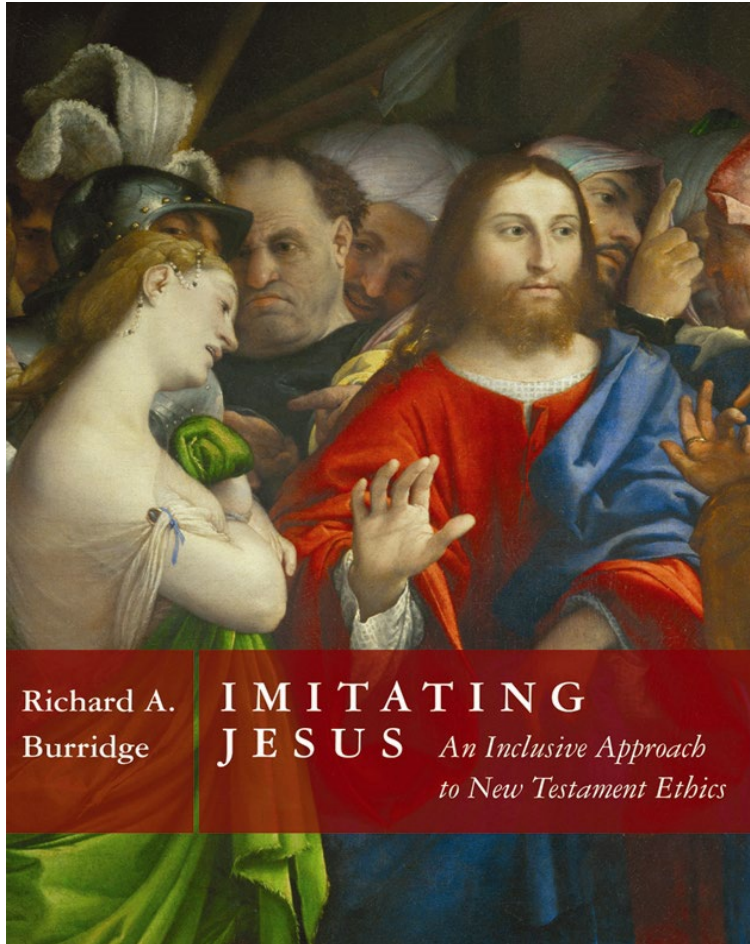


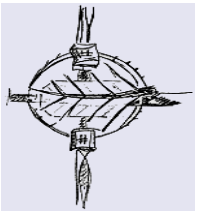
THE MEANING, VALUE AND SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE



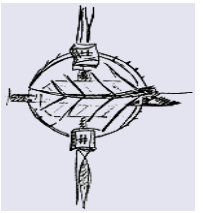
**Bernard's Inn Hall
1-2pm
Gresham College
April 25th
2019**

Rev'd Canon Professor Richard Burridge, Dean of KCL



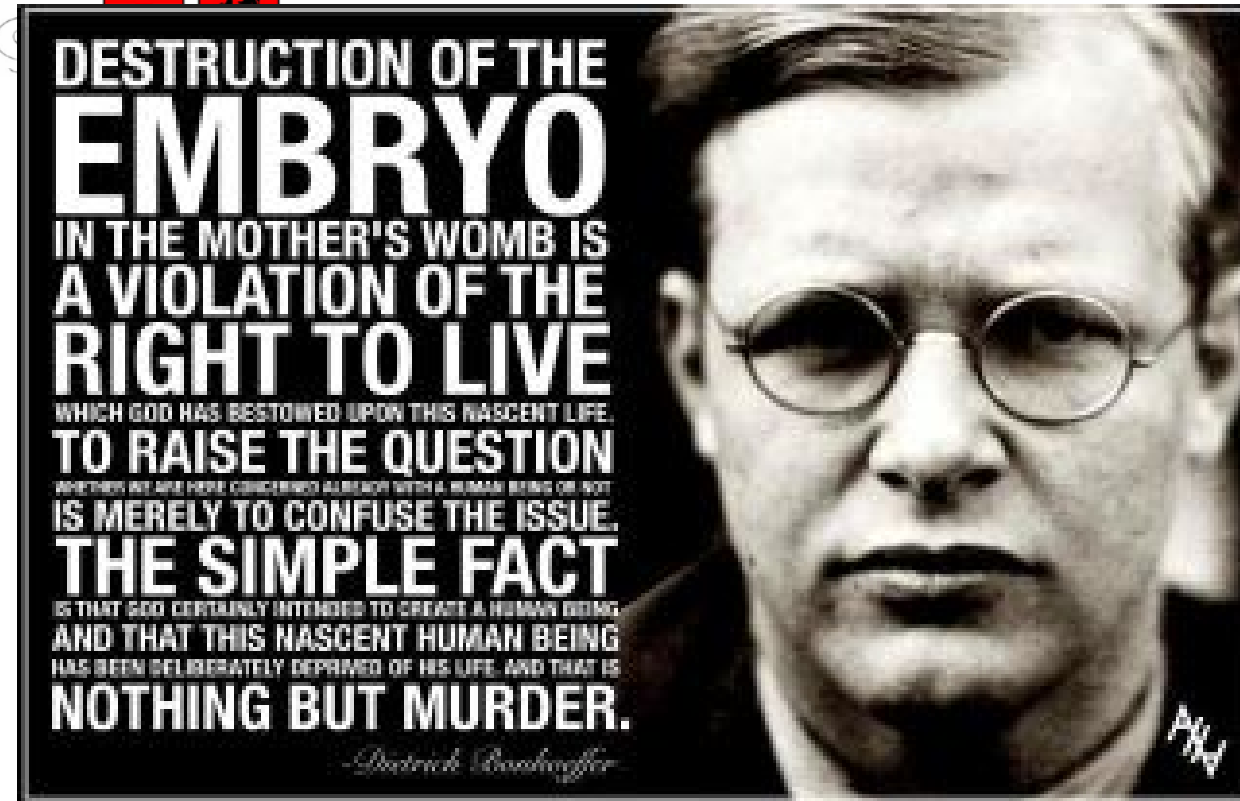
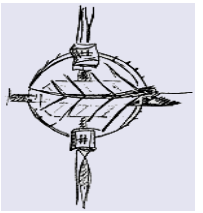


