

PASTORAL AND SOCIAL ETHICS

Lecture Outline, Part Two: Christian Ethics (Basic Principles)

by John M. Frame

- I. Christian Ethics: The Normative Perspective (Christian Deontological Ethics)
 - A. God Himself as Norm:
 1. “God is light,” I John 1:5, 4:8ff.
 - a. A reflection on the nature of God at a very basic level. (Cf. “God is love,” “God is Spirit”.)
 - b. By nature, God is self-communicative. Light is something which radiates from a source to a receiver. Cf. the identification between God and the Word, John 1:1, between God and His name (Psalm 7:17, etc.).
 - c. But “light,” particularly in this context, is a moral metaphor.
 - i. To walk in light, in John, is to walk obediently, righteously. Cf. 1:7, 2:9f.
 - ii. To walk in darkness is to sin: 2:11; cf. John 3:19f.
 - iii. Therefore, to say that God is light is to assert that God has a perfectly holy character, worthy of all praise and imitation. This is a pervasive teaching of Scripture. Simply to ascribe such perfection to God is to accord Him the status of a norm.
 - d. The specific function of light in the moral order is to reveal good and evil (John 1:5ff., 3:19ff., 8:12, 9:5, 11:9ff., 12:35f., 46, I John 1:7, 2:8ff.) and therefore to guide.
 - e. As the ultimate ethical guide, who shows us what is right and what is wrong, God is ultimate norm.
 - f. By His very nature, then, God establishes and displays what is normative.
 2. Union of God Himself with His revelation (cf. course in *Scripture and God*):
 - a. Unity between God and His word, name, glory, angel, Son, Spirit.
 - b. Assertions made about these forms of revelation.
 - i. Divine attributes ascribed to them.
 - ii. Uniquely divine acts performed by them.
 - iii. Worship directed to them.
 3. So authority intrinsic to God’s Lordship.
 4. Our responsibility: Essentially, imitation of God.
 - a. Man as vassal king, in God’s image, with responsibilities and privileges analogous to God Himself.
 - b. Righteousness as imitation of God’s character: Leviticus 11:44, Matthew 5:44-48, I Peter 1:15f. Implication: The law ultimately coincides with the character of God. To obey the law is to reflect the character of God. To disobey the law is to mar that image. The law is a picture of God’s Own nature.

- c. Righteousness as imitation of God's acts: Exodus 20:11, Deuteronomy 5:15, Matthew 5:44-48, I John 4:9-11.
 - d. Righteousness as imitation of Christ:
 - i. Christ as light, John 1:4, 3:19, 8:12, 9:5, 12:35f., 46.
 - ii. Cf. Christ as name, glory, angel, Son, Spirit.
 - iii. Imitation of Christ's character, acts: Matt. 16:24, 19:21, John 13:14f., 34f., 17:18, 20:21, 1 Cor. 11:1, Philippians 2:5-11, I Peter 2:21, I John 3:16, Matthew 16:24)
 - iv. Imitation of others who imitate Christ, Luke 4:25ff, 1 Cor. 10:1ff, 11:1, Phil. 3:17, 2 Thess. 3:9, Heb. 6:12, 11-12, James 5:17f.
 - e. Imitation of God must be carefully distinguished from coveting God's prerogatives, seeking to erase the Creator-creature distinction. Imitation is not seeking identity, but seeking to reflect God's character within the admitted limitations of creaturehood. The difference between the two attitudes is radical—between sin in its essence and righteousness in its essence.
 - f. At the most basic level, this is the source of ethical obligation. We have ethical duties because God is intrinsically worthy of obedience and because all creatures are inevitably confronted with the revelation of His standards.
- B. The Word of God as Norm (cf. course in *Scripture and God*. To say that God's Word is authoritative is to say that it is normative for ethics. On that score, no further argument is necessary.)
1. The Word that comes through nature and history:
 - a. Clearly reveals God's glory, His invisible power and divinity (Psalm 19, Romans 1:20).
 - b. Clearly reveals His wrath against sin (Romans 1:18).
 - c. Reveals man's obligations before God (norms!) (Romans 1:32).
 - d. Creation in general is not said to reveal the way of redemption from sin; however, the process of redemptive history described in Scripture does reveal God's way of salvation.
 - e. There is, therefore, a sense in which our "situation" is normative. Thus, the normative and situational perspectives overlap, as we have seen. We will consider this more fully in connection with the situational perspective.
 2. The Word that comes in persons.
 - a. The Word is identified with God Himself and with Christ, while the Spirit is said to bring the revelation home to man's heart. Thus, God mediates His Own Word.
 - b. The Word is also found in man:
 - i. "The work of the law" written upon the heart of man (Romans 2:14f.): All men, by nature, have access to the basic requirements of God. These are essentially the same as those given in the written law, but now communicated through another medium (cf. Murray on Romans).
 - ii. In the regenerate, the Word is written on the heart. This is a much more profound relation between the Word and man than is spoken of in i. The writing of the Word on the heart implies not only knowledge of obligation,

but actual obedience to that obligation, obedience from the heart (Jeremiah 31:33f.; cf. Deuteronomy 6:6, Proverbs 3:3, etc.) Cf. *Doctrine of the Word*, “The Word as God’s Presence”.

- iii. The example of apostles, teachers: I Corinthians 4:16, 11:1, Philippians 3:17, I Thessalonians 1:6, 2:6, II Thessalonians 3:7-9, Hebrews 13:7, I Timothy 2:12.
 - c. This biblical teaching shows the overlap between normative and existential perspectives. We shall explore these matters further when we consider the existential perspective.
3. The Word as spoken and written language.
- a. To the patriarchs, prophets, apostles.
 - b. Through them to others.
 - c. The revelation committed to writing is God’s Own Word also:
 - i. The covenant document is authored by the Lord and stands as the supreme norm of covenant life.
 - ii. The prophetic message claims divine authorship. The prophet is one who speaks God’s Word.
 - iii. Same for the apostolic message.
 - iv. The written Old Testament endorsed by Jesus and the apostles as God’s word.
 - v. The writings of the apostles claim the same authority.
4. Unity of the Word: The same God is speaking in all the media, and His message is consistent in all of them.
- a. Nature-history and Scripture
 - i. Psalm 33:4-11: The written law is binding because it is in essential unity with the creative word which inevitably comes to pass.
 - ii. Psalm 19: Note the implicit correlation between the revelation in creation (1-6) and in the law (7ff.). (Cf. Romans 10:13-17 with 18: Natural and special revelation as one organism).
 - iii. Psalm 147:15-20.
 - b. Person-revelation and Scripture.
 - i. The “law” in the phrases “work of the law” and “law written on the heart” is the law of God, particularly that given through Moses. Thus, the “law on the heart,” far from being an alternative to the written law, is the written law inscribed upon our being.
 - ii. The witness of revelatory persons in Scripture (Christ, the Spirit, the apostles and prophets) unanimously endorses the truth of Scripture.
 - c. Scripture also validates the others, affirming their unity with itself.
- C. Ethics and the Attributes of Scripture
- 1. Power
 - a. Through the Spirit, Scripture (as all divine utterances) carries with it the omnipotence of God.
 - b. Received in faith, the word is the source of all spiritual blessing, all holiness.

- c. Received in unbelief, the word brings curse, hardening.
- 2. Authority (the attribute particularly linked to the normative function)
 - a. At each turning point in human history, the issue facing man is the question of how he will respond to the spoken or written Word of God.
 - i. Genesis 1:28ff: Man's original task defined by the Word.
 - ii. Genesis 2:17: The probation which is to determine his status as righteous or sinner, defined by the Word.
 - iii. The Fall: Substitution of the word of a talking animal (Satan) for that of God. Ultimately, substitution of one's own word for God's.
 - iv. Promises to the Patriarchs: given through God's Word. His people are to believe and obey, even in the face of apparent evidence to the contrary.
 - v. The Mosaic Covenant: Integral to it is the book of the covenant.
 - a) Authorship is by the Lord.
 - b) Contains stipulations, laws which the vassal (Israel) must obey.
 - c) Also contains authoritative revelation
 - i) Of God's Name
 - ii) Of the History of Redemption
 - iii) Of blessings and curses resulting from obedience or disobedience
 - iv) Concerning Covenant Administration
 - vi. Jesus
 - a) His perfect obedience defined by the Law.
 - b) His life directed by biblical prophecy.
 - c) He attests the authority of the Old Testament.
 - d) He sets forth His Own word as the supreme test of discipleship (John 12:47ff., etc.).
 - e) He provides for additional revelation through His apostles.
 - vii. Apostles
 - a) Attest the authority of the Old Testament—cf. II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21.
 - b) Claim to speak and write the Words of God.
 - c) Claim that their words in oral and written form are the supreme test of discipleship.
 - viii. The Last Judgment: the criterion will be the word of Christ, John 12:48.
 - b. As ultimate criterion, Scripture, therefore, is to function as a basic commitment (or presupposition) for all our life. All choices must be consistent with the truth of Scripture.
 - i. Scripture has the ultimate say in defining what our duties are. Ethical behavior is keeping the word of the Lord, Deut. 6:4ff, Luke 8:15, John 17:6, 1 Tim. 6:20, 1 John 3:24, 5:2-3.
 - ii. The basis of duty, then, is not a rational abstraction (non-Christian deontological ethics) nor mere empirical examination of the causes and

effects of actions (non-Christian teleological ethics), nor the autonomous moral self (non-Christian existential ethics).

- iii. The autonomy of the reason or the moral self is thus radically rejected, and with them, the whole tradition of secular ethics.
- iv. Positively, the basis of duty is the fact that a personal God, Who deserves all obedience, has called us in love and authority to be His willing servants.
- v. Why ought we to obey? The answer must be circular: Because God has commanded it.
 - a) All ethical systems have a similar circularity when it comes to justifying their ultimate principle.
 - b) Non-Christian systems, however, render the very concept of duty unintelligible.

3. Clarity

- a. Clarity has meant in Reformed theology that the way of salvation is plain enough that the unlearned as well as the learned may have a sufficient knowledge of it (Westminster Confession of Faith I:vii).
- b. A larger point is ethical in nature: We may never use the unclarity of Scripture (granting that it is unclear in a sense) as an excuse for sin. God always grants us sufficient means to carry out the responsibilities before us.
- c. Christian ethics is practical. The Christian is not faced with the mystery of a contentless norm (non-Christian deontology), nor with the impossibility of doing an indefinite amount of calculation (non-Christian teleology), nor with the impossible responsibility of creating norms out of his own head (non-Christian existentialism).

4. Necessity

- a. We are not permitted to form our moral opinions on the basis of natural revelation alone. Our fallen mind inevitably twists, represses or otherwise resists the truth of natural revelation. Romans 1.
- b. Without the revelation of Christ, no salvation and therefore no morality is possible, Romans 10:13-17.
- c. The covenant document is the covenant. To break the former is to break the latter and *vice-versa*.
- d. Without the written Word, we lose the ultimate standard of discipleship (Above, 2.a.).
- e. No Scripture, no Lord, no salvation.
- f. Thus, autonomous reason has no role in formulating ethical principles. At this point, the whole tradition of “secular ethics” is radically rejected.
- g. Nor may the traditions of the church ever serve in the unique place given by God to His written Word.

5. Sufficiency (of Scripture for ethics)

- a. Formulation. “The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequences may be deduced from

Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.” (Westminster Confession of Faith I:vi).

- b. Biblical bases.
 - i. The polemic against substituting the words of men for the Word of God: Deuteronomy 18; I Kings 13; Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:1-10; Galatians 1:8f.; II Thessalonians 2:2.
 - ii. The boldness of God’s messengers, standing against the many and powerful—Moses before Pharaoh, Elijah before Ahab, Isaiah before Ahaz, Jonah before Nineveh, Paul before Agrippa, Felix Festus—free men! Cf. Acts 4:19f., 5:29.
 - iii. The inscriptional curse of the covenant document: cursed be anyone who adds or subtracts, Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18.
 - iv. The sufficiency of Scripture for salvation and good works, II Timothy 3:16f.
 - v. Christ as the last word of God in the history of redemption (Hebrews 1:1ff.) attested by the apostles (Hebrews 2:4), showing us “all things pertaining to life and godliness” (II Peter 1:2-11) “until the eternal kingdom.”
- c. Misunderstandings of sufficiency
 - i. Sufficiency is not limited to “matters of salvation” in some narrow sense. Rather it is comprehensive. Scripture is sufficient to reveal God’s will in all matters.
 - a) The Confession’s statement does mention salvation explicitly; however:
 - i) The Confession does not regard salvation as something narrowly “religious” as opposed to some other area of life. Salvation is of the whole person.
 - ii) Besides salvation, the Confession refers to “all things necessary for His own glory,” “faith,” and “life.”
 - iii) Nor is it possible to confine “faith” and “life” to some particular area of life. Faith is what we believe and life is what we do (cf. Shorter Catechism, Question 3).
 - b) Scripture places no limit on the sufficiency of Scripture in telling us the will of God. Rather, it speaks comprehensively of the sufficiency of Scripture to equip us “for every good work.”
 - c) This is not to say that Scripture contains all the world’s information or instructs us in all human skills. The point: in any area of life, our duty toward God will be an application of Scripture. For the concept of “application” see section iii.
 - ii. Scripture is not merely sufficient as a general guide by which we discover ethical norms beyond Scripture. Scripture contains all the norms (vs. some Dooyeweerdian representations).

- a) Scripture draws a sharp distinction between the sufficient word of God and the traditions of men. To promulgate a norm as God's will which is not an application of Scripture is to deny that distinction.
 - b) This misunderstanding gains its plausibility from the fact that indeed we do need extra-Scriptural information to apply Scripture. But that fact does not imply that we have duties which are not applications of Scripture.
 - c) Scripture never speaks of any extra-biblical norms which are not also found in Scripture. Romans 3:1f., in fact, may imply that the Scriptures contain a much fuller transcript of God's will than what is available to the Gentiles in natural revelation.
- iii. Scripture is not sufficient merely as a supplement to natural law.
- a) Four types of law in Thomas Aquinas' conception:
 - i) Eternal law (in God's mind)
 - ii) Natural law
 - (1) The counterpart of eternal law in the created world
 - (2) Enables us through natural reason to discern what is good
 - iii) Human law (civil statutes, etc.)
 - iv) Divine law (Scripture)
 - (1) Adds what we must know to attain our supernatural end
 - (2) presupposes the general structure of natural law
 - b) Comments:
 - i) Built on a scheme which radically distinguishes between natural and supernatural ends (cf. critique of this under situational perspective).
 - ii) Fails to reckon with the noetic effects of sin.
 - iii) Puts the Scriptural doctrines on the faulty foundation of apostate (Aristotelian) natural reason.
 - iv) Eliminates the sufficiency of Scripture in any meaningful sense. Not Scripture, but Scripture plus Aristotle becomes our working ethical authority.
- iv. Sufficiency does not rule out the use, even the necessity, of extra-biblical information in the determination of our duty. (Cf. the relation of presuppositions to evidences in apologetics.)
- a) As we have seen, God is revealed in the whole creation, though that revelation is opposed by the natural man.
 - b) Creation is the necessary medium by which the law is applied to specific situations.
 - i) Note the "moral syllogism": Sabbath breaking is wrong. Operating a factory on Sunday is Sabbath breaking. Operating a factory on Sunday is wrong. To evaluate that syllogism, you need to know, not only something about the Bible, but also extra-biblical information. Most moral reasoning is of this kind.

- ii) Scripture itself assumes that man will use his knowledge of creation in applying God's law. When God told Adam to abstain from the forbidden fruit, Adam had the knowledge of creation to distinguish trees from other things and to single out a particular tree in view, etc. God does not spell out explicitly in his revelation all this information. To do so would be ludicrous.
- iii) In Scripture, men are rebuked for failing to make such applications to current questions (Matthew 16:3, 22:29; Luke 24:25; John 5:39f, Romans 15:4; II Timothy 3:16f, II Peter 1:19-21 [in context]).
- iv) If such applications of Scripture were not permitted, we could not use Scripture at all. We would then lack, in effect, not only the applications, but the norm itself. The meaning of Scripture is its application.
- c) Thus, human reasoning also has a role in moral decision making. The sufficiency of Scripture must not be taken to deny that. We are not, of course, speaking of autonomous reason, but reason subject to God's Word ("analogical"). Thus, the Confession speaks of "good and necessary consequence".
- d) And, thus, the Confession speaks of matters which are to be ordered by "the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed".
- v. Sufficiency does not rule out the use, even the necessity, of the illumination of the Spirit for a saving understanding of Scripture, for its proper use and application. Note statement in confession to this effect.
- vi. Summary:
 - a) Scripture contains all the ultimate norms for the Christian life in all its aspects.
 - b) Natural revelation also contains norms, but none that are not in Scripture also.
 - c) The norms of Scripture must be applied with the help of natural revelation and the illumination of the Spirit.
 - d) Such applications, when correct, set forth the meaning of Scripture, its demand in a situation, and therefore are not to be regarded as extra-Scriptural.
- d. The "*adiaphora*" (literally, "no difference," "indifferent").
 - i. History
 - a) Among the Church Fathers, the term was applied to actions such as eating meat which were considered to be neither right nor wrong in themselves.
 - b) During the Reformation, Luther applied the term to certain Roman forms of worship which he felt were neither commanded nor forbidden by Scripture and thus could be practiced by the believer in good conscience. Later, further controversy developed as to whether

Protestant could acquiesce in church rites imposed by Roman Catholic rulers.

