinctions among persons are made on such morally relevant grounds as the sort of character and personifying abilities they reveal through their actions. Degrees of personhood and concomitant variations in the strengths of moral claims do not seem to me to be notions that conflict either with the principle of absolute respect for persons or with what I have described as the theist's position.[4]

In sum, if those concrete situations in which we wrestle with many of our moral questions usually involve some amount of reflection on whether and how our actions will affect various persons and also involve trying to determine what the

rights and duties of such persons are, then the fact that theistic religion both justifies respect for persons and delineates what some of the most basic rights and duties of persons are shows the relevance of the theistic perspective even to this sort of concrete moral situation.

Even if theism's task with respect to morality is the justification of respect for persons, it should be obvious that respecting persons necessarily requires the recognition of certain 'prima facie' duties 'vis-à-vis' persons, which in turn are usually discharged via respectful behavior. Thus, one cannot usually show respect for persons while wantonly killing them, deliberately blocking their freedom of action without just cause, or (even) polluting the air they breathe. Certain actions can clearly not be performed under the guidelines, "respect the rights of persons." Finally, by viewing all people as 'children of God,' theism also helps in the effort at identifying the persons among us – those who possess certain inalienable rights and obligations as a result of their status as special creations of the ultimate exemplar of personhood or moral being.

If the preceding comments are on the mark, then it seems to me that it can even be argued that the theist is acting more reasonably than his or her non-theistic colleague when they both act on such moral dicta as, "Don't wantonly kill other persons!" It appears that the non-theist who would question or challenge this dictum can only be answered by maintaining that such an action is not moral. But this answer provides no reason (in the sense of a justification) for being moral, although one who asks such a question might thereon resolve to act morally for prudential reasons. In contrast, if morality is essentially a matter of respect for persons, the theist both has a reason for being moral ('people are created in the image of God') and can draw certain conclusions regarding what is involved in being moral. Theists, in brief, seem in such situations to be acting more reasonably than their non-theistic colleagues who have at best a prudential answer to the question, "Why be moral?" Again, the retort that theism is itself an inherently unreasonable stance and, hence, cannot provide a reasonable justification for morality will in all likelihood be the non-theist's interesting twist on the 'et tu' form of argument all too commonly employed by religious apologists. However, this claim regarding theism certainly needs more of a defense than it has so far received from the opponents of theism.

In closing, it might be pointed out that approaching the morality-religion relationship in terms of the justification of that respect for persons which lies at the heart of morality could prove helpful in dealing with other issues in religious ethics. Thus, for example, it might be insightful to approach comparative religious ethics by focusing on the extent to which such ethics further or take into account respect for persons. Furthermore, questions of personhood and the rights and obligations of persons 'vis-à-vis' other persons are clearly crucial if one is to coherently address various issues raised in such fields as Bioethics, the Ethics of International Relations, the Ethics of Special Human Relations. Recalling our earlier discussion of Bioethics, it seems clear to me that many of the debates over such issues as abortion, euthanasia, behavior modification and human experimenta-

tion, are at bottom really disputes over the nature and rights of persons. The failure to resolve these prior (more fundamental) disputes about persons – or even to seriously address them – seems to be characteristic of a great many recent essays which purport to address important moral issues in Bioethics. Sadly, it appears that some of our leading religious ethicists are ready to give us advice on what it is, for example, to treat a patient as a person or to do the loving thing in a situation, without first telling us such things as what constitutes personhood and what makes an entity worthy of love.

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NOTES

1. These rather peculiar definitions of "religion" seem to be essential to (respectively) Greeley's and Bartley's arguments to the conclusion that religion is the foundation of morality.
2. In a recent essay in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, David Griffin argues that there is such a direct logical connection – at least whenever the theological assertion is of the form "God wills that I do A" and the meaning of "God" is slightly altered from the traditional use of that term to include the properties of an Ideal Observer. While Griffin seems to me to be correct in holding that with his qualifications an 'ought' statement logically follows from a theological assertion, the 'ought' statement that follows is much more like "I ought to do whatever such a God wills" than "I ought to do A." Given Griffin's qualifications, this former statement appears either to translate into "I ought to do whatever I ought to do" or (if it provides an answer to "What ought I to do?") it assumes the agent can somehow know whatever such a God wills.
3. In light of Gene Outka's analysis of "agape" (cf. *Agape: An Ethical Analysis*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), it is clear that the concept is much broader than the notion of respect in ordinary secular ethics. It is the latter, narrower notion that I intend by the phrase, "respect for persons," rather than the more active and involved "concern for the welfare of others" which is associated with the notion of agape. By taking this narrower (more Kantian) understanding of "respect for persons" (which is a function of their capacities as human agents created in the image of God), I am drawing a distinction that Harris does not draw and am differentiating myself from his position. I am grateful to William Alston for pointing out to be that I needed to make clear that "respect for persons" is not to be equated with "Christian love"/"agape".
4. I can hardly explore all the implications of the last few paragraphs in this essay. At this point I only wanted to indicate a direction in which subsequent discussions might fruitfully be taken.

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