- Row after 'After-birth abortion', *JME* (2012), Feb 23rd 2012 by Alberto Giubilini (Monash) & Francesca Minerva (Melbourne)



Article is an exercise in ethical logic:

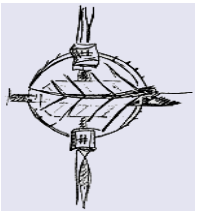
- a) Foetuses and new-borns not actual persons, 'morally equivalent', therefore they have no rights
- b) Potential persons morally irrelevant
- c) Abortion is permissible pre-birth both for disabled or viewed as 'abnormal' and for those not wanted or 'inconvenient' for the mother
- d) 'after-birth' abortion equally so in all similar cases; adoption not seen as acceptable alternative
- e) No time-limit after birth proposed for this; days? weeks?
- f) Death threats from 'pro-lifers' in USA; armed guard!



“Destruction of the embryo in the mother’s womb is a violation of the right to live which God has bestowed upon this nascent life. To raise the question whether we are here concerned already with a human being or not is merely to confuse the issue. The simple fact is that God certainly intended to create a human being and that this nascent human being has been deliberately deprived of his life, and that is nothing but murder.”

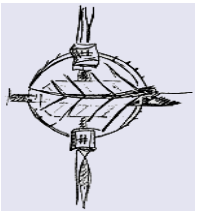
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Rev'd Canon Professor Richard Burrige, Dean of KCL



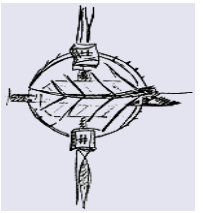
Sir Terry Pratchett, Fellow of King;s College London
28 April 1948 – 12 March 2015; Alzheimer's Disease
Wanted to die with Tallis' *Spem in Alium* playing on Ipod

Rev'd Canon Professor Richard Burridge, Dean of KCL



- *Choosing to Die* TV documentary 2011
- Emmy Award: best documentary 2012
- Peter Smedley, sufferer from motor neurone disease
- Went to the 'Dignitas' clinic in Switzerland to die; Assisted Dying debate;
- Opposed by 'pro-life' lobby; bishops?
- When/where do we draw the line?
- How to use NT in these debates?

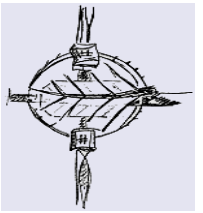




“The absence of explicit New Testament evidence suggests first of all that a certain humility about our claims and conviction concerning abortion is appropriate.”

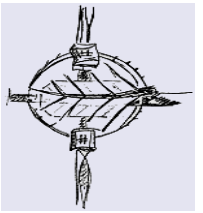
Richard B. Hays, *Moral Vision of NT*, p 445;

- two texts: Lk 1.34-5; 41-44 (John Baptist in the womb);
- Gal 5.20 (φαρμακεία , *pharmakeia* = abortifacients?)
- Hays does not discuss 1 Cor 15.8:
- “Last of all, as to one untimely born (ἐκτρώμα), he appeared also to me.”



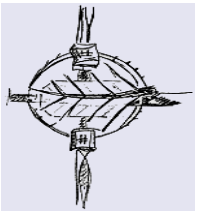
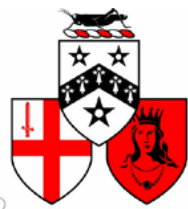
1 Methods in our Madness

- The issues of money, sex, power, violence and the meaning of life confront us all in our daily life.
- Many look towards Jesus and the Bible for help – yet the churches seem in just as much a quandary about it all.
- ‘The Bible says’ is not an answer and no quick easy answers: Bible is not a book of ethics – or even a book at all: *ta biblia* is plural, a library with plurality of genres, authors, cultures, if inspired by God.
- Twin problems of cultural relativism (bridging the gap)
- and contingency of issues (topics covered v ignored)