- c) In the late 1930's, there was a split in the Presbyterian Church of America (later OPC) partly based on the issue of "Christian liberty". Specifically, the question was whether total abstinence from alcoholic beverages was required by Scripture, or whether such use of alcohol was an *adiaphoron*.
- ii. *Adiaphora* is an ambiguous and misleading concept.
 - a) Taken literally (as a Greek neuter plural), it refers to things which are in some sense "indifferent." Thus often people refer to meat or wine or tables or chairs as "things indifferent". Generally, I think this is a shorthand way of talking about the human use of the "things". However, referring to "things" as indifferent can lead us to forget the biblical teaching that everything in creation is good (Genesis 1:31; I Timothy 4:4). There is no biblical distinction between some things which are good and others which are bad or indifferent.
 - b) More commonly, the word refers specifically to human acts. However, we should bear in mind that according to Scripture all human acts are either pleasing or displeasing to God. I Corinthians 10:31; Romans 14:23; Colossians 3:17, (cf. 23) show that all human acts are under God's evaluation as good or bad.
 - c) One sometimes hears, also, the above in modified form: "acts concerning which Scripture is silent". But the above texts indicate that Scripture speaks concerning all our acts, and so is not silent about anything. Significantly, I Corinthians 10:31 and Romans 14:23 occur in contexts dealing with matters which have traditionally been called *adiaphora*.
 - d) A more common and more defensible use of the term is formulated in this quote from the Lutheran theologian Robert Preus in Baker's *Dictionary of Christian Ethics* "acts or church rites which in themselves are neither morally right or wrong, but matters of Christian liberty." Note the modifying phrase "in themselves". The point is that these acts are right in some situations and wrong in others. Surely there are some actions in this class, but the use of *adiaphora* and the phrase "neither morally right or wrong" disguise the fact that every act in the class is right or wrong in God's sight.
 - e) Another possibility: *Adiaphora* are choices that are not between good and evil, but between two goods. This is an important concept, but I'm not convinced that the term *adiaphora* helps to expound it.
 - f) Finally: *Adiaphora* are acts that in a certain situation are neither commanded nor prohibited by Scripture. Again, this is an important notion, but the term conceals the important fact that such an act is, not morally neutral, but good in God's sight.
 - g) Conclusion: *Adiaphora* is used for too many different concepts, some of them quite unscriptural. Its use in communicating legitimate

Scriptural concepts is vitiated by its connotation of moral neutrality. Such neutrality is everywhere rejected by Scripture.

iii. There is, however, an important point raised by the *adiaphora* discussion, and that is the liberty of the Christian from the religious and ethical ordinances of men, or, in other words, the sufficiency of Scripture for ethics. (The Christian, to be sure, is subject to the ordinances of men for the Lord's sake, I Peter 2:13. But these ordinances can never be his ultimate authority, and they must be defied when they conflict with divine revelation.) That this is the central point of the debate can be seen from the classical "*adiaphora*-texts":

a) Romans 14:1-15:13

i) Setting

(1) One party in the church has a religious scruple that the other does not have.

(a) v. 2: the "strong" eat all things, the weak only herbs.

(b) v. 5: one regards special days, the other does not.

(2) Each is persuaded of the rightness of his actions (6—"unto the Lord")

(3) Both groups are Christians (3, 15).

ii) Problems (important to distinguish):

(1) One group is "weak in faith".

(2) Each group has a wrong attitude toward the other (despising, judging; 3, 4, 10).

(3) The strong, by his behavior, is placing a "stumbling block" in his brother's way.

(a) Not only a cause of grief to him (19), but:

- destructive (15)
- condemnatory (23)
- tending to overthrow the work of God (20)

(The work of God, of course, cannot be overthrown. The language, however, shows the supreme destructiveness of the stumbling block.)

(b) Interpretation: the strong, by his behavior, influences the weak to sin.

(c) The sin of the weak is against his own conscience (20-23) and thus against God.

(d) The sin in violating his own conscience, doing what he believes is wrong even though it may be objectively right, the weak acts out of rebellion, and thus sins objectively (23)

iii) Solutions

- (1) On weakness of faith: Paul sides with the “strong” (14:14, 20, 15:1). The weak, then, we assume, are to be won over to the position of the strong by loving admonishment from the Word.
 - (2) On the disputatiousness: Don’t despise or judge one another. Treat one another as brothers, in Christian love. [Note: this is not inconsistent with (1)]
 - (3) On the stumbling block: Do not induce a weak brother to sin against his conscience. If he cannot be instructed, do not use any pressure to get him to do something he believes is wrong.
- iv) The main thrust of Paul’s injunction: Do not play God. God, not man is the judge of right and wrong.
- (1) Both “strong” and “weak” have compromised that principle—the weak by “judging” the strong and the strong by “despising” the weak.
 - (2) The strong have also, in effect, “played God,” setting their own influence over against what the weak consider to be the command of God.
 - (3) Note Paul’s sustained emphasis throughout the passage on God as the supreme ethical judge: 3ff., 6-12, 17f.
 - (4) The term *adiaphora*, with its connotation of moral neutrality, suggests the very opposite of what Paul is stressing at such length. Paul wants, above all, to tell us that all our actions must be done “unto the Lord” and with faith (23).
 - (5) The notion, then, that the church may not teach people authoritatively concerning matters of food and drink is decisively rejected by this passage.

b) I Corinthians 8-10

i) Setting

- (1) Food offered to pagan idols was being sold in the market, possibly indistinguishable from other food and, thus, hard to avoid.
- (2) Question: Do we endorse idolatry by eating such food? (Note, in context, Paul’s strong condemnation of idolatry, 10:1-22, in particular connection with eating and drinking, 10:16ff. Note also the danger suggested concerning a possible sacramental union with a demon through participation in sacrifice, analogous to the union with God in the Lord’s Supper, 10:16-21, cf. 11:27-34.)
- (3) Again, one party has a scruple (They “lack knowledge,” [1, 7, 10f.] and have a “weak conscience,” [7, 9, 10-12]); the other does not.
- (4) Both groups are Christians (11f.)

ii) Problems (Same as those in Romans).

- (1) Ignorance, weakness (8:1, 7, 9-12)
- (2) Contentions (a general problem at Corinth, 1:11. Note the urging to love in 8:1-3).
- (3) Stumbling block: 8:7, 9ff. The weak sees the strong eating and is enticed into eating himself—out of a rebellious spirit. The result is that the weak is guilty of idolatry.

iii) Solutions

- (1) The strong is right, because an idol, unlike God, has no power to curse those who eat his food. An idol is nothing (4ff.). Our God is the only Lord (cf. 8:8, 10:26).
 - (a) Note well: The emphasis is that we must not ask what the demon thinks about our eating, but what God thinks of it.
 - (b) Thus again, the stress is on the exclusive authority of God over our behavior. The point is that these matters of “indifference” or “neutrality”.
 - (c) If one eats to the glory of God, the act is good (10:31); if you do it out of rebellion against God, then you are in league with devils—not because of the food, but because of your sinful behavior.
 - (d) Weakness of faith is failure to understand this principle. Cf. the young Christian who burns his idols, throws away his rock music, vs. the older Christian who collects idols and rock records for their artistic value.
- (2) Contentions: Be loving (8:1-3), edifying (10:23f.). Do not exalt your own “knowledge”. (“I am a Westminster graduate; I know the Greek. You are a benighted fundamentalist.”)
- (3) Stumbling block: Seek to teach the weak, but, if that is not possible, and if you might cause him to violate his conscience, abstain, 8:7, 9ff. God’s concerns, not mine, must govern my behavior.

iv) Note again, the inadequacy of “*adiaphora*” to convey the moral intensity of the situation. There is nothing morally neutral about becoming an idolater through violation of conscience.

I Corinthians 9 is especially significant in showing the intensely moral considerations which govern Paul himself in decisions on how to use the good things of creation.

- c) I Timothy 4:1-5: Some advocate abstinence from marriage and meats. The operative point is that God has created all things good, and thus, man has no right to despise them.
- d) Colossians 2:16f.: Some try to “judge” others about feasts, etc. The relevant point in context is the triumph of Christ over principalities and powers. We hold fast to him, not to men or angels. Again, the opposite of ethical indifference is presented.

D. Parts and Aspects of Scripture as Norms

Scripture is a diversity in unity. In seeking to use Scripture as our ethical norm, we cannot avoid the question of how the various parts and aspects are related to one another. Ethics presupposes hermeneutics (as well as *vice-versa!*).

1. Different Forms of Language

- a. Scripture contains many kinds of language: imperatives, indicatives, questions, promises, prose, poetry, song, law, history, epistle, proverbs, parables, drama, symbolism, emotive expression, etc.
- b. When doing theology, we are tempted to think of Scripture as a collection of indicatives; when doing ethics, we are inclined to think of Scripture as a collection of commands. There is truth in both of these approaches [e., below], but both can mislead.
- c. Since all Scripture is profitable for godliness (II Timothy 3:16f.), we dare not exclude any passage or any type of language in formulating a Christian ethic. The ethical implications of the Psalms, of Ecclesiastes, of the parables, etc., must all be done justice.
- d. It may not always be possible to do justice to such diverse media merely by translating them into scholars' prose. At times, ethical admonition may have to reflect the variety of Scripture itself—using poetry, symbol, parable, etc.
- e. Each type of language is a perspective on the whole, as well as an element within Scripture. In a sense, all Scripture is indicative because all Scripture contributes to our belief system. All Scripture is imperative because all Scripture contributes to our knowledge of our duty before God. Yet it is dangerous to reduce our image of Scripture to one such perspective, denying the existence or importance of others.
- f. The structure of the suzerainty treaty—a unity made up of different kinds of language (name, history, law, vow, administration) illustrates how a document with many functions can exercise a unified authority.

2. Gospel, Law, and Redemptive History (or: the relation of biblical and systematic theology in the development of a Christian ethic). Compare discussion of “biblico-theological extremism” under the definition of “moralism” in the beginning of this outline.

- a. In many ways, it can be shown (cf. courses in hermeneutics, homiletics, biblical theology) that Christ is the “center” of Scripture, and, more specifically, that the events of his death, resurrection, ascension, and sending forth the Spirit at Pentecost are of central importance in Scripture. These are the events to which the Old Testament looks forward and upon which the New Testament reflects.
- b. Does this imply that Scripture is most basically to be characterized as a redemptive history?
 - i. Certainly, Scripture is a history in that it records and interprets the historical events mentioned earlier, and in their historical context.
 - ii. Scripture, however, is different from modern histories.

- a) It includes, for instance, a law code, a song book, a collection of proverbs, a set of letters—and not merely as historical source-material!
 - b) All of these, and the historical material too, are intended not merely to give us historical information, but to govern our lives here and now (Romans 15:4; II Timothy 3:16f., etc.).
 - c) As often pointed out, the Gospels are not biographies of Jesus. They are Gospels. Their purpose is not merely to inform, but to elicit faith. Most histories do not have this purpose.
- iii. It would, of course, be possible to define “history” so broadly as to include all these functions. One could speak of the Psalms and Proverbs as in some sense “interpretation” of historical events. But such definitions are so far removed from normal language as to be misleading. “Interpretation” in the usual sense is not the chief purpose of Psalms and Proverbs.
 - iv. I am therefore willing to say that Scripture is a redemptive history, but I am reluctant to say that this is the only way or the most important way of characterizing Scripture.
 - v. At the very least, we would have to modify the phrase “redemptive history” in order to say that Scripture, unlike any other history, is normative redemptive history—history intended not only to inform, but to rule the reader (II Timothy 3:16f.).
 - vi. But to say that Scripture is normative history is to say that Scripture is not only history, but also law, and that “history” and “law” are at least equally important characterizations of Scripture.
 - vii. Such correlation between history and law is to be expected if, as Kline argues, Scripture is a “suzerainty treaty”.
 - viii. Scripture is also Gospel—its intention is to bring the good news of Christ to elicit faith in Him.
 - ix. I would argue that there are still other ways to characterize Scripture: It is also promise, wisdom, comfort, admonition. Cf. the variety of the treaty form.
 - x. Does this approach compromise the emphasis of Scripture upon Christ and upon His death, resurrection, etc.?
 - a) Christ is not only central to history, He is central also as the eternal lawgiver (Word), as the wisdom of God, as prophet, priest, and king. It therefore could be argued that a more flexible approach to Scripture does more justice to the centrality of Christ than does an approach which gives primacy to history.
 - b) The death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ and the Pentecostal outpouring are important not merely as historical happenings (though over against the skepticism of modern thought, it is vitally important to affirm them as historical happenings). They are also vitally important in their present impact upon us, not least in their normative function. Romans 12:1ff.; Ephesians 4:1ff.

- c. Ought ethics and theology to be “controlled” by redemptive history?
 - i. They ought to be controlled by everything Scripture says. This includes not only its statements of historical fact and its interpretations of the meanings of history, but also its commands, poetry, its systems of truth, etc.
 - ii. Since theology is to be controlled by everything in Scripture, it is to be controlled by redemptive history, but not by that alone. Theology (ethics) must be aware of the process of redemptive history, must take it into account, must say or do nothing that compromises the teachings of Scripture about this history.
 - iii. Theology and ethics must be equally concerned to do justice to the normative teaching of Scripture, its power to change the heart, etc.
 - d. Relations between ethics and redemptive history
 - i. Redemptive history is the setting in which the law is given. We must understand redemptive history in order to understand and apply the law.
 - ii. The grace of God given in redemptive history gives to us the righteousness of Christ by imputation and the power to keep the law by sanctification.
 - iii. Reflection upon redemptive history motivates us to obey. We obey, not simply because we are commanded to, but out of gratefulness for what God has done and an in-wrought desire to obey. Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:15; Colossians 3:1ff.
 - iv. Our fundamental obligation, to imitate the righteousness of God, is not created by redemptive history. It dates from creation and is binding upon all people, whether redeemed or not.
 - v. Ethics, then, involves description of the redemptive-historical process, but not only that. It also involves the imperative of the law, the promise and comfort of the gospel, the powerful poetry and wisdom and parable which drives the message into the heart.
 - vi. Since ethics is inevitably application, it must not only look back upon redemptive history (and ahead to the *parousia*), but must focus upon the present, exhorting us to our present duties in the name of Christ.
3. Law and Gospel
- a. The Lutheran Distinction (*Formula of Concord*, Article V.)
 - i. Law: “properly a doctrine divinely revealed, which teaches what is just and acceptable to God, and which also denounces whatever is sinful and opposite to the divine will.”
 - ii. Gospel: “the doctrine which teaches what a man ought to believe who has not satisfied the law of God, and therefore is condemned by the same. . . .”
 - b. The *Formula* teaches that even though the Gospel preached by Christ and the disciples involves a call to repentance (Mark 1:1ff, 1:15, Luke 24:46-47, Acts 20:21), the Gospel when contrasted in general with law makes no such demand. It comforts against the terrors of the law by bidding us look to Christ alone (Article V:vi)

- c. In Lutheranism, the distinction between law and gospel is the key to Scripture. They consider many others, including the Reformed, to be confused as to the distinction.
 - d. The Reformed, while not denying the legitimacy of the distinction, tend to speak of “law” and “gospel” in broader, and, to my mind, more Scriptural terms.
 - i. The Lutheran sees law almost exclusively as threat and terror, while the Reformed put more emphasis upon law as the delight of the redeemed heart (Romans 7:22; Psalm 1, 119:97; etc.), the law as a gift of grace (Psalm 119:29), law as “way of life,” (Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 5:33, 8:3, 11:13-15, 28:1-14, 30:11-20, 32:47; Psalm 119:29; etc.).
 - ii. The Lutheran position tends to abstract the Gospel from the demand of repentance, feeling that such a demand is not properly good news. But, in Scripture, the demand is good news because it arises out of the fact that God has acted, and man may now respond.
 - e. The three uses of the law
 - i. Enumeration:
 - a) “External discipline”—to restrain sin in society (*Formula of Concord*, Article VI)
 - b) Law as a means to drive men to Christ by exposing their sin.
 - c) Law as a rule by which the regenerate may shape their lives.
 - ii. The Lutherans accept all three uses of the law (as over against some among them who denied that the law should be preached to the regenerate). They base this use of the law upon the incompleteness of sanctification in the regenerate, and therefore, the believers continuing need of threat, “sharp urgency”.
 - iii. Works of the Spirit, however, are such as can be produced by no threat or constraint whatever. (“ . . .as if they had never received any precept, had never heard any threats, and expected no remuneration.”) As such, believers “live in the Law”; i.e., they conform to the law, but not by threat or constraint.
 - iv. The Reformed stress that the preaching of the law need not be mere threat or constraint, but is a gift of grace.
 - v. The distinction between works done under constraint of law and works done in the Spirit is not as simple as pictured in the *Formula*.
 - a) Agreed: Works done merely out of constraint and not out of love and gratefulness to God are not good works at all.
 - b) However, living in the Spirit is living in response to a command (Galatians 5:16, etc.). It is preposterous to suppose that obeying this command puts us in the sphere of the flesh.
 - c) It should not be supposed that sanctification is achieved without struggle, without constraint.
4. Law and Grace (see Murray, 181ff.)
- a. What law can do:

