

BOOTS-ON-THE-GROUND CHRISTIANITY Week 3

Absolutism / Divine Command Theory

Right and wrong have been r_____ to us by God and we must adhere to it.

Big picture: how absolutism works:

- Truth is handed down to us by God through r_____
- Mankind is morally r_____

Is it good because God wills it or because it is right?

- God is by nature good, and he cannot change (Malachi 3:6)
- God does not command laws that are c_____ to his nature.

BIG SIDE NOTE - Natural Law Theory

- *Adjacent to absolute positions - belief in objective natural laws.*

4 LAWS:

E_____ Law - rational order of the cosmos established by God

N_____ Law - the rational creatures participation by human reason

H_____ Law - laws created by human societies and governments

D_____ Law - explicit moral teachings revealed through God's revelation

(Nali... take it away! haha)

How God communicates his will - REVELATION:

C_____ (Rom 1:18:22), Human C_____ (Romans 2:14-15),
H_____, J_____ (Heb 1:1-2), The Holy S_____, S_____,
D_____ and V_____, T_____, P_____ and
M_____

The loudest and most consistent way in which God has spoken is through the scriptures.

But here's the problem... MORAL DILEMMAS:

- **Abraham sacrificing Isaac** (Gen 22)
- **The Deceiving Midwives** (Exo 1)
- **Rahab Lying about the Spies** (Josh 2)
- **Saul, David and the Priest of Nob** (1 Samuel 21-22)
- **Peter and the Jewish Sanhedrin** (Acts 4-5)

This leads us to 3 different takes within Absolutism: Unqualified, Conflicted and Graded.

Unqualified: there are no exceptions to God's laws, and there are no true moral dilemmas

Conflicting: Moral dilemmas happen and conflict, and no matter what, we will sin. So it is best to choose the lesser of two evils and ask for God's forgiveness.

Graded: There are higher moral laws and lower ones, the lower ones will give way to the greater in the case of a moral dilemma, but when they don't conflict, we must uphold them all.

Unqualified Absolutism: no exceptions!

God always will make a third way in every apparent moral dilemma (Dan 1)

Logic: God is unchanging (Malachi 3:6). God has not depressed his unchanging moral character in his law. God cannot contradict himself. Hence, no two absolute moral laws can really conflict and all moral conflicts are only apparent and not real.

Positives of unqualified Absolutism:

It is based in God's unchanging nature, it stresses rules over results, it shows trust in God's providence and stressing that there is always a way to avoid sinning (1 Corinthians 10:13)

NEGATIVES:

False premise of all sins being equal. Fatal question of the "unqualified ethic" by each proponent of the view. Certain commands have limitations such as obeying government. Scripture shows examples of no 3rd way. Unqualified absolutists commit sins of omission by avoiding moral dilemmas.

Conflicting Absolutism: you can't help conflicting moral laws.

God's moral Law is Absolute (Psalm 19:7, Exodus 20:7)

Moral Conflicts are Unavoidable (Matthew 5:48)

The duty is to do the lesser evil (John 19:11)

Forgiveness is available (1 John 1:9)

Positives of Conflicting Absolutism:

It preserves moral absolutes. It has a moral realism. It attests to humanity's freedom. It is a solution without evil - even better than Unqualified Absolutism!

Negatives of Conflicting Absolutism:

Choosing the lesser evil is morally absurd. No biblical grounds to choose the lesser evil. It practically becomes unavoidable. Does God command sin? Jesus must have sinned if

moral dilemmas are unavoidable!

Graded Absolutism: There are g_____ laws

- There are higher and lower moral l_____ (Matthew 23:23, John 19:11, 1 Cor 13:13, Matthew 22:34-40, 10:37)
- There are u_____ moral conflicts (Genesis 22)
- God does not hold the individual responsible for personally unavoidable moral conflicts, provided one keeps the h_____ law.

Biblical examples of Graded Absolutism:

- Love for G_____ over love for mankind (Matthew 22:36-38, Luke 14:26)
- Obey God over G_____ (Romans 13, Titus 3:1, Dan 3, 6, Acts 4, 5)
- Explains cases of justified d_____ in the Bible (Exodus 20:16, Joshua 6:17, Heb 11:31, Exodus 1:20-21)

Positives of Graded Absolutism:

- It avoids r_____
- It successfully answers moral c_____
- It makes sense of the c_____ (James 2:13)

Objections to Graded Absolutism:

- How is it any different than Situationism?
- Graded absolutism is a form of subjectivism
- If obedience to the lower commands is sometimes necessary, how can this be called an absolutistic position?
- If the moral law is a reflection of God's attributes, how can there be a hierarchy of moral law?
- How could a lesser evil ever be the good thing to do? Exemptions vs acceptance
- Does Graded absolutism undermine scriptures?

CURVE BALL - What about conscience?

- Conscience has ethical implications (Rom 14:23)
- Yet conscience is unique to the individual (14:5)
- In our convictions, we must not cause our brothers/sisters to stumble (14:13-20)
- THIS does not clarify, it COMPLICATES!

Studying ethics brings us to this main point:

ALL ETHICAL SYSTEMS F_____.

But THIS is the point of ethics...To Highlight the necessity of C_____! (Rom 3:23-24)

Fred Blackburn - "The Dead Have No Need Of Ethics"

- Ethics professor who deposits that all ethical systems fail, and in Christ, we are no longer in need of ethical systems. Why? **R. A. W.**
- We are d_____ to sin (Romans 6:11) **RECKON**
- We bear f_____ by being connected to Jesus (John 15:5) **ABIDE**
- We ignore our f_____ when we walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16) **WALK**

Pneumanomian: Spirit-law

- The Holy Spirit is our guide, but must not be confused with our own rationality, emotions or other possible d_____.
- Rely on the Holy Spirit-inspired W_____! (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- Depend on p_____ who are also walking by the Spirit! (Gal 6:2, Heb 10:24-25)
- The Holy Spirit is our t_____! (John 14:26, 1 Cor 2:6-16)

Strengths of the Pneumanomian position:

- It overcomes the p_____ in the various Absolutist ethics without denying God's absolute Law.
- It highlights the n_____ work of Christ, the cross, and the Holy Spirit.
- It deposits a r_____ solution to walking ethically.
- Because it is by the Spirit and not by the law, it can utilize the positives and avoid the negatives of various ethical s_____.

Objections to the Pneumanomian position:

- Blackburn says that all ethical systems fail, but doesn't his position f_____ as an ethical system?
- Couldn't a "Pneumanomian" position be easily a_____?
- Isn't this position impossible to p_____?