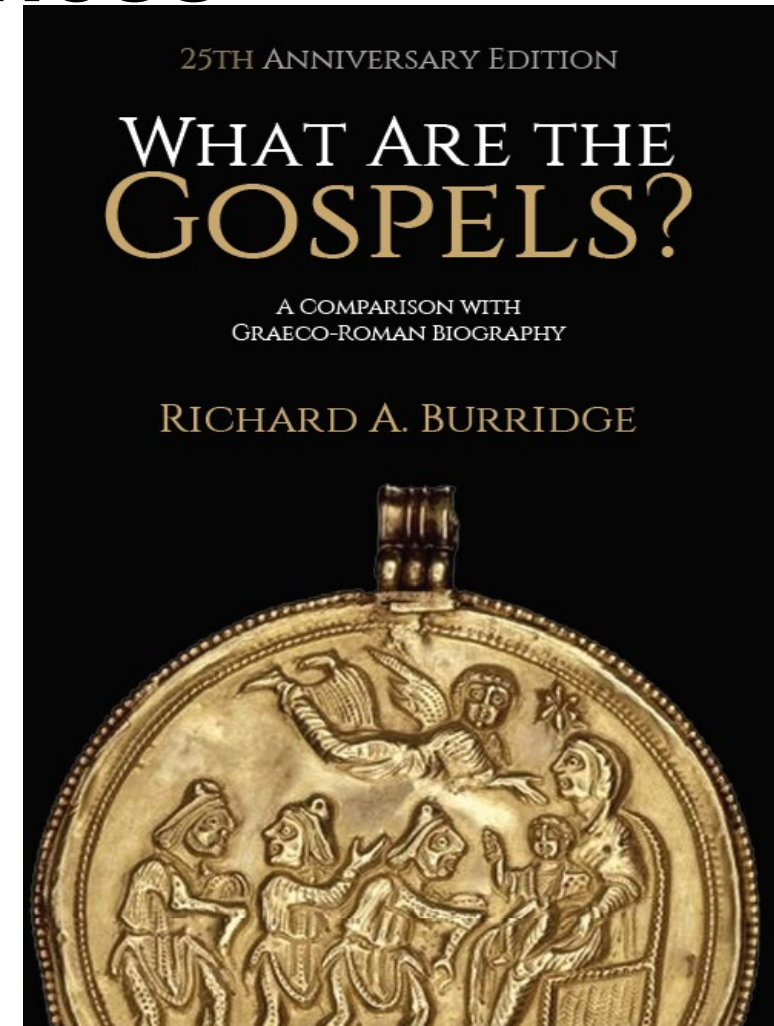
1 Methods in our Madness

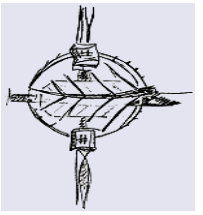
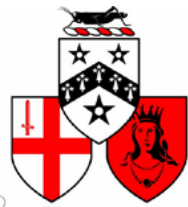
- Cannot ask modern ethical questions of ancient text – but gap between cultures is bridged by looking at basic human needs – Money (October), Sex (February), Meaning or Value of Human Life (April)
- Jesus is not an ethical teacher – but Bible provides us with a starting point in his preaching of kingdom of God (words) and his loving acceptance of poor and marginalised (deeds).
- NT is not a book of ethics – but genre of gospels means that we have to take both Jesus' words and deeds into account. Use of narrative & stories as well as teaching, his example as well as his instructions.
- If all the above are true, then how do we look for ethical material in New Testament? And how do we apply it to today?



1 Methods in our Madness

- Approach flows from my doctoral research:
- Gospels are composed in the same genre as other ancient lives – so must be interpreted in a similar fashion; narratives about a person.
- Graeco-Roman biography is very different from modern examples. Long, detailed, alive.
- Briefer 'portrait' through subject's deeds and words, with extended account of death.
- *What are the Gospels?* (25th anniversary third extended edition, Baylor 2018) £35 offer today!

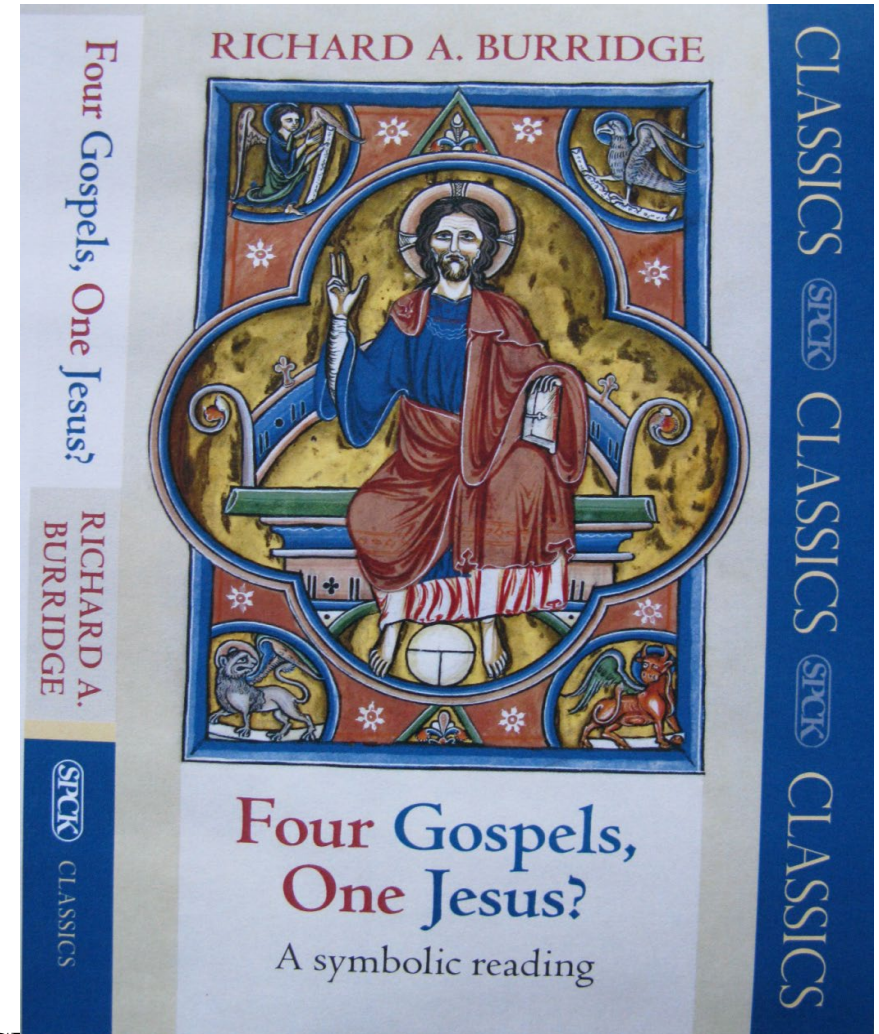


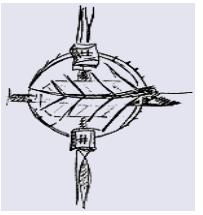
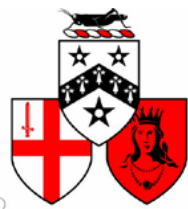