- i. commands and demands
 - ii. pronounces approval and blessing
 - iii. pronounces judgment upon infractions
 - iv. exposes, convicts of sin
 - v. excites, incites to worse transgression
 - b. What law cannot do:
 - i. anything to justify the sinner
 - ii. anything to relieve the bondage of sin
 - c. Being “under law”:
 - i. being under the dominion of sin (Romans 6:14)
 - ii. being under the ritual law of the Mosaic economy
 - iii. obligated to obey God in Christ.
 - d. The Christian under the law of God: Matthew 5:17-20; I Corinthians 9:20f.; Romans 6:14, 7:1-6; I Corinthians 6, 8.
5. Old and New Covenants
- a. In both covenants, there is demand for obedience and the promise of salvation by grace alone through faith (Murray, 194-201).
 - b. Both covenant documents are authoritative for men today: II Timothy 3:16f.; Matthew 5:17-20.
 - c. What change is brought about by the establishing of the New Covenant?
 - i. Now, we live looking back on the accomplishment of redemption, not looking forward to it as under the Old Covenant.
 - a) Thus, the believer has a much greater power to do good works because of the great fullness of the Spirit poured out on Pentecost.
 - b) Thus, the believer has a firmer assurance that his sins are forgiven.
 - c) Thus, he has a stronger motive to holiness:
 - i) Gratefulness for the love shown to him in Christ.
 - ii) A firmer assurance that sin can be overcome by the power of God.
 - iii) The example of Jesus’ love.
 - d) Hence, appeal to the work of Christ and its results (presence of the Spirit, unity of the body, etc.) become the chief motivations of New Testament ethics. It is these facts, more than the mere fact that holiness is God’s will, which motivates the exhortations of the New Testament. (Note “therefore” in Romans 12, etc.)
 - e) The NT does sometimes appeal to the law, however, to motivate obedience (Matt. 5:17-20, 7:12, 12:5, 22:36-40, 23:23, Luke 10:26, John 8:17, Rom. 8:4, 13:8-10, 1 Cor. 9:8-9, 14:34, Gal. 4:21-22, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, Jas. 2:8.)
 - ii. What change is there in the believer’s obligation as a result of the covenantal change? What stays the same?
 - a) The fundamental requirement of love is the same (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37ff.; parallels; John 13:34f., many

Johannine parallels) with a new clarity, motivation and example (“as I have loved you”).

- b) Our obligation to keep the law in general remains intact, Matthew 5:17-20.
- c) While the whole law remains binding, its application is different in many respects.
 - i) A change of situation always brings about a change in application. The application of the Torah to city life is different from its application to a largely agricultural society.
 - ii) The change from Old Covenant to New brings about some rather broad changes in the situation in which we apply the law.
 - (1) In general, the Old Covenant is related to the New as shadow to substance, as type to antitype. Since the reality had not yet come, God’s people in the Old Covenant period knew of Christ only through symbolic prophecies, types, ordinances. Since Christ has come, and with him, the New Covenant revelation, we are not restricted to such shadows for our knowledge of Christ. Positively, Christ, Himself, is revealed as the sufficient mediator and sacrifice.
 - (2) Unlike the Old, the New Covenant community is not identified with a particular national and political unit. The New Covenant order, therefore, does not demand loyalty to one earthly kingdom among others. Positively, Christ is the King in a new international commonwealth, a new people of God.
 - (3) The New Covenant puts into effect a written canon that will not be added to until the *Parousia*. The former special office of prophecy is fulfilled in Christ as the mediator of the New Covenant revelation.
 - (4) Thus, the New Covenant puts into effect crucial changes in the priestly, kingly, and prophetic functions.
 - iii) Since the situation changes in these ways, the status of the law changes as well.
 - (1) Christ as priest fulfills the law of expiation.
 - (2) Christ as king fulfills the civil law.
 - (3) Christ as prophet fulfills the moral law.

6. Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil Law

- a. The traditional discussion
 - i. The Westminster Confession (XIX:i-v) distinguishes three kinds of law:
 - a) Moral, given at creation, summarized in the Decalogue, perpetually binding and useful under the gospel (i, ii, v, vi)
 - b) Ceremonial, prefiguring Christ and giving moral instruction, all of which are abrogated under the New Testament (iii).

- c) Judicial (sometimes called civil), given to govern Israel as a political entity. These expired with that state, “not obliging any other now, further than the general equity may require.”
 - ii. Controversy has existed:
 - a) Concerning the three-fold distinction itself.
 - b) Concerning the status of the civil law.
- b. Evaluation of the three-fold distinction.
 - i. The distinction is not found explicitly in Scripture. Scripture speaks simply of “the law,” both positively and negatively. It is “the law” which Jesus did not come to destroy (Matthew 5:17-20). It is “the law” to which men are in bondage because of sin. It is “the law” from which we are set free in Christ. The Old Testament, too, does not list its statutes in such neat groups. “Moral,” “ceremonial,” and “civil” statutes are placed alongside each other and mixed together with no apparent concern about possible category-confusion.
 - ii. It is important, therefore, to say that the most basic changes wrought by the New Covenant in this area affect, not one part of the law, but the law as a whole.
 - iii. It is not always easy to distinguish these three categories.
 - a) They don’t come neatly labeled in the OT. Typically, they are mixed together.
 - b) Laws traditionally called “ceremonial” do not pertain only to ceremonies, but to many other things, like diet, clothing, economics (the Sabbatical years and Jubilee), etc.
 - c) The Confession’s discussion makes it look as though the way to find if a law is currently binding is to determine first which of the three categories it belongs to. However, it more often happens that we determine which laws are binding first, and then decide which bin to put them in.
 - iv. Nevertheless, the three-fold distinction does reflect a genuine distinction within the divine government—the prophetic, priestly, and kingly functions.
 - a) Moral law corresponds closely to the prophetic office, which sets forth God’s demand for righteousness.
 - b) Ceremonial law (called law of expiation in an earlier discussion) corresponds to the priestly office, which concerns particularly man’s need of expiation from sin.
 - c) Civil law corresponds to the kingly office, which governs the covenant commonwealth.
- c. Evaluation of the discussion concerning continuation / abrogation.
 - i. To summarize our earlier discussion: It is best to say that the law as a whole is subject to changes in application because of the advent of the New Covenant.

- ii. Ideally, then, it is best not to raise the question in terms of the general categories moral, ceremonial, and civil. Rather, having seen something of the overall change in our relation to the law, we ought then to study each particular statute to see how it is affected by the overall change.
- iii. This task, however, can be facilitated if we learn to make at least rough groupings among types of laws, determining those groupings primarily by the functions of the laws in the history of redemption. The distinction between moral, ceremonial, and civil, then, can be an aid to us.
- iv. The ceremonial law.
 - a) Sacrifices and cleansing regulations are no longer literally binding because they are but shadows of the work of Christ (Colossians 2:13-17; Hebrews 9:8-10; 10:1-18).
 - b) Dietary laws are not literally binding because they are a form of cleansing law, prefiguring the purity of Christ. Enforced under the New Covenant, they would encourage the misconception that the Kingdom of God is food and drink, Mark 7:14-23, esp. verse 19; I Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14; Acts 10:9-16, 11:2-10.
 - c) The calendar of feasts is treated similarly, Colossians 2:16f.
 - d) The fundamental requirement of these laws is still binding, that we approach the holy hill of God with clean hands and a pure heart, i.e., with the righteousness of Christ. We come to God bearing sacrifice—the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ.
 - e) The ceremonial laws continue to instruct us concerning that righteousness.
 - f) Do some of the “ceremonial” laws bear upon human health and safety? More work is needed on this subject.
- v. The moral law.
 - a) In general, the authority of the “moral” statutes is reaffirmed in the New Testament and most all of the Old Testament ethical principles are specifically reinforced.
 - i) Statements about the authority of the law (Matthew 5:17ff.) or the moral teaching of the Old Testament (II Timothy 3:16f., etc.).
 - ii) Authoritative use of the Old Testament in moral discussion: Matthew 5-7; James 2:8; Mark 7:10; Romans 13:8-10; Ephesians 6:2f., etc.
 - iii) Reiteration of Old Covenant moral principles, Ephesians 4-6, etc.
 - b) Changes
 - i) The law is no longer a curse and threat because of Christ.
 - ii) Since our sins are forgiven and the Spirit dwells within, the law is now in a greater sense than under the Old Covenant, a delight.
 - iii) We have a stronger motivation to holiness.
 - iv) The New Covenant revelation completes the canon. The moral law has been revealed once-for-all, and our business is application of that, not waiting expectantly for further revelation.

- vi. The civil law (Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*).
- a) Obvious Changes
 - i) The New Covenant no longer identifies the Kingdom of God with an earthly political unit. We belong to a heavenly city, under Christ, the King. Thus, there is no requirement of loyalty to national Israel. The Kingdom of God is not to be defended by the sword.
 - ii) Some of the civil laws clearly are addressed to a particular historical situation, e.g., the division of Canaan into portions for the various families of Israel, the consultation of Urim and Thummim, etc.
 - b) Does the kingship of Christ, however, eliminate the need for a distinctively Christian political order?
 - i) In the Old Testament, the ultimate kingship of God was not compromised by the existence of a temporal human kingship.
 - ii) The New Testament teaches that in the new dispensation, God appoints rulers for His righteous purposes (Romans 13:1-7).
 - iii) Since all things are to be done to God's glory, we should expect God to provide us with at least general norms for righteous rule.
 - c) The Old Testament theocracy may be seen as a sort of "incarnation" (Don't press the analogy suggested by that word!): the kingdom of God existing in the form of human social institutions.
 - i) The theocratic statutes presuppose that paradoxical situation, and thus may not be naively applied to any other situation.
 - ii) With the coming of the New Covenant, political institutions on earth lose their "divine nature".
 - iii) Nevertheless, as a form of human government promoting social order, the statutes must be seen as the wisest ever given (Deuteronomy 4:7f.)
 - iv) In the Old Testament period, even pagan rulers were judged for their failure to rule righteously, righteousness being defined by the law of God. Thus, the Old Covenant norms for politics were not seen as applying exclusively to Israel (cf. Bahnsen).
 - v) It is inevitable, then, that we shall seek to imitate the Old Covenant theocracy in developing a Christian politics, somewhat as we seek to imitate the righteousness of the incarnate Christ.
 - vi) Imitation of Old Testament Israel, like imitation of Christ, is fraught with peril. We will often be tempted to claim for ourselves what was unique to the theocracy. On the other hand, we may dismiss as unique to the theocracy something that God wants us to observe. The job is difficult.
 - d) Problem Areas.
 - i) Sabbatical years and the Jubilee

- (1) Analogous to yearly feasts or to weekly Sabbath?
- (2) Are they moral, ceremonial, or civil? (Perhaps, the distinction breaks down here.)
- (3) If civil, are they distinctive to Israel or a divine model for all civil order?
- (4) If limited to Israel, how may we in the present situation emulate the equity provided by these laws?

ii) Tithe structure.

iii) Penalty structure (same problems).

- e) Summary: I'm straddling the fence on this issue. I hope I can resolve it some in my own mind because it is crucial in determining our social and political responsibility. In general, however, I would say that the burden of proof is on those who would deny the relevance of some civil statute to our time.

7. The Love Commandment and Other Commandments

Note: more will be said about the nature of love under the existential perspective. Our present purpose is to sketch the relation between the love-command and the other commands. By "love commandment," we mean the commandment to love God and, thus implicitly and on that basis, the command to love one another.

- a. Prominence of the Love Commandment.
 - i. Love as the covenant allegiance owed by a vassal to his suzerain.
 - ii. Prominence of love (= exclusive covenant loyalty) in the Decalogue. ("Thou shalt have no other gods before me.")
 - iii. Prominence of love in the *shema*, the fundamental confession of faith of God's Old Covenant people (Deuteronomy 6:4ff.)
 - iv. Prominence of love in Jesus' teaching (particularly love of enemies, e.g., Matthew 6:43ff.).
 - v. Love as the "new commandment" identifying the New Covenant people of God, John 13:34f., 15:12, 17; I John 2:7ff., 3:11ff., 4:7ff.
 - vi. Emphases on love in New Covenant ethics: I Thessalonians 4:9; I Peter 1:22; Hebrews 13:1.
 - vii. Love as the highest Christian virtue: I Corinthians 13; I Peter 4:8.
 - viii. Love as fulfillment of the law: Matthew 22:37-40; parallels; Galatians 5:14, 6:2; Matthew 7:12; Romans 13:8ff.
- b. Love is a commandment, part of the law.
 - i. This fact immediately rules out any opposition or antithesis between love and commandments in general.
 - ii. Any arguments directed against the keeping of commandments in general bear with equal weight against obedience to the love commandment.
- c. The love commandment requires obedience to the whole law of God.
 - i. In the covenant structure, the commandment to love the Lord (exclusive covenant loyalty) is a prologue to the detailed prescriptions of the law.

Love is demonstrated by obedience to the prescriptions. Note connection in Deuteronomy 6:4ff.

- ii. “Fulfillment” of the law implies that loving behavior will carry out the law’s requirements.
 - iii. One who loves Jesus will keep his commandments, John 14:15, 21, 23, 15:10; I John 2:3-5, 3:21ff., 5:3. Cf. correlation of “light” and “love” as equally ultimate characterizations of God in I John.
 - iv. Scripture never suggests that one must ever disobey a divine command to fulfill the law of love.
- d. Love is a provocative characterization of the law.
- i. Even though love involves obedience to law, loving and obeying are not merely synonymous. Although they require the same thing, they characterize it in different ways.
 - ii. Love focuses more on the motive of the heart (cf. later under existential perspective), obedience more on the actions performed.
 - iii. The emphasis on love, therefore, warns us that slavish obedience is not the goal of the law. Obedience out of grudging, unwilling submission is not what the law requires. Rather, God calls us to lives of earnest concern, genuine care, for God and one another.
- e. Misunderstandings
- i. Schleiermacher: law is concerned only with the outward act. Therefore, the love commandment is not a commandment at all.
 - ii. Brunner, Bonhoeffer: Since God’s will for me is always absolutely concrete, law can be only a general guide. Knowledge of God’s will comes about in a momentary inspiration in a situation.
 - iii. J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*: There are no rules. Laws are general guidelines, maxims, but none is absolute. Ultimately, we must simply do what is the most loving thing in a particular situation.
 - a) Contradiction: Fletcher renounces rules (irrationalism) but sets forth his own rule (do what is loving in a situation) as absolute (rationalism). (His attempt to show that his rule is not a rule in unconvincing.)
 - b) Fletcher’s rule lacks all content, and, thus, can give no moral guidance.
 - c) Fletcher’s notion of love is unbiblical. He denies the biblical relationship between love and the other commandments.
 - d) Implementing the norm of love faces the same difficulties as implementing the principle of utility.
 - e) Thus, Fletcher’s arguments (often dogmatic assertions) about what love requires are supremely unconvincing.
8. The Decalogue and the Other Commandments (see introduction to Part Three).
9. Priorities Among Divine Commands.
- a. Every legal obligation (in human or divine law) is essentially obligation to a legal system. That system includes not only specific precepts, but also broader principles, judicial arrangements for applying the law, executive arrangements

for enforcing it, etc. The system as a whole determines what use is to be made of any part of it.

