In the fields of biblical hermeneutics and Christian ethics we often speak of a problem, the ‘problem of Scripture and ethics.’ The problem seems to have to do with the nature of Scripture, and the difficulties can be encapsulated in two words: distance and diversity. The historical-cultural distance between the biblical texts and the current modern context looms large. How can moral and ethical concepts and strictures arising from such culturally distant locations have bearing on modern moral issues? What help do these texts offer us as we face modern issues in bioethics or a global politics where weapons of mass destruction are brandished? Then there is the problem of diversity: Scripture speaks more than one language, both literally (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) and ethically (wisdom traditions, prophetic traditions, laws and maxims, narrative, and so on). The writings were composed and compiled over time, in various cultural and historical contexts. Their diversity seems to defy reification into a useful set of clear ethical or normative principles. These are the basic problems modern hermeneutics and Christian ethics grapple with in relation to Scripture.

But while our version of the ‘problem’ is new, since at least the time of Thomas Aquinas, Christian theologians have realized that difficult epistemological and hermeneutical issues surround the understanding and employment of the sacred texts in theological and ethical reasoning. Since at least Thomas’s time, some theologians and biblical interpreters have thought that metaphor and analogy have important roles to play in these matters. In the current context, systematic theologians David Tracy and David Kelsey, historian Wayne Meeks, theological ethicists James Gustafson and Stanley Hauerwas, and biblical schol-

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ars Dan Via and John Donahue are prominent and influential figures among the many who highlight the role of analogical and imaginative modes of reasoning in biblical hermeneutics, theology and theological ethics.

This chapter surveys the work of William Spohn and Richard Hays, two Christian scholars whose work belongs to this stream. In the course of this survey, an argument builds that while analogical imagination models are to be commended for giving attention to metaphor and analogy as well as for validating the usefulness of the imaginative in theological ethics and biblical hermeneutics, they remain in thrall to an objectivist historicism and fail to deliver sufficiently clear and workable analytical methods. Theoretical and methodological distinctions between cognitive linguistic approaches to metaphor and these analogical imagination models are highlighted, and it is argued that the cognitive model may have more to offer those working in the area of Scripture and ethics.

*Scripture & the Analogical Imagination:*
*William Spohn’s Go and Do Likewise*

Roman Catholic moral theologian William Spohn was a kindred spirit with a passion for helping Christians come to a holistic understanding of Christian ethics and of the role of Scripture in moral formation and discernment, so that they can fully live the life offered in Christ. Though his books are accessible to non-specialists, they also represent important contributions Spohn made to the field of Christian ethics. Perhaps his core contribution lay in the way Spohn linked the ethics of Scripture to the role of Scripture in Christian ethics. To make those connections, he proposed revisions in the ways we describe the focus and scope of ethics and demonstrated a thoughtful way of reading the New Testament with issues of moral discernment and formation in view.2 Declining to be confined by narrower definitions that implicitly discount the significance of moral formation, character, and community, Spohn widened the scope of ethics and explicated with real life

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2 Spohn’s primary stated objective in *Go and Do Likewise* was to assist the faithful in making those connections, rather than laying out the methodological and theoretical fine points of this approach for professional ethicists. William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 1999).