1 Methods in our Madness

- The 'so what?' question – what are implications / consequences of this idea
- Four gospel versions of story of Jesus kept by the early church.
- Four narratives seen through the four traditional symbols.
- Jesus' teaching within narrative of deeds
- *Four Gospels, One Jesus?* Eerdmans / SPCK 1994, 2005
- Classic edn., SPCK 2013 (£8 offer today)

Rev'd Prof Richard Burridge, Dean of KCL



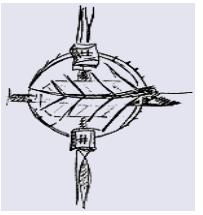
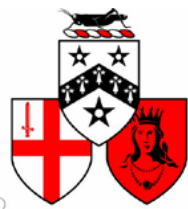


1 Methods in our Madness

- Awarded Ratzinger Prize 2013 in the Vatican by Pope Francis after major conference on this theme
- Presenting him with *Four Gospels, One Jesus?*
- Citation: for establishing
- “indissoluble connection of Jesus and the gospels”

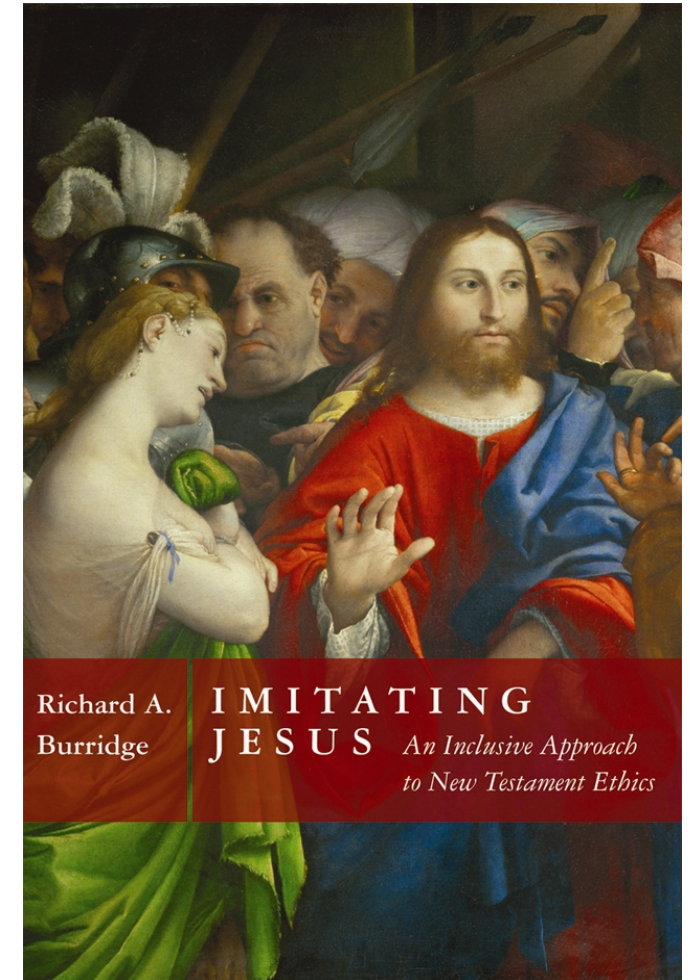
Rev'd Prof Richard

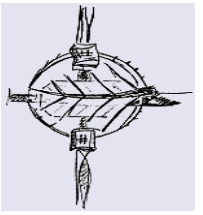
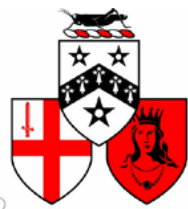




1 Methods in our Madness

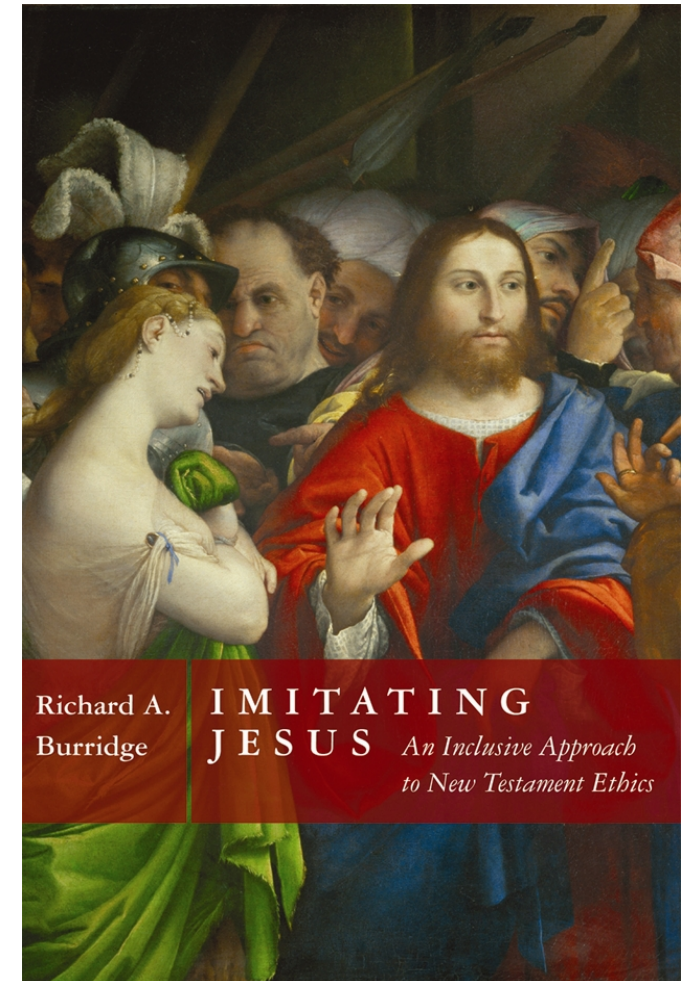
- Attempt to take implications of biographical gospel genre for NT ethics seriously.
- First volume about the ethical material found in the New Testament.
- Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Eerdmans: 2007).
- Second part: how the New Testament can be used in ethical dilemmas today.
- *Money, Sex, Power, Violence and the Meaning of Life: Following Jesus Today* (forthcoming)