- b. In any legal system, certain principles are regarded as more important than others: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice,” Matthew 9:13; “Leave your gift at the altar and be reconciled to your brother,” Matthew 5:24; “Weightier matters of the Law,” Matthew 23:23. Cf. Psm. 78:17, 32, 56, Ezek. 8:6, 13, 15, Matt. 12:31-32, 18:6, Luke 12:47-48, John 19:11, Heb. 2:2-3, 10:29, 1 John 5:16, WLC 151-52.
- c. In any legal system, it is assumed that, in emergencies, the normal regulations may be transcended by larger principles such as the maintenance of human life and safety (Matthew 12:4, parallels), obedience to higher authority (Acts 5:29; cf. Romans 13; I Peter 2:13ff.)
 - i. Norman Geisler: “graded absolutism”
 - ii. W. D. Ross: “prima facie duties.”
- d. Thus, the application of any biblical commandment is subject to the broader principles of biblical ethics. In any particular situation, a lesser principle may be transcended by a higher one.
 - i. This is not antinomianism: we are talking about “higher” and “lesser” principles within the law itself, not exceptions to law. Actions in accord with this principle are obedient to the law in its full meaning.
 - ii. This must be done carefully. This principle is not a warrant, e.g., to disobey the seventh commandment in the name of love since love is a higher and broader principle. We must guard against replacing the biblical norms with the lusts of our own hearts and using the above principle as rationalization.
- e. A further example of this principle: Not every biblical commandment can be carried out immediately by every individual.
 - i. We tend to think of obedience as instant response to divine commands: biblical pictures of Abraham, Jesus, and others reinforce this picture.
 - ii. Thus, sermons often suggest that we ought to drop whatever we are doing and do what the sermon calls for: persistent prayer, evangelism, pursuit of social justice, visiting the sick, feeding the poor, studying the Scripture, etc.
 - iii. However, we clearly cannot do all of these all of the time. We are finite, and our schedules are limited. We must frequently stop obeying one command in order to obey another. And Scripture does not assume otherwise. It assumes that some commands may not be carried out “immediately”.
 - iv. It also recognizes that such activities are fundamentally the responsibility of the church as a whole, not of each individual within the church. No individual could single-handedly evangelize everyone in Burma or pray for all the lost in India.
 - v. Each individual is expected to play a role in the fulfillment of these tasks. The role one plays will depend at least partly, on his own gifts. Not everyone is expected to play the same role.

- vi. It should not be assumed, therefore, that one who spends ten hours a week helping the poor is necessarily more obedient than someone who spends ten hours in prayer or visiting the sick.
- vii. Therefore, in addition to the general system of “priorities” set forth in the law itself [c., d. above], each individual must develop for himself, in the context of the church and obedience to the Word, a personal set of “priorities” which may be different from those of anyone else.
- viii. It seems odd, even impious, to suggest that an individual may decide what emphasis he will put on various divine (absolute) commands. Yet, this is a necessary part of applying the word to a situation; and without such application, the law is a dead letter.
- ix. It must not be assumed, therefore, that because God has commanded something, it must be done immediately or must be given an unlimited amount of time.
 - a) In some church courts, e.g., one commonly hears that since God has sanctified the truth and requires sound doctrine, questions of doctrinal orthodoxy always must take precedence over all other considerations. Thus, there are church courts that are so preoccupied with doctrinal questions (even minutiae) that they do little in the area of missions, evangelism, prayer, etc. The commandment concerning doctrinal soundness, however, must not be thought to take precedence over every other consideration in every situation.
 - b) Other church courts take the opposite approach: God commands evangelism, and, thus, we must be up and about the business of soul-winning, and questions of doctrine must take second place. But to assume without argument that they must is to take an irresponsible attitude.
 - c) The OP and PCA churches differ essentially in their customary determinations of priorities. The OPC is closer to a) above; the PCA closer to b), though both bodies are most balanced than the caricatures in a) and b) would suggest. The main problem inhibiting merger of these bodies is that neither group is willing to question seriously its own scheme of priorities or to acknowledge the difficulty and subtlety of the question involved. Each group tends simply to assume that its own scale of priorities is right and then to measure the other group in terms of that scale.

II. Christian Ethics: The Situational Perspective (Christian Teleological or Situational Ethics).

In the normative perspective, we asked “What is our duty?” Here, the ethical question is, “How must I change the world in order to accomplish God’s purposes?”

A. The Situation and Our Knowledge of Our Duty.

- 1. Recall what was said earlier about God’s character and acts as ethical revelation.
 - a. As our ultimate “situation” or environment, God Himself is norm [I.A.].

- b. Since his word comes through nature and history, there are norms available to us through the situation [I.B.].
 - c. Such norms do not go “beyond” Scripture in the sense of compromising Scriptural sufficiency [I.C.5.].
 - d. Yet, natural revelation is indispensable for the application of Scripture [esp. I.C.5.c.iii.]. And without the application, we would have no norm at all.
2. Functions of the situation in making moral decisions.
- a. Posing moral questions: We are told to do all to the glory of God. Thus, every fact poses the question of how we are going to use the things before us to God’s glory. (Picture Adam’s thinking as he came to know more and more about the world: “How can I best relate this fact to my calling before God?”)
 - b. Answering moral questions: Everything we learn about the facts helps us to answer the questions of 2.a. The fact that fire cooks food shows us one way in which fire can be employed in the building of God’s kingdom. This is saying simply that everything we learn about the world helps us better to apply God’s norms. Cf. the relation of presuppositions to evidences in apologetics. (Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*)
3. Means-end relationships (teleology).
- a. Often, applications of God’s norms will be on the basis of means-end relationships. If I am to obey God by worshipping on Sunday morning, I must find transportation to church. Finding transportation, then, is a duty because it is a means to the end of getting to church.
 - b. Does the end justify any means?
 - i. God uses even ungodly means to achieve his purposes. His purposes will be achieved whatever means we may try to employ (his decretive will). This fact, however, does not justify the use of such means (his preceptive will).
 - ii. Though ungodly means have a certain effectiveness [i], Scripture often represents them as powerless. Ultimately, they can achieve neither their own purposes nor the purposes of God (Ephesians. 6, e.g.).
 - iii. Thus, in one sense, only godly means are capable of achieving God’s purposes. Ungodly means must be seen as working against them, contributing to them only in a highly ironic or paradoxical sense. God uses ungodly means by overruling them, overwhelming them, forcing them contrary to their intention to glorify him.
 - iv. Thus, in one sense, the end does justify the means. Any means that is in the best sense conducive to God’s glory is legitimate. Any means that is not is illegitimate.
 - v. However, the situation is so complicated that we should seek to evaluate on the basis of Scripture not only the ends we seek, but also the means for achieving them.
 - vi. In practice, we often justify an action because it is conducive to a good end. There is nothing wrong with this as long as we are open to the correction of Scripture concerning both ends and means.

- vii. A means which is good ‘in itself,’ or good ‘in general,’ must be further evaluated according to the end it aims to accomplish and its efficiency in achieving that end.
 - c. Thus, we can see the very limited sense in which a ‘Christian utilitarianism’ is possible. We seek to calculate the consequences of our actions to determine whether they are conducive to God’s purposes. But we must do this always in subjection to God’s written Word.
4. Casuistry.
- a. Casuistry is simply the application of law to situations.
 - b. As such, it is inevitable. If we are to obey the law at all, we must learn to make judgments about its applications (cf. normative perspective). Scripture requires that. [I.D.5.c.iv.b) i)].
 - c. Casuistry assesses the differences in different situations, the motives of actions, the diversities (priorities, especially) within the law itself.
 - d. Though casuistry is unavoidable to the Christian, it has been subject to much abuse. We dare not take on this job without being aware of the dangers of it, the errors associated with it in the past.
 - i. Pharisaism: The law is in effect replaced or even contradicted by casuistic interpretations, “. . . making the word of God of none effect by tradition.”
 - ii. False applications were often made normative in the church.
 - iii. Casuistry as rationalization of sin: (“lax” interpretations). In Rabbinical Judaism and later Roman Catholic casuistry, there was a tendency to polarities between more “lax” and more “rigorous” schools: Shammai vs. Hillel, Jansenists vs. Jesuits, etc.
 - a) Principle that a wrong action can be justified because it is more right than its opposite.
 - b) Too easily determining exceptions to general commands.
 - c) Too easily claiming implicit qualifications to commands.
 - d) Principle that a normally sinful action can be excused if done for a good motive.
 - iv. Casuistry as a burdensome yoke (“rigorous” interpretations):
 - a) Vast catalogue of restrictions added to God’s word.
 - b) Leaves little room for freedom of the believer, individual responsibility.
 - c) Encourages a nit-picking mentality, interest in minutiae as over against the “weightier” matters.
 - d) Questions the perspicuity of revelation by making morality a matter for experts to decide.
 - e) Promotes overconfidence in the interpreter’s own ability to interpret Scripture and situation. Are we really sure that we “understood” the Viet Nam war?
 - f) Encourages works-righteousness.
 - e. Ways to guard against such abuse.

- i. Firm, practical confidence in the gospel of justification by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ.
 - ii. Firm, practical confidence in Scripture as the clear and sufficient word of God.
 - iii. Perspective: Awareness of what is more or less important within Scripture itself, and among its applications (“priorities”).
 - iv. A mature conscience, resisting rationalization.
 - v. A recognition that even the largest catalogue of applications will not be exhaustive. No matter how large (or how accurate!) the catalogue, there will always be a question of application remaining. (If the catalogue applies the Scriptures, who applies the catalogue?). Thus, there is always need for a choice by the individual. And, often, that choice is best helped, not by a list of rules, but by moral growth in the Spirit.
5. Summary: A biblical understanding of our situation will tell us our duty. If we understand the ends and means of the created order, we will know what to do. This is a Christian “situational” or “teleological” ethic. However, it presupposes and involves all we said earlier about the norm.

B. The Ethical Situation (environment).

Since we must take our situation into account when we make ethical choices, it is important that we learn to describe that situation in a biblical way.

1. God Himself: God is the original environment from which all else comes, and in whom we live and move and have our being. Recall the “Lordship attributes,” control, authority and presence [Part I: I.C]. It is the fact of God, which must, above all, be taken account of in our ethical decisions.
 - a. His Decree.
 - i. Since God by His decree foreordains everything that comes to pass, all means/end relationships are part of his all-wise plan. We can trust that the means he approves will be effective and that the end he announces will surely come to pass. Hence, the persuasiveness of the “natural law” idea. God’s commands are consistent with creation. I would not say that the former are “grounded in” the latter, for the opposite conception is equally legitimate.
 - ii. Thus, the situational and normative perspectives are consistent. What God tells us in His word will surely take place in the world. Obeying the law is the best way to get along in the world.
 - iii. Does our environment ever force us into making a sinful choice? (“Conflict of duties,” “tragic moral choice”.)
 - a) There are many apparent examples of this: cf.
 - i) Must we not, in some situations, tell lies in order to preserve life? In World War II, many fought moral battles over the question of whether they should answer truly when asked if they were hiding Jews.

- ii) Women in concentration camps were sometimes lured into adulterous relationships on the promise that cooperation would save the lives of their loved ones.
- iii) Biblical examples: cf. Murray 123ff., Kline “The Intrusion”.
- b) It appears that in these examples one cannot keep one commandment without breaking another. This is because the situation has become so distorted by sin that no perfectly righteous choice is possible.
- c) Such an analysis must, however, be rejected:
 - i) The character of God.
 - (1) God is not a tempter (James 1:13). Men are tempted when they are enticed by their own lust (v. 14). If God in His providence allowed the world to go so far astray that no good choice could be made, it would be difficult to avoid shifting the blame for our sinful decisions on to him. In a sense, of course, God has decreed that fallen man cannot choose the good. But this presupposes that the environment presents even to fallen man a righteous alternative (see below).
 - (2) God does not deny Himself (II Timothy 2:13). If genuine “tragic choices” existed, God would be, in effect, commanding and forbidding the same thing (in our example, he would be commanding and forbidding either truth-telling or preservation of life).
 - ii) The character of sin: Sin always presupposes that there is something right that ought to be done, and that man knows what that is. Note Romans 1-2, other biblical condemnations of sin. If there were “tragic choices,” there would, in those cases, be no clearly right alternative, and, therefore, no way of knowing that alternative.
 - iii) The character of the law:
 - (1) If there are “tragic choices,” then the Lord in effect commands two contradictory things [1.b.], and the law, then, would also be contradictory. Remember that where applications are contradictory, meaning is contradictory.
 - (2) “The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul” (Psalm 19:7ff.). If there were “tragic choices,” then it would be necessary and beneficial to break the law in some way (e.g., in the example of the law requiring truth), and harmful to keep the law. The suppositions are impossible.
 - iv) The character of Christ:
 - (1) If Jesus did face “tragic choices,” i.e., choices in which it is impossible not to sin, then, it could not be said that Jesus was “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” If Jesus faced “tragic choices,” then He was a sinner.
 - (2) If we face “tragic choices” and Jesus did not, then it can scarcely be said that Jesus was “tempted in all points like as we

are.” (Hebrews 4:15). I.e., if Jesus did not face decisions of this most difficult type, then he can hardly be said to have participated in the moral agony of our fallen world.

- v) I Corinthians 10:13—A promise particularly given to believers, but reflecting the general view of moral life summarized above.
- d) Why the theory is plausible.
 - i) It is easy enough, when writing an ethics text, to concoct an example where all “ways of escape” from sin are ruled out. But are there cases like that in the real world? Be careful of forming your picture of the ethical life on the basis of hypothetical examples taken from ethics textbooks.
 - ii) Some of the plausibility of this theory comes, however, from the undeniable fact that moral choice is often very difficult. Often, it is not easy to find the “way of escape.” In rejecting the concept of “tragic moral choice,” do not fall to the other extreme of oversimplifying ethical problems.
 - iii) Some alleged examples of tragic moral choice are really questions of priority within the divine law. [Cf. I.D.11.]. It is at least arguable, e.g., that the command to preserve life overrides the command to tell the truth in some cases.
 - iv) Some moral situations are particularly difficult because they involve a choice between two evils. When trying to save lives on a battlefield, we may have to choose between allowing one man or another to die, in order to have time and resources to save others. This seems like a “tragic choice” in the above sense. Note well, however: It is a choice between two evils, not a choice between two wrongs. Either choice we make will bring harm to someone, and that is, in one sense, evil, even “tragic” in a general sense. But it cannot be shown that all possible choices in that situation will displease the Lord.
- iv. Foreordination, freedom, responsibility.
 - a) It has often been thought that if man is to be responsible for his actions, he must be able to act independently of God’s decree.
 - i) Recall *autexousion* (free will) in many church fathers.
 - ii) Thomas Aquinas: God moves man’s will toward the universal good; else man would not be able to will anything. However, man determines himself, by his reason, to will this or that (which may be a true or only apparent good).
 - iii) Arminianism.
 - iv) Secular philosophers: Descartes, Kant, Existentialism, some British writers such as H. D. Lewis and C.A. Campbell.
 - (1) Lewis and Campbell deny not only divine foreordination; they also deny that our choices are determined at all by past choices or character.

- (2) Other secular philosophers the same.
- b) The central argument: “ought” implies “can”.
- i) It is generally assumed in law that a person can be blamed for something only if he was able to avoid doing it. If, e.g., someone is judged insane, he may be acquitted of blame, since, presumably, he “could not avoid” doing what he did.
 - ii) Scripture, then, is also invoked to support this principle.
- c) Comments:
- i) It is true that in Scripture moral responsibility presupposes certain kinds of “ability”.
 - (1) Doing right or wrong presupposes all those abilities which distinguish human beings from the animal kingdom. Animals are not subject to moral praise or blame (except metaphorically or symbolically, Exodus 19:13, etc.)
 - (2) Morality presupposes that ethical decisions are our decisions—decisions which, even if foreordained, are genuine decisions of the person, based on norms which the person adopts as his own [cf. III.B.1.d-e.]
 - (3) Doing right or wrong presupposes knowledge of God’s standards, Romans 1-2. Those who have greater knowledge are subject to greater condemnation, Leviticus 5:17ff., Numbers 15:29ff., Luke 12:47f., for, in a sense, they are more “able” to do right.
 - (4) Moral choice also presupposes that mankind in Adam was originally created with such a nature that he could have chosen obedience. Thus, the human race is responsible for the depravity which resulted from disobedience (Romans 5).
 - (5) Scripture also presupposes that man is not determined entirely by his heredity and created environment. Even those without wealth or education or moral training know God’s law and are expected to obey even if their environment militates against it. (Cf. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, IX.) A bad environment, therefore, is no excuse for disobedience.
 - (6) Moral responsibility presupposes various natural abilities: physical and mental capacities for carrying out God’s commands.
 - (7) Accessibility to God: God can reach us by his grace, so that we “can” do his will.
 - ii) Other kinds of ability, however, are not presupposed by the Scriptural concept of responsibility.
 - (1) The power of contrary choice since the Fall.
 - (2) The ability to will contrary to, or independently of, God’s decree (Acts 2:23, 4:27f.).

