



The Meaning of Value Development in Biblical Perspective¹

Ted Ward

A. Because . . .

The Bible is basically a developmental document, developmentally unfolding, developmental in concept and developmental in its assumptions about men and women and humanity's relation to God, and because . . .

The Bible reveals principle to be the highest structural level of human morality (i.e., than prescriptive, legalistic obedience: Hosea 6:6, Matthew 9:13, Matthew 12:7, Matthew 5:21-48, Romans 7:6)

It can be concluded that a developmental view of moral values is compatible with biblical premises.

B. Because . . .

The propositions and assumptions underlying Kohlberg's research respect the reality of essential righteousness (as defined biblically in terms of justice), and because . . .

Kohlberg's findings relate human values to the fundamental issue of authority,

It can be concluded that Kohlberg's findings can be understood in biblical perspective.

C. But since . . .

Kohlberg ultimately appeals his case for the centrality of justice to a humanistic philosophy and to the aspirations of a democratic society, and since.

Kohlberg does not adequately deal with the source of values or with the developmental function of obedience,

A biblical perspective that adds to the understanding of *source* and the human being's orientation to source is necessary to complete the model of values development.

D. Thus . . .

Reexamination of Kohlberg's findings in biblical perspective suggests that the three levels are better explained as three stages of orientation to source of values: Level I: Self as source; Level II: Recognition of externality of source; Level III: Incorporation into oneself of the principles from the external source so that they become internal and liberating ("Not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" II Corinthians 3:3).

¹ Ted Ward. The Meaning of Value Development in Biblical Perspective, Unpublished document, 1976

Kohlberg's model is constructively augmented by a biblical view of humanity's response to authority. Three levels of response to authority can be seen as inherent in the three levels of structural development: Level I: Response to authority as response to forces which are seen as punishing or rewarding; Level II: Response to authority in respect for that authority and the worthiness of its being; Level III: Response to the principles seen as essence of authority, willingly, even eagerly, as appropriate in a relationship of love.

Further, we can see the two basic biblical exhortations, to *obedience* and to *trust*, as the keys to deliverance from the pathological stalemates, respectively at the hurdle from Level I to Level II and from Level II to Level III.