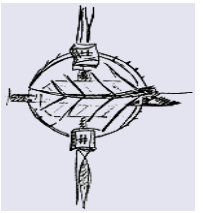




1 Methods in our Madness

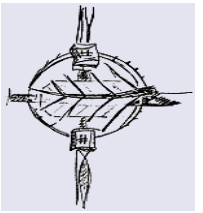
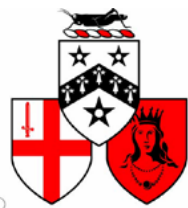
- (i) It takes Jesus seriously as a preacher or prophet of restoration eschatology, rather than a moral teacher, to be followed more than obeyed.
- (ii) It also takes the gospels seriously as ancient biography. Must consider Jesus' ethical teaching *and* his practice:
- 'In the first book, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach' (Acts 1.1).
- Must include both his words and his deeds; a narrative, inclusive approach.





2 Towards a Fourfold Method

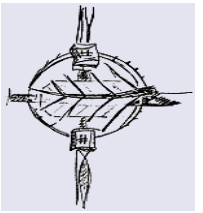
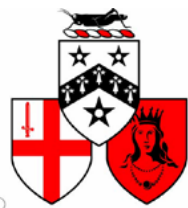
- a) Begin with Jesus' words and deeds; use of drag net – include narrative as well as teaching, stories and examples.
- b) Hays' *Moral Vision of NT* uses focal images; can also lead to distortion. Instead, look for best line fit on 'scattergram', and how rest of NT follows (or not) the direction set by Jesus' teaching & example
- c) Look at the four different genres of ethical material: rules, principles, paradigms/ examples, overall biblical world-view
- d) Apply it all to today within the context of an inclusive community of interpretation which ensures that the voices of those most affected are actually heard.



I Descriptive stage –Jesus' words and deeds

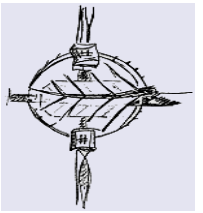
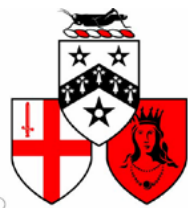
- Socio-historical background/ Context: *OT texts*:
- Sovereignty of God (Job 1.21; Ps 104); Image of God (Gen. 1.26; 5.1; 9.6); Life as gift from God (Gen. 2.7)
- Command not to kill Gen. 4.15; 9.6; Exod. 20.13





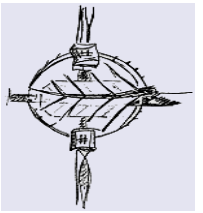
I Descriptive stage –Jesus' words and deeds

- *a) Jesus' words & teaching/ Mark & triple tradition*
- Paradox of 'save life, lose it; lose life, find it' sayings found in all 4 gospels; unusual - significant
- Matthew 16.25-26; Mark 8.35-37; Luke 9.24; John 12.25
- Cut off what stops you entering life: Matt 18.8-9; Mark 9.43-45; yet not followed literally, eyes/hands?
- Hate life to follow Jesus – Luke 14.26



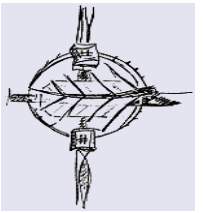
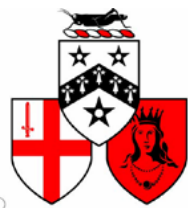
I Descriptive stage –Jesus' words and deeds

- *b) Jesus' example:*
- Loving attitude towards children: Matt.19.13-14; Mark 10.13-16;
- Attitude towards those who were suffering – Jesus' anger at disease and death; 'rebukes' it – as with demons
- Saving life more important than Sabbath: Mk 3.4; Lk 6.9
- Jesus' approach to the (near-)dead: sorrow and mourning at death: Jairus' daughter Mk 5.35-39; widow of Nain Lk 7.12-13; death and raising of Lazarus Jn. 11.33-35;
- Jesus is willing to give his life as 'ransom for many', Matt 20.28; Mk 10.45



I Descriptive stage –Jesus' words and deeds

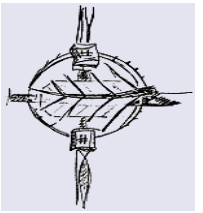
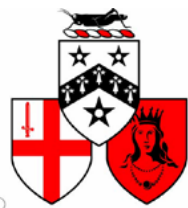
- *Summing up Jesus' teaching and activity:*
- Use of scattergram idea and "best line fit"; Guillemette: 'Jesus does not give *directives*, but rather a *direction*.' N. Guillemette SJ, 'The Sermon on the Mount: Feasible Ethics?', *Landas* 9 (1995), 209-236; quotation from p. 235.
- Use plotting data to get the general direction or overall trend established; like discerning the Milky Way in the night sky.
- **Words:** Jesus' teaching has a strong stress on/for 'life'; God as the source of life and the goal of all life; this life is to be lived for God.
- **Deeds:** Jesus lives out his teaching in confronting disease and death with life; yet he is also willing to suffer and lay down his own life.