- (3) The power to know exhaustively or control completely the effects of our actions.
- (4) The power to establish our own moral standards (cf. Sartre).
- iii) To suppose that any of the abilities under ii) are required for morality is to adopt a non-biblical set of moral presuppositions. Thus, the basic question is a question of morality, not merely of metaphysics or anthropology.
- iv) “Free will” in the Arminian sense is actually destructive of responsibility.
 - (1) It makes our choices to some extent the product of chance. And who can be held responsible for choices which are purely accidental, which just happen?
 - (2) This problem is even more obvious in those views which make choice independent of previous choices and character. Moral choice on such views becomes “internal accident,” a queer movement of the mind.
 - (3) It makes our ultimate environment, at some point, impersonal rather than personal. At that point, we are no longer responsible, because responsibility is always responsibility to a person.
 - (4) The notion of chance (irrationalism) coupled with moral autonomy (rationalism) amounts to a non-Christian dialectic that is destructive of all moral (and other) discourse.
- v) The Problem of Evil: See Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God; Doctrine of God*.
- b. His Authority (cf. I., the Normative Perspective): God’s word is the fact by which all other facts are to be interpreted and evaluated.
- c. His Presence (cf. III., the Existential Perspective): In our thinking about ethics, we must reckon on the fact that God is not aloof or far away from us, but deeply involved in our midst both to bless and to curse.
 - i. Before the Fall: God was Lord and Friend to man; Control, Authority, Presence.
 - ii. After the Fall:
 - a) God appears to judge sin. His hostility toward sin continues even in the present period. Thus, we make our ethical decisions with the wrath of God in view (Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 3:6).
 - b) He gives the redemptive promise—the basis of ethical hope.
 - iii. With the patriarchs and Israel: covenant solidarity. “I will be with you,” Exodus 3:12; Cf. Deuteronomy 7:6ff., etc. Because we are his, because he has drawn us to himself, therefore we are to be holy, set apart for him.
 - iv. Incarnation to Pentecost:
 - a) The kingdom has come—the righteousness of God on earth.
 - b) We are in the kingdom, in Christ, in the “age to come.” We are children of light. Thus, we are able to prevail in the moral battle.

- c) In Christ, we have the definitive example of righteousness.
- d) Yet, we are also living in “this age”. The old and new ages overlap, and we exist simultaneously in both. Christ has won the decisive victory (“already,”) but sin continues to exercise power until the *parousia* (“not yet”). Thus, all ethical life involves tension. We are holy in Christ, yet disobedient servants.
- v. The *Parousia* and Consummation: Note the various ways in which this hope is related to ethics as a purifying doctrine:
 - a) Since this age is to end and the things of this world are to be dissolved, the Christian ought to have a set of priorities radically different from those of the world, II Peter 3:11; cf. I Corinthians 7:26, 29.
 - b) Since we eagerly await that day (II Peter 3:12; I John 3:3), we will anticipate it even now by purifying ourselves as he is pure. Thus even now, we are part of the new age, not of the old (Galatians 1:4; Romans 12:2)
 - c) Since the Resurrection of Christ has decisively established the new age, we are confident that our labors for his kingdom will not be in vain, but will inevitably prevail, I Corinthians 15:58.
 - d) We look to the *parousia* as our deliverance from tribulation, and thus as a source of hope in tribulation, Luke 21:28, parallels.
 - e) Knowing that Christ is coming, but not knowing the day and hour, we must always be ready to meet him, Matthew 24:44; I Thessalonians 5:1-10; I Peter 1:7; II Peter 3:14.
 - f) Rewards also serve as motivation, Romans 14:10; II Corinthians 5:10; I Corinthians 3:8ff., 9:17f., 25; Colossians 3:23-25; Ephesians 6:7f., II Timothy 4:8; I Peter 5:4; James 1:12; Psalm 19:11; Matthew 5:12, 46, 6:1ff., 10:41f., parallels; II John 8; Revelation 11:18.
 - i) This teaching is not works righteousness or salvation by merit.
 - (1) We do not deserve the reward. Even at our best, we do no more than our duty, Luke 17:7-10.
 - (2) The reward is out of all proportion to the service rendered, Matthew 19:29, 20:1-16, 24:45-47, 25:21ff.; Luke 7:48, 12:37.
 - (3) Essentially, the reward is the kingdom itself (Matthew 5:3, 10, 25:34) which is given by grace to the elect, Matthew 20:33, 25:34; Luke 12:31f. Cf. the Old Testament emphasis on the Lord himself as the inheritance of his people. Psalm 16:5, 73:24-26; Lamentations 3:24. Cf. Philippians 1:7-11.
 - ii) Paradoxically, however, there are also degrees of reward, and these have some positive correlation to our faithfulness [passages under f)].
 - (1) Remember that our faithfulness is itself a gift, a product of God’s grace.

- (2) The passages underscore the principle that although we are saved by grace through faith alone, the faith that saves is never alone, never without obedience.
- (3) Since, then, there is a positive correlation between salvation and obedience, it is not surprising that there should also be a correlation between the degree of obedience and the fullness of salvation blessing.
- (4) Since there is no sorrow or pain in heaven, we must assume that even though there are degrees of blessing, everyone will be perfectly happy with the blessing he has. Everyone receives enough to fill him to capacity. No one will be jealous.
- iii) Note the correlation between our own ultimate self-interest and the fulfillment of God's purposes. [Cf. below on the goal.] There is no antagonism between these in Christian ethics.
- vi. Notice, then, how our ethical decisions must take account of past, present, and future events.

2. The Angels.

In a surprising number of passages, Scripture teaches us to take our angelic "environment" into account when making ethical decisions.

- a. The doctrine of angels rebukes the smallness of our cosmology.
 - i. The modern cosmology leaves little room for angels.
 - a) In one sense, it is relatively easy for modern man to deal with God: He makes God so utterly transcendent that his existence is irrelevant to the world.
 - b) Angels, however, cannot easily be eliminated by the transcendence route.
 - ii. Though the modern cosmology is often said to be much broader than the biblical one, much larger, it is actually smaller in its view of rational beings. The modern view sees man as the only rational being on earth and the vast reaches of space (save some enclaves on other planets) as devoid of intelligent life. In Scripture, however, the universe is filled with great multitudes—legions—of angels. Thus:
 - iii. Scripture teaches that the visible world is only a small part of God's kingdom, only a small part of the intelligent life of the universe. II Kings 6:17 teaches us that we need a larger perspective than the visible world affords.
 - a) Our spiritual struggles are part of a much larger warfare.
 - b) The warfare is in one sense far bigger and more complicated than we would ever suppose apart from revelation.
 - iv. The doctrine of angels also emphasizes the personal character of God's providence. Not only is the world governed by a divine person, but that divine person typically works, not through impersonal "law structures," but through personal agents. This is important, for impersonal

determinism militates against ethical responsibility. God does not press buttons—not often at least; rather, he sends messengers.

- b. The doctrine of angels shows us something of the dimensions of our ethical warfare.
 - i. Angels participate in the kingdom warfare.
 - a) Bad angels—Satan and his hosts—tempters, accusers, etc.
 - b) Good angels—ministering spirits for us (Hebrews 1:14).
 - c) The fight one another, as well as against and for us (Daniel 10:13, 21; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7).
 - d) Thus, Scripture urges us not to underestimate the difficulty of the struggle, as if we could succeed with human resources alone, Ephesians 6. Not only are men involved, but also beings which are terribly strong, intelligent, numerous, and, to us, exceedingly mysterious.
 - e) On the other hand, we ought not to overestimate the difficulty either; for there are angels fighting on our side, II Kings 6:15-17.
 - f) The main point: Do not base your hopes or fears merely upon the empirical situation. The really decisive issues in life are religious and ethical, even if “experience” suggests otherwise; for it is our religious and ethical equipment alone that will prevail over the hosts of evil. Use the armor of God!
 - ii. Angels are witnesses to human salvation. Luke 12:8f., 15:10; I Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 3:10; I Timothy 3:16; I Peter 1:12; Revelation 14:10.
 - a) Although in one sense angels participate in the redemptive drama, there is another sense in which they are spectators rather than participants. Redemption does not extend to them. Unfallen angels need no redemption, and fallen angels receive none (cf. Hebrews 2:16).
 - b) Thus, the angels are somewhat bewildered by the process of redemption. They are amazed at what God has done for humanity.
 - c) Remarkably enough, they learn the redemptive wisdom of God through the church, Ephesians 3:10! It is our privilege to teach angels by our words and life! (Consider this as an ethical motivation.)
 - d) Beyond this, the angels also serve as “witnesses” in a more official sense (Luke 12:8f., etc.).
 - iii. The doctrine of angels is a measure of the greatness of our salvation in Christ; for that salvation lifts us above the angels.
 - a) According to Hebrews 2:9, Jesus was made a little (or “for a little while;” the temporal expression *brachu* is used) lower than the angels for the suffering of death. He is then again exalted above them.
 - b) The passage implies that Jesus’ brethren share that exaltation with him. Thus, Psalm 8 is fulfilled. Although we do not yet see everything subject to man, we see this dominion in Jesus (2:8).
 - c) Thus, the angels minister to us, not *vice versa*, Hebrews 1:14.

- d) The world to come is not theirs, but ours, 2:5ff. (Cf. Paul's odd statement that we shall judge angels, I Corinthians 6:3.)
- e) Thus, angel worship is a great delusion from which Christ has set us free, Colossians 2:18f., Revelation 19:10, 22:8f.
- f) Because of Christ, Satan is a defeated foe. We may resist him, and he will flee, I Peter 5:8f.; James 4:7.
- g) Salvation is for man alone, God's image, not for angels (Hebrews 2:16) [cf. ii., above].

3. The Human Environment (Social).

God expects us to take our fellow human beings into account when we make moral decisions. We shall say much more about the foundations of social ethics in connection with the ethics of government (Fifth Commandment) and of sex (Seventh). At this point, we shall restrict ourselves to some very general observations.

- a. The Cultural Mandate: A Corporate Task (Genesis 1:28ff.).
 - i. "Subduing" and "replenishing" the earth are not tasks that Adam could even conceivably have done alone [cf. I.D.11.e.iv.].
 - ii. Since God made man male and female, and since reproduction is part of the cultural task itself, God intended from the beginning that this work be carried out primarily as a corporate task, a task of mankind.
 - iii. Thus, the individual is not responsible to replenish and subdue the earth; rather, his responsibility is to make the best contribution to this task of which he is capable.
 - iv. Thus, from the very beginning, God intended for us to make our individual decisions by taking other people into account, and specifically by seeking how we can best help our fellow human beings in their divinely ordained task.
- b. The Fall: A Corporate Failure.
 - i. Eve was intended as a helper for Adam in every respect including the ethical-religious. Both were to encourage one another in keeping the commands of God.
 - ii. In the Fall, Eve became temptress instead of helper, taking the role of Satan.
 - iii. Similarly, Adam forsook his headship and capitulated to the sinful request of his wife.
 - iv. Thus, the Fall involved not only individual sins on the part of Adam and Eve, but simultaneously a breakdown of their relationship, of their God-ordained family structure.
 - v. Corroborating these observations: The Fall brings about sexual shame between the man and woman, Genesis 3:7, 10f., 21, cf. 2:25. Also, note Adam's blaming his wife for his sin, 3:12, further breakdown of family harmony, 3:16, pain and toil in the cultural task, 3:16-19 [cf. a.].
 - vi. Note also the New Testament emphasis on Adam as corporate head of the human race, Romans 5; I Corinthians 15.

- vii. Thus, the question “What would have happened if Eve had sinned but Adam remained obedient?” is an unreal question, demanding, not a minor, but a major change in the biblical story. Adam and Eve were united in their cultural task and united also in sin. It was the race that fell in Genesis 3.
- c. Corporate Effects of the Fall.
- i. Working out of the curse [above, b.v.]
 - ii. Development of “civilization” among sinful men.
 - a) The sons of Cain, Genesis 4:17-24, developing social, cultural, governmental institutions in opposition to God.
 - b) Genesis 6:1-5: Royal polygamy? Angel marriages? Mixed marriages? In any case, a breakdown in the divinely ordained social structure.
 - c) Genesis 11:1ff.: Babel. Unification of the human race in disobedience to God.
 - d) Compounding of evil through cultural developments; Sodom and Gomorrah, Canaan, etc. Sinful practices reinforced by unified cultural tradition, rationalized, accepted easily by individuals.
 - e) Principles of evil incarnate in governmental, ecclesiastical forms: Daniel, Revelation.
- d. The Corporate Character of Redemption.
- i. The first redemptive promise, like the cultural mandate, concerns land and seed (Genesis 3:16-19): In toil, we will live off the land until the seed of promise defeats the enemy. Like the cultural mandate, these promises concern humanity as a body. The toil over the land is a common task, and the seed presupposes reproduction and family.
 - ii. God redeems, not merely individuals, but “a people”.
 - a) Sethites / Cainites, Noah’s family, Shem / Ham and Japheth, Peleg / Joktan (Genesis 10:25?), Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Christ.
 - b) The promise “to you and to your children”—family units brought into the kingdom. Circumcision and baptism.
 - iii. Redeeming a people implies that the people is united by common structures. Thus, redemption involves the development of a new civilization, new social institutions.
 - a) Prophetic, priestly, kingly institutions.
 - b) Family, church, state.
 - c) New Covenant: Christ as king, apostles, prophets, pastor-teachers, elders, deacons, each believer using his gifts to serve the body.
 - d) The consummation: not only new heavens and new earth, but New Jerusalem as well—new city, new social order.
- e. Corporate Life “Between the Times”.
- i. Specific situations do develop, different in some respects from those noted in Scripture, to which the law must be applied.
 - ii. Thus in ethics, we must discern carefully the process of history.

- f. Corporate Life and Moral Decisions (Summary).
- i. God intended for us to help one another in our common task, not to try to do everything alone. Thus, we are to seek help and guidance from those equipped to give it.
 - ii. Because of sin, however, other people are not only helpers, but tempters as well. Thus, the need of vigilance, testing, proving as well as trusting.
 - iii. Such temptation, sinful influence, is compounded by the development of unregenerate social institutions.
 - iv. Because of redemption, we may expect from others, not only help coming out of “natural” gifts, but specifically, the blessing of the Spirit. In other words, we meet Christ in his brethren. The gifts of the Spirit are not proportional to intelligence, education, wealth.
 - v. The blessing of the Spirit is magnified in the development of regenerate institutions.
 - vi. We must not only expect help from one another, but must above all seek to help one another—the love-command. In all our decisions, we must consider the needs of others above our own.
 - vii. The great events of our time must be addressed by the Word. This involves Christian analysis of social and political issues. Such social critique is itself a corporate task. Many ministers do not have the training to carry out such analysis knowledgeably. The ministry needs help from many Christians trained in many fields.
4. The Human Environment (Individual).
- a. Christian ethics is throughout both individual and social. In every decision (not only decisions about “social issues”), we are called to take others into account. On the other hand, every decision (even on “social issues”) is a decision which we make as individuals. We must always live “with others,” but also with ourselves.
 - b. Our character.
 - i. Created in God’s image, precious to God.
 - ii. Depraved by the fall, unable of ourselves to do anything good.
 - iii. New creatures in Christ, free from sin’s dominion, filled with gifts of the Spirit.
 - iv. Sin still lingers until the consummation.
 - v. Individual differences in character from other Christians due to differences in level of sanctification, specific temptations, etc.
 - vi. For more on this, see existential perspective, III.
 - c. Our history.
 - i. Besides being members of groups and institutions, we are each unique—different in some way from every other human being.
 - ii. This uniqueness begins in the creative mind of God and exists from conception.
 - iii. Each of us has unique heredity, environment, abilities, strengths, weaknesses.

- iv. None of us enters the kingdom of God in precisely the same way. Though faith and repentance are necessary in all cases, these occur in many different forms and in many different situations.
 - v. Each of us has a set of experiences different in some way from those of everyone else.
 - vi. Each of us has, in some degree, a unique role in the kingdom of God—a unique calling, unique gifts and opportunities.
 - vii. Each of us has, in some sense, a unique spiritual battle. True, the temptations we face are “common to man” (I Corinthians 10:13); but they do not take identical form in every individual case. All of us are tempted to steal, but in different ways: Some are tempted to steal from individuals, others “only” from corporations or government, others from the honor due to God.
 - viii. Each of us has, in some measure, unique moral responsibilities stemming from his particular calling. (The pastor of Covenant PCA, Winter Park, is obligated to preach there regularly; I am not.) These arise out of applications of the Word to our unique situations.
- d. Moral decisions, then, must take into account both the likenesses and the differences between ourselves and other persons (particularly other Christians).
- i. We must each apply the word to his unique situation. Though we can and must seek help from others in this, no one else can do it for us. Even in applying the advice of others, an individual judgment must be made.
 - ii. We must each seek to overcome his unique temptations through the means of grace, realizing that our temptations are not, at the most basic level, different from those all men experience (I Corinthians 10:13) or, specifically, different from those which Christ experienced as a man (Hebrews 4:15).
5. The Natural Environment.
- a. Man as part of nature.
 - i. Man is a creature, and in that respect is closer to nature than he is to God.
 - ii. Man is made of the dust, Genesis 2:7.
 - iii. He is dependent upon the ground for his continued life, Genesis 1:29, 2:8ff., 3:17ff., etc.
 - iv. Thus, many obvious similarities and analogies between human and animal life.
 - b. Man as distinct from nature.
 - i. A special creation, not a product of evolution, Genesis 2:7, 21ff.
 - ii. Special engagement of the divine counsel, Genesis 1:26.
 - iii. Image of God, Genesis 1:26ff.
 - iv. Vassal lordship over the earth, Genesis 1:26ff., 2:19f.
 - c. The curse on the ground, Genesis 3:17-19.
 - i. The earth resists man’s dominion.

- ii. It is a source of distress (“toil”), weariness.
- iii. Though all things are good, even after the fall (I Timothy 4:4; cf. Genesis 1:31, I Corinthians 10:26), man’s lust finds in things a source of temptation, as with the fruit in the fall narrative itself.
- iv. Events in the natural world serve as means of divine judgment, chastening, deliverance.
 - a) The plagues of Egypt.
 - b) Job’s sufferings.
 - c) The Flood, etc.
- d. Nature and redemption
 - i. Natural (and supernatural) signs, Matthew 2:2, 24:29ff.
 - ii. Nature and redemptive events (above, d.iv.).
 - iii. Creation waiting anxiously for the consummation, Romans 8:19-23.
 - iv. The course of nature and history is “on our side”. Things and events are occasions for growth and victory, not only means of temptation (Romans 8:28).
 - v. Consummation: The new heavens and new earth, II Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1.
- e. Nature and moral decisions.
 - i. From the beginning, man was expected to apply God’s word to his natural environment.
 - a) Cultural mandate: How do we use each thing to God’s glory and to fulfill our task?
 - b) Naming of animals.
 - c) Abstaining from the forbidden fruit.
 - d) “Keeping” and “cultivating” the garden, Genesis 2:15. I.e., Adam’s task is not merely to dominate, but also to maintain and improve his natural environment. Conservation is not, of course, opposite to subduing and replenishing, but necessary to them.
 - ii. Since the fall, we must reckon with nature as an occasion for suffering, frustration, sin.
 - iii. Yet even now, we live by the ground (Genesis 3:17ff.) and, thus, must continue to cultivate and subdue it.
 - iv. Anticipation of physical resurrection in the new creation-purifying doctrine.

C. The Goal of Christian Ethics.

Since Christian ethics is, from the situational perspective, a matter of determining the best godly means of achieving God’s purposes, it is important for us to try to define in general what those purposes are. What goal or goals ought we to be seeking in moral decisions?

1. The Doctrine of the Two-fold End.

- a. Some church fathers, perhaps under Gnostic influence or due to misreading of Scripture, denigrated the physical world, favoring an ascetic withdrawal from

the world as the highest form of Christian morality (Tatian, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Jerome).

- b. Augustine.
 - i. More positive, world-affirming view of the state, marriage, property. These are not evil in themselves.
 - ii. Earthly life, however, is but a pilgrimage to the hereafter. The supreme goal of human life is our union with God in the vision of God in heaven.
 - iii. Earthly pursuits, therefore, though not sinful in themselves, can distract us from our heavenly goal.
 - a) Private property is legitimate; the rich and poor alike can be saved by God's grace. But possessions are a hindrance to the soul, and, thus, poverty is preferable. If we cannot abstain from possessions, let us at least seek to avoid the love of possessions.
 - b) Marriage is a sacrament and therefore good, but sex always involves desire (in this age), and desire is evil. Therefore, celibacy is higher than marriage.
 - c) The state promotes justice and happiness in the world. Yet in this fallen world, it is based on self-love, contempt of God. Thus, it must be subordinate to the church.
 - d) Even good works are always tinged by sin.
 - iv. Asceticism, therefore, is valuable, not because the flesh is evil or because we ought to seek what is unpleasant for its own sake, but rather because such practices free us from earthly preoccupation so that we may better serve God.
 - v. Comments:
 - a) Augustine realizes better than his predecessors that God's creation is good.
 - b) His motive for asceticism is not that things are bad in themselves, but that our sinful hearts become preoccupied with them so as to draw us away from the service of God. Augustine's concern, then, is ethical, not metaphysical. The question he asks about the use of things is altogether biblical.
 - c) Augustine, however, tends to go beyond the biblical data in his moral generalizations. Is it true that all desire is evil? That marriage always or generally presents more spiritual dangers than celibacy? That the state is necessarily less godly than the church?
 - d) In these overgeneralizations, Augustine almost unconsciously returns to hierarchical patterns of thought: the soul vs. the body, the church vs. the state, etc.
 - e) Augustine's otherworldliness, his preference for monasticism, run counter to the biblical emphasis upon involvement in the affairs and needs of the creation.
- c. Thomas Aquinas.

- i. Man's highest good: Contemplation and love of God, bringing likeness to God and realization of the true self.
 - ii. In its highest form, the beatific vision, this is possible only in the life to come.
 - iii. Through reason, leading us to habits of virtue, we can attain an incomplete happiness in this life.
 - iv. For eternal blessedness, however, a supernatural principle of grace must be infused into man by God—the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, love.
 - v. Even in this life, the contemplative life is superior to the practical life.
 - a) It is based on the love of God, while the practical life is based on the love of man.
 - b) The practical life is therefore less meritorious.
 - c) The contemplative life is more free from the senses and bodily organs.
 - vi. *Consilia Evangelica* (evangelical counsels).
 - a) The safest, quickest way to blessedness is the monastic life, the life of poverty, chastity, obedience.
 - b) These cannot be commanded, for they are not for everybody. Yet for those capable of it, this is the way to the highest perfection.
 - vii. Comments:
 - a) Like Augustine, Aquinas presents us with an essentially otherworldly ethic, based on biblical warnings about the temptations of earthly life and the kingdom of God as the highest good.
 - b) Aquinas is subject to the same criticisms as Augustine in these matters.
 - c) Aquinas compounds the problems which Augustine had.
 - i) With a lower view of the effects of sin. He sees man without grace as capable of goodness at a certain level, but needing grace to achieve the highest goal.
 - ii) By dividing Christians into various groups who have essentially different obligations. One group has a “higher” morality than the other, even though the other group is not guilty of sin on that account. There is no biblical support for this notion.
- d. Lessons.
- i. It is important to maintain that all men have the same “chief end”. Much mischief has been done.
 - a) By allowing the legitimacy of non-Christian ends as having natural but not supernatural validity.
 - b) By claiming that different groups of Christians may properly seek different ethical goals.
 - ii. Formulation of the goal must be based upon Scripture, not on plausible generalizations about the physical and spiritual, the civil and ecclesiastical, the married vs. the celibate life, etc.
2. The Overall Goal: Biblical Formulations

Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question #1: “What is the chief end of man? Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

- a. Glory of God.
 - i. Man’s purpose from the beginning is determined by God, Genesis 1:26ff. Man is created, preserved and redeemed for the sake of God’s purposes and no other.
 - ii. Man’s obligation to God is the central feature of biblical law (cf. normative perspective).
 - iii. I Corinthians 10:31; Romans 14:23; Colossians 3:17ff., 23: All that we do must be done as unto the Lord. Our obligation to seek his glory pervades every aspect of life, every moral choice. Matt. 6:33.
- b. Human Enjoyment of God (cf. “eternal life” as the goal *Westminster Confession of Faith* XVI:2).
 - i. Scripture data:
 - a) Law as delight of the redeemed heart, Psalm 1, 119:97; Romans 7:22.
 - b) Law as gift of grace, Psalm 119:29.
 - c) Law as way of life, Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 5:33, 8:3, 11:13-15, 28:1-4, 30:11-20. Obedience is the road to covenant blessing.
 - d) Law given for our good, Deuteronomy 10:12f; cf. 4:40, 12:28.
 - e) Rewards as motivation for obedience: [cf. above, II.B.1.c.v.f)]
 - ii. An “anthropocentric” formulation? Yes, in a way. But remember that it is God who is to be enjoyed, and indeed God in contrast with the lusts of our own hearts.
 - iii. Consistency with the first formulation: God is glorified by the realization of redeemed human life. He does not demand the annihilation of man, but rather obedience to him brings the highest happiness. There is no need to draw sharp opposition between “happiness” and “duty” as in much non-Christian philosophy.
 - iv. Scripture does condemn selfishness and preoccupation with one’s own comfort and pleasure, demanding self-sacrifice and even the endurance of hardship and persecution. But this is presented as the road to the most enduring forms of happiness: Matthew 5:24-34, 10:16-42, etc.
 - a) The passages which most graphically describe the rigors, the difficulties of the Christian life, characteristically also emphasize its rewards.
 - b) In contrast, the pleasures of sin are characterized as fleeting and vain. Even the pursuit of the good things of this earth is vain outside the context of God’s overall purpose (Ecclesiastes).
- c. The Kingdom of God as Man’s *Summum Bonum* (Van Til).
 - i. Biblical emphases
 - a) Qualifications for entering the kingdom are ethical, but conferred by grace.
 - b) Seeking the kingdom involves seeking God’s righteousness, therefore, at all levels. Cf. Matthew 6:10.

- c) Thus, “seeking the kingdom” is that supreme purpose which takes precedence over all others, Matthew 6:33. Cf. Matthew 25:34.
 - ii. Relation to other formulations:
 - a) Combines theocentric, anthropocentric emphases. Matthew 6:33 teaches that as we seek to glorify God, we will find our own happiness.
 - b) Brings out the key factor of historical development: The goal of ethics is the implementation of a particular historical program, not merely of general norms.
 - c) This specific program shows concretely how the glory of God is related to our happiness.
 - iii. Summary: The Goal of ethics is the fulfillment of the total covenant relationship between God and man. We seek to advance the purposes of that covenant, that kingdom program.
- 3. More Specific Goals.
 - a. Every commandment, indeed every application of a commandment, presents us with a goal to be fulfilled, an end to be attained (overlap of situational and normative perspectives). The question of priorities among these goals is the same as the question of “priorities among divine commands” [above, I.D.11.].
 - b. Cultural Mandate and Great Commission.

We shall deal with only one specific priority question here, the relation between these two basic aspects of God’s kingdom program. There is much to be said here, and I have much work yet to do on the question. However, I offer the following theses as fuel for discussion. The general point: The Great Commission is an application of the cultural mandate to the post-fall situation, and within that situation, has “priority” in some, but not all, senses.

 - i. The redemptive promise takes the form of the Cultural Mandate.
 - a) The Cultural Mandate (Genesis 1:28ff.) has two basic elements, the subduing and the replenishing of the earth, corresponding to the creation ordinances of labor and marriage. (The consecration of these activities to God is reflected in the Sabbath ordinance.)
 - b) The curse again brings these two elements into view. Childbearing (3:16) and labor (3:17ff.) are the aspects of human life singled out for special mention.
 - c) The *Protevangelium* (3:15ff.) also mentions these functions specifically. They are not only cursed, but are instruments of redemption.
 - i) Though childbearing will be painful, it will, in time, yield a redeemer.
 - ii) Though labor will be toilsome, nevertheless, it will sustain physical life so that the line of the promised seed will be preserved.
 - d) The post-Adamic covenants promise land and seed.
 - i) Noah: His family is to be saved, and the land will be preserved from further destruction by flood. His sons will live and be subject

- to curses and blessings. Note especially the renewal of the Cultural Mandate, Genesis 9:7.
- ii) Abraham: The seed of the promise and the land of Canaan.
 - iii) Moses: The Abrahamic promise renewed.
 - iv) David: Seed and territorial dominion combined in the concept of kingship and the promise of a continuing Davidic throne.
 - v) Christ: Rules (Matthew 28:18, etc.), fills (Ephesians 1:23, 4:10) all things. Rule and filling by Christ are present realities, but they also have an aspect yet to be fulfilled, I Corinthians 15:24ff., Philippians 3:21.
- e) Redemption, therefore, is a particular kind of “subduing” and “replenishing”.
- i) It is the subduing of sin and of the enemies of God, and of the curse which these have brought upon the earth.
 - ii) It is the filling of all things with the redemptive presence of God in Christ, through the Spirit. More specifically, it is the creation of a new race of people (I Peter 2:9) with their children (Acts 2:39) who are to carry the knowledge of God throughout the earth (Matthew 28:19f.). Thus “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea,” (Isaiah 11:9).
- ii. After the fall, the goal of ethics is always presented in specifically redemptive terms.
- a) “To him (Jesus), the kingdom exists there, where not merely God is supreme, for that is true at all times and under all circumstances, but where God supernaturally carries through his supremacy against all opposing powers and brings man to the willing recognition of the same.” Vos, *The Kingdom and the Church*, p. 50.
 - i) Note: The kingdom is not mere rule, but redemptive rule; not mere filling of the earth, but filling the earth with faithful kingdom subjects.
 - ii) Scriptural basis: The kingdom as the righteousness of God on earth [above, 2.c.].
 - b) I Corinthians 9, 10.
 - i) Paul, here, speaks of the goals of his ministry, specifically the reasons why he does not use his “rights”: 9:16-27, 10:33.
 - (1) To make the gospel known without charge, 9:18.
 - (2) To save men, verses 19-22, 10:33.
 - (3) For his own share of Gospel benefit, 23-27.
 - (4) Note that all of these are specifically redemptive goals.
 - ii) Paul urges us to have the same goals: 9:24, 10:31-11:1.
 - (1) 10:31 presents us with a purpose which covers all of our activities.
 - (2) That purpose presupposes a concern for the redemption of others, verses 32-33. Doing things to the glory of God implies

that we will constantly be thinking about the redemptive needs of other people.

- (3) Imitating Paul and Christ (11:1) involves imitation of redemptive love [cf. other references to *imitatio Christi*, I.A.3.d.]

iii) Philippians 3:4-17.

- (1) Here again, Paul describes the goal of his life in broad terms. Note the “all things,” v. 7f., the “one thing,” 13, “the goal,” 14.
 (2) Here again, he presents his goal as an example to us, 15-17.
 (3) Here, the emphasis is upon Paul’s own participation in Christ’s redemptive blessing, the knowledge of Christ gained through redemption, specifically in contrast with “confidence in the flesh” (3f.).

iv) Matthew 6:33.

- (1) In context, the kingdom of God is presented as our ultimate priority as over against lesser priorities (seeking food, drink, clothing).
 (2) The ultimate priority is characterized not only as the kingdom, but as righteousness (cf. 5:6). In the post-fall context, this is the righteousness of God in contrast with human sin. It is the divine program of redemption and judgment.
 (3) It is, then, this program which we must regard as our prime concern, even over against the (in itself good) concern for physical necessities.

- v) Conclusion: Everything we do must be done in advance, not only God’s purposes in general, but specifically the purposes connected with his post-fall program, the purpose of redemption.

iii. To say that the goal of ethics is specifically redemptive is, in one sense, to narrow the goal, and, in another sense, not.

- a) We are no longer concerned to subdue and replenish the earth apart from the redemptive significance of those acts. In that sense, our goal is “narrower” than it was before the fall.
 b) On the other hand, the redemptive mandate is every bit as comprehensive as the cultural mandate.
 i) The redemptive program culminates in a New Heaven and New Earth—if anything, a more comprehensive and radical change than would have resulted from Adam’s obedience to the original mandate.
 ii) Our redemptive responsibility involves all our decisions, all aspects of life.
 iii) The Christian bricklayer, e.g., is responsible not only to bring out the potential from the earth to God’s glory, but in doing so to contribute to the progress of the gospel (and this is done in many ways).

- iv. The Great Commission is a statement of the redemptive goal.
 - a) Note that it is not merely a command to preach the way of forgiveness in abstraction. It commands us to “make disciples” and to teach “to observe all that I commanded you.” Note the comprehensiveness here.
 - b) The Great Commission, then, calls us to preach the gospel, but including all the implications of the gospel for all areas of life.
 - c) Discipling and teaching are not only by word, but also by example. Cf. the notion of witness, Acts 1:8.
 - d) Thus, the Great Commission calls us to redemptive witness in all aspects of life.
- v. Relations between Cultural Mandate and Great Commission.
 - a) Both call for creative involvement in God’s purposes in every decision of life.
 - b) Both call for godly subduing and filling of the earth.
 - c) Both call for comprehensive change in the world-system.
 - d) The Cultural Mandate is prior in that it came first in history and established the general structure of man’s responsibility. The Great Commission is merely a particular application of it to a sinful age.
 - e) The Great Commission sets forth the specific concerns which must motivate our subduing and filling today. In that sense, it has priority.
 - i) Thus, Paul gives up his cultural rights and responsibilities (eating, drinking, marriage) to carry out his redemptive calling, I Corinthians 9.
 - ii) Each of us must imitate Paul insofar as our gifts and callings require.
 - iii) This does not mean that everyone must be a preacher. Those better equipped to do other things also carry on redemptive witness as they demonstrate the difference made by the Gospel in their work.
 - (1) Not only making money for missions, etc.
 - (2) Ethical responsibility on the job.
 - (3) Seeking to develop new structures by which the love and righteousness of Christ can be made manifest through their work.
 - (4) Seeking to apply the teaching of Christ in its full scope.