II Canonical stage – fit rest of NT together?

- *c) Matthew/Luke – double tradition (Q?)*
- Matt 6.25-27// Luke 12.22-25: do not worry about your life,
- Give account of life after death:
- Parable of the Talents
- Matthew 25.14-30//
- Luke 19.12-27
- *d) Matthew*
- Matthew 5.21-26 intensifies 'not murder' to include anger;
- Matthew 7.14 few find narrow gate leads to 'life'

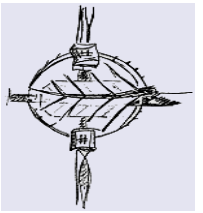
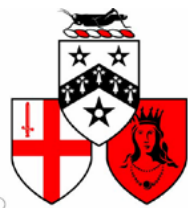




II Canonical stage – fit rest of NT together?

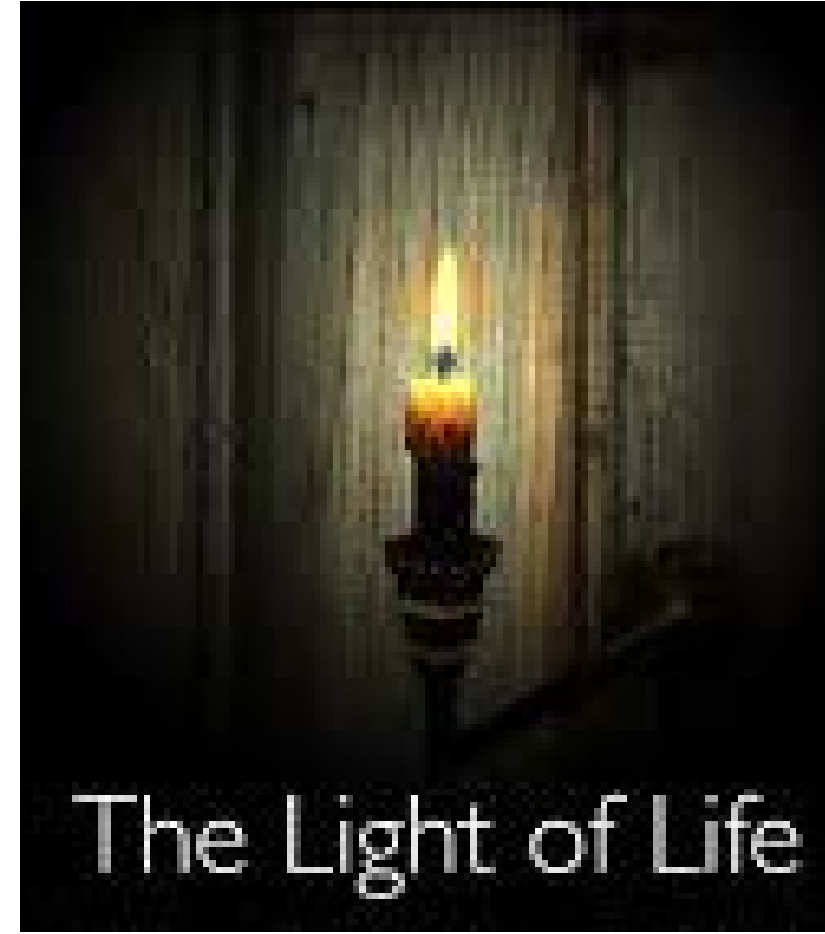
- e) *Lukan material*
- Sorrow for lack of children (Lk 1.7, 25); joy at birth (1.14, 44, 58, 67-79).
- Lk 1.34-5; 41-44 - babe in womb leaping, used by Pope John Paul II *Evangelium Vitae* §45
- Often linked to OT foetal life passages e.g. Jeremiah 1.5, Ps. 139.13-16; Isaiah 49.1-6
- But texts say nothing about foetal life in general.
- It is God who decides end of life for the rich fool with many barns (Luke 12.20)

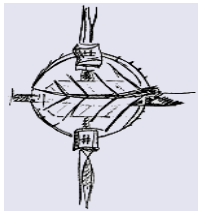




II Canonical stage – fit rest of NT together?

- *f) John – key word and theme in 4th Gospel*
- 'In him was life' 1.3; Eternal life connected to reaction to the Son, 3.15-16, 36; 17.2-3
- Father raises dead and gives life, and has judgement of life/death, so too does the Son 5.21-29; Jn 17.2-3
- Jesus is the source of means of life – 'I am' sayings, bread of life 6.35-48; light of life 8.12; way, truth and life 14.6; 10.10 - to have life in all its fullness; resurrection and life 11.25

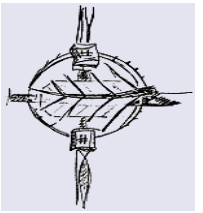




II Canonical stage – fit rest of NT together?