III. Christian Ethics: The Existential Perspective (Christian Existential or Personalist Ethics)
 The normative perspective asks, “What is my duty?” The situational asks, “How may I change the world in order to bring about those goals pleasing to God?” The existential perspective puts it this way: “How must I be changed, that I may please God? Or corporately, “How must we be changed, etc.?”

A. Goodness and the Being of God.

1. [Cf. I.A.] God’s moral attributes and his person are one. His goodness is inseparable from his being. Without his goodness, God would not be God. His good acts, therefore, are expressions of what he truly is.

2. God's moral attributes, not only his power and authority, render him "worthy" of all praise and obedience. The goodness of his acts, further, motivates us to obey.

B. Goodness and the Being of Man.

God intends that man as God's image should reflect in a creaturely way this union of goodness and being, so that doing good comes "naturally"—i.e. as a normal expression of his nature. As an aspect of the divine image, this natural goodness renders man an object of worth, deserving of respect above all creatures.

1. Creation.

- a. As image of God, man was originally made with a positively good character—not, as on the Roman Catholic construction, in need of special grace.
- b. He was made free [cf. II.B.1.a.iv.] in various senses, particularly in the sense that, although good, he was in some paradoxical way capable of sinning.
- c. He was responsible to obey God's commands.
- d. As free and responsible, he made his own decisions, in a sense. Though subject to God's authority, he was responsible to adopt God's norms as his own. Unlike all other creatures, man had the capacity to decide whether to obey or not.
- e. Thus, though God's norms were imposed upon him from above, in one sense, they were also imposed by man upon himself. Man acts upon those principles which he makes his own. (Note relative truth in existentialism.)
- f. As vassal king, man also has the responsibility of applying God's norms to the lower creation. Everything else in creation is subject to man and specifically subject to man as a means of fulfilling the cultural task. Thus in a sense, man becomes a lawgiver to the lower creation. Man's authority reflects that of God of which it is image.
- g. Like God, also, man is a unity. The distinction between body and soul creates no ethical conflict in man (as in Roman Catholic theology), nor does it imply that man is torn between an earthly and a heavenly end [II.C.1.]. Nor is there any tension in man created by the distinctions between will and intellect, emotions and reason, etc.
- h. These ethical attributes of man (goodness, freedom, responsibility, authority, unity), together with all the aspects of the image of God, make man, like God, a person of worth, deserving respect. Christian ethics is personalist in that it values people above all other created things. Cf. Genesis 9:6; I Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9.

2. Fall.

- a. Man is depraved; in himself, he cannot please God (Romans 8:8; cf. 7:18).
- b. There is controversy in the church as to whether man lost the image of God in the fall or whether that image is merely "defaced". The latter view, I think, is the Scriptural one. In any case, it is clear that man's original creation in God's image confers upon man a continuing dignity and importance, despite his sin [1.h., above].

- c. After the fall, man is no longer free by nature to choose the good. Yet, he is free in other senses [II.B.1.a.iv.].
 - d. After the fall, man is still responsible.
 - e. Similarly, man maintains a kind of moral authority subordinate to that of God. He still must “decide for himself” [above, 1.d.]; He still establishes subordinate norms [1.f.]. Although he will abuse this responsibility, the responsibility remains.
 - f. After the fall, man remains a unity. His sin is not the result of inevitable conflict among the parts of his being; rather it is the result of willful choice. It does sometimes happen that will and intellect, or intellect and emotion, “conflict” in some sense; but such conflict simply means that fallen man wants to do what he knows is wrong. All “aspects” of man are equally affected by sin.
 - g. Though fallen, man is responsible to be what he was before the fall—obedient from the heart, obedient by nature. Nothing less will please God. Hence the depth of the hopelessness of fallen man even trying to please God apart from grace.
3. Redemption.
- a. The atonement of Christ, applied to our hearts by the continuing work of the Spirit, renews us in the image of Christ (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). There is controversy over the relation between this “image” and the image in which we were originally created. However, it is an image of God, and thus includes all the moral excellencies with which man was originally created.
 - b. Sin remains in the believer, not to be wholly eradicated until the return of Christ; but the dominion of sin is gone forever (Romans 6:1-14).
 - c. The process of sanctification (cf. courses on *ordo salutis* and means of grace), Murray, “The Dynamic,” *Principles*, IX.
 - i. It involves both dependence upon God and substantial effort on our part. Sanctification is a spiritual battle. It takes vigilance, discipline, effort (*contra* quietism, perfectionism, Keswick, some Lutheran representations).
 - ii. It involves conscious obedience to God’s commands [cf. I., normative perspective] as well as spontaneous action in the Spirit.
 - a) Recall earlier discussion of the Lutheran *Formula of Concord* [I.D.3.] which finds an opposition between obeying commandments and working in the Spirit.
 - b) Comments:
 - i) Such an opposition or antagonism is not found in Scripture. It is true that mere obedience to commands without a heart renewed by the Spirit is worthless; but such obedience is not true obedience either.
 - ii) The two need not compete, for each has a distinct function in equipping us for good works. The commands tell us God’s will, and the Spirit enables us to do it. Neither can do the job of the other.

- iii) It is true that, as we mature in the Lord, our obedience becomes less labored, more spontaneous, in those areas in which are becoming sanctified [cf. d., below]. We do not always need to look up chapter and verse; we know God's law so well that it is written on the heart, and we do it simply out of gratefulness and delight. Even in such cases, however, it is the law which we obey out of gratefulness and delight.
- c) It involves Christ in union with us and us in union with Him.
 - i) Regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification are aspects of our union with Christ (Gaffin).
 - ii) Faith, repentance, these represent union with Christ "from our side". We do these things because we are in Christ. They represent our reception of Christ.
- d. Note ethical goodness, freedom, responsibility, authority, unity in the redeemed [cf. 1., 2., above]. The process of sanctification brings about greater and greater unity between us and the goodness of Christ which indwells us. We are light in the Lord, Ephesians 5:8, Matthew 5:14; [cf. above, I.A.]. The law is written on the heart, [I.B.2.b.]. The goal, again, is that we serve him gladly from the heart simply because we are his joyful servants; because what we want to do is to serve him in that way. The service of Christ is perfect freedom.

C. The Motive of Christian Ethics.

1. The Concept of Motive.

- a. "Motive" as reason given for an action: "His motive was revenge."
 - i. A norm: "He did it because he was commanded to"—normative perspective.
 - ii. A goal: "He did it to achieve this purpose."—situational perspective.
 - iii. An inward disposition: "He did it because he was hungry."—existential perspective.
 - a) Overlaps the normative, since it presupposes a norm (that hunger ought to be satisfied).
 - b) Overlaps the situational, since it presupposes a goal (the satisfaction of hunger).
- b. "Motive" as efficient cause for an action (whether or not given as reason): "His political liberalism is motivated by a hatred of his domineering father."
 - i. Norms [a. i.] and goals [a. ii.] do not in themselves cause actions unless accompanied by an inward commitment to obey the norm or to achieve the goal [a. iii.].
 - ii. Thus, motive, in the second sense, is roughly equivalent to motive in sense a.
 - iii. However, an inward disposition may cause an action even when it is not acknowledged as a reason for the action, and even when it functions unconsciously.

- c. The existential perspective deals with “motive” in senses a. iii. and b. The motives discussed (love, hate, faith, rebellion, etc.) will often be motives in both senses, but always in sense b.
2. The Necessity of a Right Motive (The Inwardness of Biblical Ethics).
 - a. The demand for heart-righteousness, Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 5:8, etc.
 - b. The polemic against externalism and hypocrisy, Isaiah 29:13f.; Matthew 23.
 - c. The necessity of faith, love, etc., for any good work. Romans 14:23.
 - d. Revelation as writing on the heart (cf. Christian Mind course): I Corinthians 13, to bring saving benefit, the word must be applied to the most basic level of man’s being.
 3. Formulations of Motive.
 - a. Here, we shall consider those “inward dispositions” which, in Scripture, are considered necessary and sufficient for good works. “Virtue ethics.”
 - i. “Necessary” = without them, there can be no good work.
 - ii. “Sufficient” = any work motivated by them will be good.
 - b. Each of these may be regarded as “perspectives” on the whole regenerate character.
 - i. None is ever found without the others.
 - ii. Each characterizes each of the others: Faith is loving (Galatians 5:6); love believes (I Corinthians 13:7), etc.
 - iii. The regenerate life is characterized by all of them.
 - iv. This does not make them all synonymous. They are different “perspectives”. While they all describe the regenerate life, they do it in different ways. Thus, love, e.g., cannot be substituted for faith in the expression “justification by faith alone”. Faith describes the regenerate life specifically as trusting and receiving Christ, and these qualities have a special role in justification.
 - c. Faith.
 - i. Its basic character (review from Doctrine of the Holy Spirit course)
 - a) Receiving the free gift of salvation.
 - b) Trusting Christ as savior and Lord (involves understanding and believing the word, Romans 4).
 - ii. Relation to works.
 - a) Faith is an obedient response to a divine command,, the command to believe, and therefore is itself a good work.
 - b) One who has faith will inevitably do good works, so that there is no true faith without good works (James 2:14-26; Galatians 5:6).
 - c) Thus, works are an evidence of faith (James 2, Hebrews 11).
 - d) Faith is not a particular act which we can distinguish and isolate from all others. It is a way of doing other things.
 - i) Consider this model: Faith is one act, followed by other acts (“works”). We believe at one time, and that act of believing gives us the strength to do other things (good works).

- A) It is like eating a candy bar and thereby getting strength to set a pole vaulting record.
 - B) The model of the evangelistic meeting: coming forward is faith; what follows is works.
- ii) This model is misleading.
- (1) What is the one act which constitutes faith (analogous to eating the candy bar)?
 - (a) Not a concrete physical act, like raising one's hand at an evangelistic rally, or submitting to baptism. These can be done hypocritically, unfaithful, and well as faithfully.
 - (b) Not a concrete mental action (like praying a silent prayer, or saying "yes" to Jesus inwardly). These acts too can be hypocritical as well as faithful.
 - (c) Not something utterly mysterious, incapable of concrete definition. For in Scripture, "faith" is a word in the common language of Christians.
 - (2) Trusting Christ is not something that I do, and then stop doing, before I obey. Rather, faith is particularly evident during obedience.
 - (3) Trusting is most naturally understood as a characteristic of actions (including thoughts). The child trusts his father to catch him, not primarily before he jumps, but as he jumps. To trust is to act on the assumption that the object of our trust is reliable.
 - (4) Thus, the close relation between faith and obedience in Scripture. It is not just that obedience always follows faith. Rather, faith and obedience are simultaneous, and even beyond that, logically involved in one another, inseparable in concept. Obedience always involves faith, and *vice-versa*.
- iii) Conclusions.
- (1) Faith is not something distinctively "mental" as opposed to something "physical" (G. Clark, *Religion, Reason and Revelation*). It is as likely to be present (or absent) in physical acts as in mental acts. (Cf. the child jumping into father's arms—perhaps without reflection; Abraham leaving Ur.)
 - (2) Faith is not some act that we perform for a time and then stop doing in order to do something else. It pertains to all our actions insofar as these are obedient to God.
 - (3) Faith is "adjectival" or "adverbial". It is a quality of other acts, not something that can be performed by itself.
- e) However, although the relation of faith to works is so close that faith involves works, faith does not justify us in virtue of its character as obedience. It justifies by virtue of its quality as trust and receiving of Christ. It justifies because it looks away from itself, even from obedience, to Christ and his salvation.

- iii. The necessity and sufficiency of faith for good works.
 - a) Necessity, Hebrews 11:6; Romans 14:23.
 - b) Sufficiency, Genesis 15:6; New Testament parallels.
- iv. Faith as motive.
 - a) Exhortations to act in faith, Matthew 8:10, 9:2, 22, 17:20, 21:22, etc.
 - b) Ethical appeal to the great realities which are the object of Christian faith, Ephesians 4:1ff., Romans 12:1ff., etc.
 - c) Indications that only believers are capable of doing good works.
 - d) Inseparability of faith from good works and *vice-versa* (above).
- d. Repentance.
 - i. Repentance is the negative side of faith and inseparable from it. It is turning away from sin, while faith is turning to Christ. Each involves the other.
 - ii. Repentance, therefore, functions as a motive as does faith, Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20; II Timothy 2:25f., Revelation 2:5.
 - iii. As faith is not only a preparation for action but a quality of actions, so is repentance. Repentance is not just believing that one is a sinner, or feeling sorry, or even hating one's sins. Repentance is actually turning away from sin, and that is found only in one's actions.
- e. Fear of God—see Murray, *Principles*, X.
- f. Hope.
 - i. Hope is faith directed toward the future aspect of salvation. Like faith, it is firm and sure, not tentative or wishful as the English word "hope" sometimes suggests. Romans 5:5; I Corinthians 1:7; I Timothy 1:1; Hebrews 3:6.
 - ii. As such, hope functions as a motive to good works.
 - a) Specific references, Acts 23:6, parallels; Romans 5:4ff.; II Corinthians 3:12ff.; Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 1:5 (there said to motivate faith and love!), I Thessalonians 5:8, etc.
 - b) Ethical passages motivating obedience by presenting the consummation of redemption [Above, II.B.1.c.v.].
- g. Love
 - i. Prominence of the love-commandment in Scripture, c. I.D.9.
 - ii. Relation of the love-commandment to the rest of the law, also cf. I.D.9.
 - iii. Necessity and sufficiency for good works, I Corinthians 13.
 - iv. Basic characteristics. (Here, love of God and of one another will be treated as one—cf. I John 4:19ff.)
 - a) Gratefulness.
 - i) In the covenant structure, the love-command follows and presupposes the historical prologue, in which the suzerain's gracious deeds are set forth. Love, then, is the vassal's grateful response to the suzerain's benevolence.

- ii) In the Old Testament structure, love is particularly Israel's grateful response to God for his taking Israel to himself and delivering them from death.
 - iii) The New Testament calls us to love as God first loved us in Christ, I John 4:7-21; John 13:34f.
 - iv) Note, apart from use of the term "love," the biblical emphasis on thanksgiving through offering, prayer, actions: gratefulness as "motive". Emphasis of *Heidelberg Catechism*.
- b) Covenant Loyalty.
- i) "Love" is the term used in the treaties to describe the fundamental responsibility of the vassal: to give his ultimate loyalty exclusively to his covenant Lord, to avoid any competing treaty—relationships.
 - ii) Note this emphasis in Israel's fundamental confession of faith, Deuteronomy 6:5ff., and in the first commandment of the Decalogue, which takes the role of a "love-command" in the Decalogue structure.
 - iii) In the New Testament also, love is covenant loyalty. It is a commitment to Christ as the only Lord and therefore a resolution to keep (obey) him [above, I.D.9.]. Thus, it is the mark of Christians as opposed to those outside the covenant (John 13:34f., etc.).
 - iv) As loyalty to the whole covenant institution, love binds the vassals to one another as to the suzerain. I John 4:19ff.
 - v) Douma, "To love means to stick with your choice." *The Ten Commandments*, 21.
- c) Comprehensive Reorientation of Life.
- i) Deuteronomy 6:5f. and its New Testament allusions indicate that the love of God is a loyalty that is to permeate all aspects of life, so that nothing is left unaffected by it.
 - ii) Note the comprehensiveness of love as a way of life in I Corinthians 13, particularly its connections with all other Christian virtues.
 - iii) It has sometimes been asked whether the concept of love undergoes change from Deuteronomy (covenantal love—a relation of loyalty and obedience) to the later Old Testament (in Hosea, a more emotional commitment, focused on marriage rather than politics as a model).
 - (1) Remember, however, that marriage, life politics, is essentially covenantal in character and involves loyalty and obedience, as Hosea makes clear.
 - (2) Remember also that covenantal love, being a heart-commitment, a commitment of the whole person (nation), engages the emotions as every other part of life. One cannot

love God with his whole heart while remaining cool to him. He demands (and wins) our emotional allegiance along with the rest of what we are.

(3) God's love for us is highly emotional, Psm. 103:13, Isa. 49:15, 66:13, Hos. 11:3.