- *f) John*
- Laying down life for others, not taking life in John 10.11-15; 15.13; see also 1 Jn 3.16
- Jesus' own grief about Lazarus' death in Jn 11;
- Comforting Mary Magdalene Jn 20.11
- *2 Acts*
- Author of life Acts 3.15;
- God gives life and breath to all Acts 17.25;
- Acts 11.18; 13.46, 48 – offering life to Gentiles

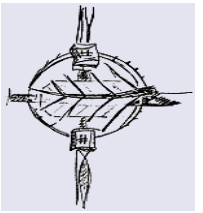
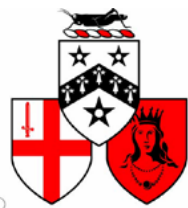




II Canonical stage – fit rest of NT together?

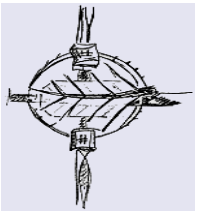
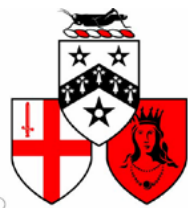
- 3 *Paul*
- RBH: Gal 5.20 use of φαρμακεία as work of flesh – may include abortifacients, but means magical drugs, potions, generally.
- God gives life to death and calls things into existence, Romans 4.17;
- Jesus as conqueror of death in 1 Cor 15.51-55; death is last enemy 1 Cor 15.26
- Again (eternal) life is linked to Jesus: Romans 5.17-18; 6.10, 22-23;





II Canonical stage – fit rest of NT together?

- 3 *Paul*
- We walk in a new life Rom 6.4; 8.10-11;
- Not I who live, life in flesh is by Jesus Gal 2.20
- Manifesting his life 2 Cor 4.10-12; Christ exalted in body in life or death: 'to live is Christ to die is gain' Phil 1.20-22.
- Paul's desire to leave body and life and be with Christ, Phil. 1.23-4
- Live or die to Christ Rom 14.7-8
- 1 Cor 6.13-20 on body as temple of Holy Spirit; bought with price; glorify God in your body;
- Value of suffering Phil 3.21-24; Rom 5.3-4; 8.28

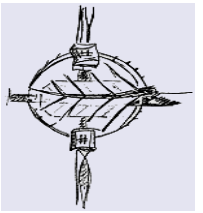


II Canonical stage – fit rest of NT together?

- 4 *Rest of the NT*
- Crown of life after death James 1.12
- God who gives life to all 1 Tim 6.13;
- Life that is really life 1 Tim 6.19
- 1 John – lots about life: 1 Jn 3.14-16 passed from death to life if you love others; follow Jesus' self-sacrificial model in laying down life for others
- Revelation: tree of life 2.7; 22.14, 19; crown of life 2.10; book of life 3.5; 17.8; 20.12, 15; water of life 7.17; 21.6; 22.1, 17; Being faithful even to death brings life 12.11

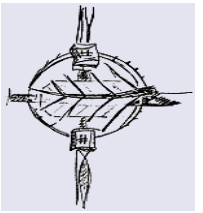
Rev'd Canon Professor Richard Burridge, Dean of KCL





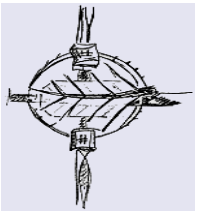
II Canonical stage – fit rest of NT together?

- ***Summary:***
- Same trajectory running on into the rest of the NT from Jesus' deeds and words (and back into OT)
- God as the source, ground and goal of all life
- Concern for humans to live life in all its fullness
- Opposition to all that detracts from life – sin, sickness, suffering, evil, death
- Yet this life is not the end in itself, and may need to be sacrificed for the sake of eternal life in God.



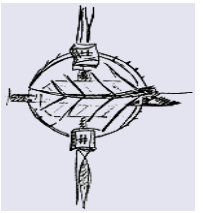
SUMMARY OF BIBLICAL MATERIAL

- Clear direction from Jesus that life is to be lived in light of kingdom/ eternal life and all must be sacrificed for the latter; also his concern for those who suffer, esp for children and his anger at disease/death, his healing/liberating ministry; yet acceptance of his own suffering and death.
- Luke amplifies esp. the concern for children; fuller treatment of meaning of life in John; Paul's anthropology on living in Christ; rest of NT sees God as author of life; be faithful even unto death (Revelation)



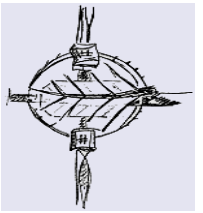
SUMMARY OF BIBLICAL MATERIAL

- Few direct commands (except eg cutting off what prevents entering into life, Matt 18.8-9; 19.18); principles about God as source of life, body as temple of Spirit, concern for 'the least of my brethren'; examples of JnBap and Jesus in the womb (Lk 1.34-5; 41-44), anger at Herod or dragon (Rev 12.4); clear overall theology in favour of life.
- Church's tradition and handling of care for the suffering, hospitals, relief of needs etc; curious singling out of opposition simply to things like abortion, stem cell research and euthanasia – as opposed to a wider look at Christian desire for life and the relief of suffering.



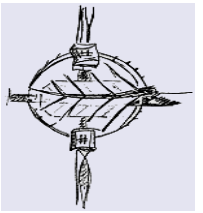
IV Practical stage: today's ethical dilemmas

- 1 *Following Jesus in radical discipleship*
- Jesus' words and deeds give us a direction, rather than directives (Guillemette) – back to tracing the Milky Way
- Jesus' call to take up cross, deny self and follow him costily;
- This provides us with some content, but not 'all the answers'; Jesus and the NT more concerned about issues of money, violence, power than about sex, marriage/divorce
- Does the Church follow God's priorities as in NT/Bible; what about the over-riding biblical ethic of love in Jesus' example?



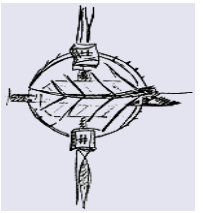
IV Practical stage: today's ethical dilemmas

- *2 Interpreting the scriptures in an open and inclusive community*
- How to form a mixed and inclusive community to discuss these issues around a table?
- Voice of outsiders to be heard esp. childless, those with handicapped children, scientists and researchers
- How to build a community which responds to the ethical challenge, yet open to affected 'outsiders'?
- Are we friends of sinners - or judgmental excluders?



IV Practical stage: today's ethical dilemmas

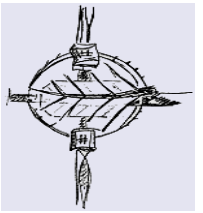
- *2 Interpreting the scriptures in an open and inclusive community*
- Because of the lack of clear 'proof' texts, even more reason for community response. Need to find a way to do exegesis and hermeneutics together without vilification or violence.
- Listen to voice of affected 'outsiders' – on both/all sides
- Will community take responsibility for the cost of the decision – e.g. helping with elderly, adopting/ raising 'unwanted' children?



IV Practical stage: today's ethical dilemmas

- *3 Sorts of questions/issues to consider:*
- The sanctity of life – what about questions of value and meaning?
- Issues at the beginning and end of life, more than just abortion or euthanasia.
- Infertility treatment; egg/sperm donations; third party involvement?
- Stem cell research – mapping human genome project leading to new cures

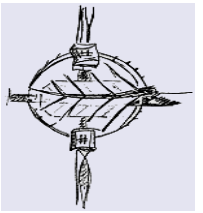




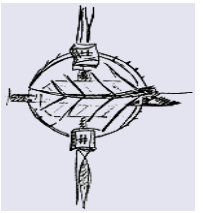
IV Practical stage: today's ethical dilemmas

- *3 Sorts of questions/issues to consider:*
- Medical interventions in infertility, gene therapy in early life – and
- Prolonged medical treatment of the elderly and terminally ill.
- Assisted dying, suicide, relation of killing, 'letting die', and murder
- Consistency over issues of capital punishment; police and armed forces.

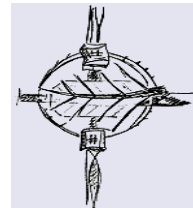




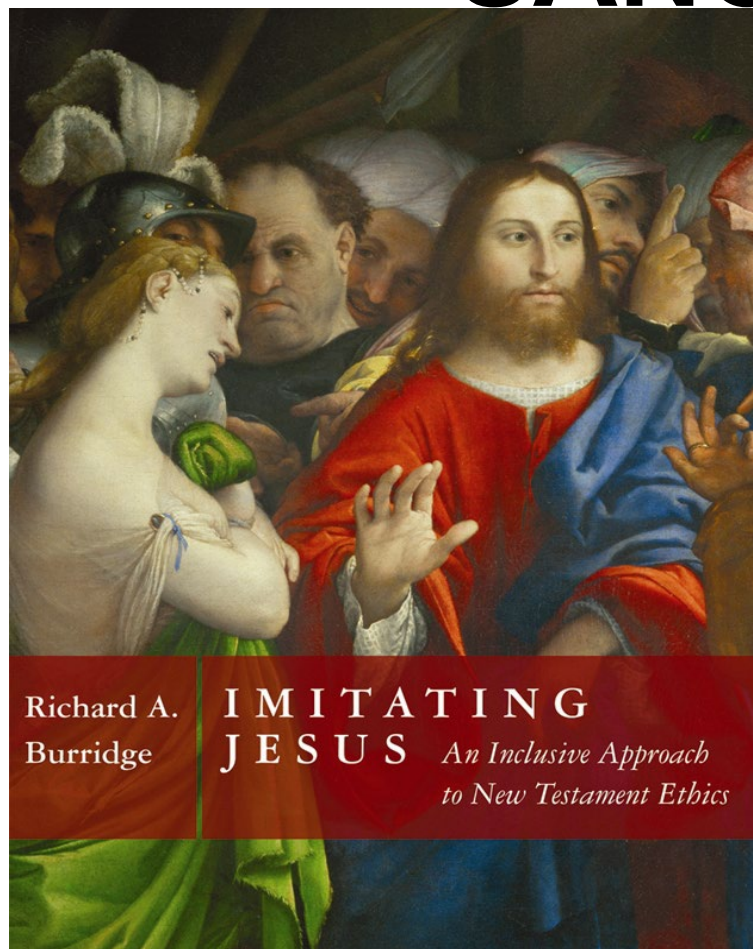
- Frank recognition of the overall coherence of Jesus' teaching and example – yet how little of it the church has actually accepted and put into practice through history.
- Why have certain 'hot-button issues' (eg homosexuality and abortion) become the 'acid-test' of so-called biblical orthodoxy, when much larger and clearer areas (such as the use of money, or marriage/divorce, or non-violence) are not obeyed or followed to the letter?



- Does this four-fold method provide us with some ethical material to work with, despite the fact that Jesus is not a moral teacher and the New Testament is not an ethical book, and help us to grapple with New Testament ethics?
- How do we form inclusive communities of interpretation in real-life churches and congregations to do comprehensive bible study – which also allow for the voices of ‘others’ to be heard?



THE MEANING, VALUE AND SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE



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