- d) Imitation of God's grace.
- i) Cf. imitation of God as fundamental principle of biblical ethics, I.A.3.
 - ii) Those who have been delivered will seek to deliver others, Deuteronomy 5:15; Matthew 18:21-35.
 - iii) Thus, we are called to imitate specifically God's love for us by loving one another in the same way, John 13:34f.; I John 4:7-21.
- e) Imitation of the Atonement: laying down our lives for one another, I John 3:16.
- i) The love of God which we are to imitate is most precisely displayed in the atonement: John 3:16, 15:13; Romans 5:8, 8:39 (in context); Ephesians 2:4f.; II Thessalonians 2:16; I John 3:16, 4:9f.; Revelation 1:5. Cf. Mark 10:45; I Peter 2:18-25; Philippians 2:1-11.
 - ii) Involves loving the "unlovely," since we were unlovely when Christ loved us, Romans 5:8; Luke 14:21; Matthew 9:9-13.
 - iii) Involves putting the interests of others above our own, Philippians 2.
- f) Imitation of God's Common Grace: love of enemies, Matthew 5:43-48; Galatians 6:10; Exodus 23:4.
- i) Question of the Imprecatory Psalms:
 - A) Remember that the Psalms are communal, not merely individual songs, and that they call down the wrath of God against those who oppose that nation identified with the Kingdom of God. In our time, these are not so clearly identified, and the long-suffering of God in our age is more central.
 - B) Nevertheless, there are imprecations in the NT as well as the OT: Matt. 23:17ff, Acts 1:16-20, Rom. 11:9-10, Gal. 1:8ff, Rev. 6:10, 18:20. Jesus takes Psm. 69 on his lips, John 2:17, 15:25, Rom. 15:3.
 - C) And the OT, like the New, prohibits personal vengeance (Lev. 19:17f, Psm. 5:6, 7:4, Prov. 20:22).
 - D) It is not wrong, however, to call down God's wrath on those who clearly oppose his kingdom—with the understanding that God may answer that prayer by bringing his wrath upon Jesus.
 - E) A proper imprecation disclaims personal vengeance. It is a prayer for the vindication of God's name against rebels, leaving vengeance in God's hands.

F) God has revealed that he will show vengeance to some. The imprecatory Psalms are our “Amen” to his justice.

ii) Note “priority” given to the “household of faith” in Galatians 6:10. This is like the priority of the family—everyone must provide for his own household (I Timothy 5:8) “especially”. Our brothers and sisters in Christ will naturally be closer to us than those outside—our closest friends. But this does not require any mechanical computation dividing the church’s funds into certain percentages. We are to be ready to meet the needs of those whom we can help, without asking first about national or religious allegiance, Luke 10:25-37.

g) Seeking out responsibility.

i) Love is a disposition to keep the commandments of God [I.D.9.c.].

ii) Love seeks out what we can do to serve one another [above, d)-f)].

iii) Love, therefore, gives an inevitably positive thrust to the law of God, which tends often to favor negative formulation. It is not an adequate response to the law simply to abstain from certain things. (If that were true, we could achieve sanctification by remaining in bed.) Love calls the believer to seek out ways of doing positive good, not merely of avoiding evil.

iv) We may, therefore, see Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount as an exposition of the law in light of the love-commandment.

v) Love involves a concern for justice, not only mercy or benevolence. (Response to common question of whether love as a basic principle of Christian ethics must be supplemented by justice (Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Niebuhr, Ramsey): the question assumes a sub-biblical concept of love.)

h. Hatred of evil, Gen. 3:15, Psm. 139:21f.

h. Other Christian Virtues (Galatians 5:22f., elsewhere): other “perspectives” on the Christian motive. Love is focal among them since it makes explicit the basic motivation of the atonement. Yet, all can teach us about the ramifications of love.

D. The New Life as a Source of Ethical Knowledge (overlap with normative perspective).

In order to know what to do, we must know God’s law (normative perspective), the situation to which the law applies (situational), and ourselves as those who apply it (existential). The redemptive transformation makes us into new creatures who are capable of applying the law as God intended.

1. The Word as God’s Presence in Blessing.

a. Scripture speaks of God’s word in at least three ways:

i. Decree—the word by which God directs the whole course of nature and history.

ii. Address—the word by which he speaks to his creatures in meaningful sentences.

- iii. Presence—the word by which he comes to his creatures, by which he lives with them. Cf. syllabus on *Doctrine of the Word of God*.
 - b. By his word, God dwells with believers to bring blessing.
 - i. God’s “name” placed on his people.
 - ii. The word written on their heart.
 - iii. The word as containing sanctifying power, Isaiah 55:11; Genesis 18:4; Luke 1:37; Matthew 4:4; Hebrews 4:12.
 - iv. “Revelation” as the knowledge of God given to all believers (Matthew 11:25; Ephesians 1:17).
 - v. Christ as the present word, John 1:14, etc.
 - vi. The Spirit as the breath which drives the word into the heart, I Thessalonians 1:5, etc.
 - c. Formulation.
 - i. Not a continuing special revelation, but an application to the heart of that revelation already given.
 - ii. Specifically, the taking root of God’s address in our heart so as to create true obedience.
 - iii. To have the word (in this sense of “word”) is to be actually obedient. Knowing it and doing it, therefore, coincide.
 - iv. Since the word in this sense makes us obedient, we may say that it enables us to translate precept into action, to apply the written word in our actual decisions.
 - v. Without this continuing divine work, we would be unable to do any good thing. Scripture itself does not make us good, unless the Spirit makes us obedient to Scripture.
 - vi. To speak of the “word” in this sense is to speak of all the divine gifts which produce sanctification.
 - vii. We ought to seek these blessings through all the “means of grace,” through the word as address (Scripture, preaching, counsel), the sacraments, prayer.
 - d. Implications.
 - i. We can see already that there is a kind of ethical knowledge (knowing how to obey, having ethical ability) which requires the sanctifying work of the Spirit. More on this below.
 - ii. Ethics, therefore, can never be a merely academic discipline. It is never a matter of merely coming up with the best verbal formulation of ethical principle. Even an exhaustive catalogue to ethical principles (applications of Scripture) will not produce holiness unless the Spirit applies the word to the heart.
 - iii. When we go to Scripture as a means of grace, we ought to seek not only the answers to questions, but also the power of the Spirit, working in and through the word.
 - iv. Here, then, is another reason why all aspects of Scripture, not just the laws and ethical admonitions, are relevant to ethics. The questions, commands,

prose, poetry, parables, history, etc., all serve equally as vehicles of that transforming power. Through the all, God turns our hearts to seek him.

2. Ethical Knowledge as Product of Sanctification.

That ethical knowledge which is peculiar to the Christian is inseparable from obedience [cf. c.iii., above]. That knowledge produced by sanctification is obedience.

- a. Wisdom.
 - i. Essentially a skill—”knowing how,” rather than “knowing that” [Exodus 31:1-5; cf. Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*] (These are related, but are not the same thing.)
 - ii. In Scripture, it sometimes takes on an ethical character—the skill of godly living, James 3:13-17.
 - iii. Specifically, wisdom is often the ability to do the right thing in particular (especially in difficult) situations. Luke 21:14f.
 - iv. Godly speech seems to be particularly emphasized as wise: Acts 6:10, I Corinthians 2:6 (cf. 1, 4, 13), 12:8; II Peter 3:15; Colossians 1:28.
 - v. Wisdom is an ethical guide, Proverbs 3:5f., 22-26, producing confidence.
 - vi. Source: redemptive covenantal communication of God’s wisdom to us by his word and Spirit: Proverbs 3:19, 8:30, 28:7-9, 30:5; Jeremiah 8:8f; Exodus 28:3, 13:3; Deuteronomy 34:9; Acts 6:3; I Corinthians 1:24, 30, 2:6-16; Colossians 2:3, 3:16; II Timothy 3:15.
 - vii. Note well: One cannot claim to have wisdom in this redemptive sense unless he is obedient.
- b. Knowledge (cf. *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*).
 - i. To “know God” in the deepest sense is to know his covenant lordship.
 - ii. Involves knowledge of the three perspectives.
 - a) The works of God (situational).
 - b) The will of God (normative).
 - c) Self in the presence of God (existential).
 - iii. Given by grace, by Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 - iv. Based on the Word of God.
 - v. Obedience is not only a consequence, but a constitutive aspect of the knowledge, so that we cannot have knowledge without obedience: Jeremiah 22:16, 31:31f., Hosea 4:1f., 6:6; John 7:17, 8:19, 32, 41, 55, 17:25; I John 2:3-5, 2:12ff., 3:16, 4:7; Philippians 3:8-11; I Corinthians 2:6f., 13; II Corinthians 10:5; Ephesians 3:17-19, 4:13; II Timothy 2:22f.; II Peter 1:3, 5, 2:18-20; II Thessalonians 1:8f.
- c. Truth (cf. *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*; Murray, *Principles*, 123-128; Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 382f.).
 - i. Concept.
 - a) “Metaphysical” absoluteness.
 - b) “Epistemological” correctness.
 - c) “Ethical” rightness

- ii. Source: God in Christ by word and Spirit.
 - iii. One cannot, therefore, say that he has the truth in the fullest biblical sense unless, by God's grace, he is walking in the truth, obeying the truth.
 - d. Doctrine.
 - i. The teaching of the word of God to promote spiritual health (I Timothy 1:10, 4:6, 6:3; II Timothy 1:13, 4:3; Titus 1:9).
 - ii. This teaching is done by all Christians, and not only in formal discourse (Colossians 3:16!).
 - e. Conclusion: The knowledge conferred in the process of sanctification is not only the information necessary for obedience, but obedience itself.
3. Intellectual Knowledge and Ethical Knowledge.
- How, then, does intellectual knowledge fit into the overall pattern of "knowledge" in the ethical-redemptive sense?
- a. The ethical presupposes the intellectual, Hebrews 11:6; I John 4:2, etc.
 - i. These passages, of course, are talking about adults of normal intelligence and do not resolve questions about the status of infants, the mentally retarded, etc.
 - ii. This is the sort of point generally in view when people say that "life ought to be built on doctrine". That slogan misleads, I think, by equating doctrine with a set of propositions (cf. 2.d., above), but the intent of it is biblical.
 - b. The intellectual presupposes the ethical. (This point is less often made and less often understood.)
 - i. The unbeliever's ethical rebellion compromises even his "intellectual" knowledge. For to know the way of blessing and willfully to forsake it is a stupid response. Cf. *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*. The "intellectual knowledge" of the unbeliever is paradoxical. He knows (and thus is responsible), but in some sense does not know (because he renounces his knowledge).
 - ii. Since, then, the grace of God overcomes our unbelief and its consequences it overcomes even he "intellectual" weakness caused by unbelief. Thus, when Scripture speaks of knowledge in general coming through sanctifying grace (I Corinthians 8:1-4; I Timothy 1:5-11; I John 2:3-6, 9-11, 20-27, 4:2f., 8, 13-17, 5:2f.; John 7:17, 11:40; Ephesians 1:17f., 3:18f.), it means knowledge as a whole. God's gift of ethical righteousness brings restoration of knowledge, even in the "intellectual" sense.
 - iii. Note in the above passages especially the connection between "intellectual" knowledge and love (I Corinthians 8:1-4, 13:7, 11-13; Philippians 1:10; I Timothy 1:5-11; I John 2:9-11; Ephesians 3:17f.), faith (John 11:40), obedience (I John 2:3-6, 5:2f.; John 7:17).
 - iv. Scripture teaches us our duty, among other ways, by presenting the Christian virtues (the fruit of the Spirit). We can learn more about our duty by asking "How can I be more loving, gentle, etc.?"

- v. *Dokimazein*: A life of obedience gives us increasing discernment as to what our duties are.
- a) Romans 12:1f.
 - i) The language of living sacrifice, nonconformity to the world, transformation, renewal of the mind emphasizes the necessity of ethical change.
 - ii) One who is so transformed will “prove what the will of the Lord is”.
 - (1) “Prove” (*dokimazein*) = “to discover, to find out or learn by experience what the will of God is and therefore to learn how approved the will of God is” (Murray, *Romans*, *ad loc.*). It is both learning what God wants and coming to approve of it.
 - (2) But notice that here ethical transformation precedes knowledge of God’s will, oddly enough. The point seems to be that the more we obey, the more we know of our duty. The new life equips us to know.
 - b) Philippians 1:10.
 - i) Love produces knowledge and *aisthesis* (perception, discernment, sensitivity: a moral sense, we might say).
 - ii) This sensitivity enables us to prove (*dokimazein*) *ta diapheronta* (what is important, what really matters at a particular time).
 - iii) Here again, obedience (love) gives me a sensitivity to God’s will, to know what to do.
 - c) Ephesians 5:8-10.
 - i) We are light, and that inevitably involves obedience [cf. earlier discussion about God as light, I.A.10. Also the discussion of “Goodness and the Being of Man”, above, III.B.]. Note again how righteousness comes from an inward principle.
 - ii) That obedience enables us to know God’s will, verse 10.
 - d) Hebrews 5:11-14 (no *dokimazein* here, but the same idea).
 - i) Problem: doctrinal immaturity, inability to understand Melchizedek priesthood (11).
 - (1) They don’t even understand the most basic things (12; cf. 6:1-2).
 - (2) They lack a standard (*logos*; cf. F.F. Bruce) of righteousness. Doctrinal immaturity is ethical immaturity.
 - (3) They are “without experience of” (*apeiros*) the standard. The problem is somehow related to inexperience. In some sense, it requires experience in the Christian life to understand the great doctrines.
 - ii) Characteristics of doctrinal maturity (14).
 - (1) They have a moral sense (*aistheteria*—cf. Philippians 1:10).
 - (2) The sense is exercised; note emphasis on experience, connotation of rigor.

- (3) The exercise is “by reason of use” (*exis*, a skill acquired through practice). The more we use our moral sense, the more accurate it becomes.
- (4) The result of this exercise: the discernment of good and evil. Thus, we come to know our duty through vigorous moral exercise.
- (5) The further result (in context): doctrinal discernment. We come to understand the Melchizedek priesthood as we obey God. As “life is built on doctrine,” so “doctrine is built on life.”
- e) Conclusion: knowing our duty presupposes sanctification. It presupposes active involvement in the spiritual warfare. We may never suppose that knowledge of our duty always comes before obedience, as though we could spend three years studying God’s will and then do it. Learning and doing God’s will are simultaneous.
- vi. Some principles implicit in these passages. (The above teachings are rather hard to understand in the context of our intellectualistic heritage. The following comments may help us to understand why Scripture presents the matter as it does.)
 - a) The intellect is part of life. Its health depends on the health of the whole organism. Intellectual acts are acts of the whole person, and like all other acts, they are subject to sin and sanctification. Sanctification in one area of life begets sanctification in others. Thus, it is not surprising that in some senses obedience is prior to intellectual understanding. Cf. John 3:3.
 - b) Thinking presupposes the ability to think; “knowing that” presupposes “knowing how”. “Knowing how” involves obedience to a norm, i.e., doing right.
 - c) What does it mean to “have a concept” of something? Well, when we test people to see if they have the right “concept” of, say, a triangle, we find out what they can do. “Having a concept” always involves being able to do certain things. It is a disposition to action. Such dispositions to action are ethically directed—directed toward a particular goal which is either godly or sinful. Thus, concept presupposes disposition to act, which, in turn, presupposes ethical dispositions. (For a Christian” to have a “right concept” of God implies being ready to endure hardship for the sake of Christ. Concepts can take a long time to acquire. Compare the apostle Paul saying “We are more than conquerors” with a Sunday School class of five-year-olds saying the verse).
 - d) Knowing our duty involves application of Scripture to situations [I., II.], and that, in turn, involves a particular kind of moral vision.
 - i) Ethical judgments involve seeing our situations “in the light of” biblical categories. We ask, “Is this act murder?” “Is this act stealing?” etc. We want to call our experiences by their biblical names.

- ii) The text itself does not perform this job. Scripture does not mention each of our experiences specifically. Categorizing our experiences under biblical rubrics, then, is something that we must do, by God's enabling.
- iii) This moral task involves:
 - (1) Seeing patterns in our experience which can be compared with similar patterns in biblical events. (Hijacking planes is different from stealing oxen, but there is a common pattern).
 - (2) Seeing analogies between our experiences and biblical teachings, stories, etc.
 - (3) (Cf. the aesthetic terminology in Philippians 1:10; Hebrews 5:11-14: the moral sense is in some ways like an aesthetic sensitivity.)
- iv) This moral discernment is not simply a matter of sense-experience.
 - (1) The "duck-rabbit": You can see the location of every line in the picture, even reproduce the picture, without having the "rabbit-aspect" dawn on you. Some would not even recognize the duck, though they see all the lines. "Seeing as" is not the same as "seeing".
 - (2) Seeing a pattern involves experience in the world and in cultural means of representing the world. (In the above example, it helps to have seen ducks, rabbits, and other pictures of ducks and rabbits.)
 - (3) Seeing ethically relevant patterns is even more complicated. One can have a very good grasp of what takes place without "seeing" the relevant ethical patterns and analogies, without seeing this "as" adultery, Sabbath breaking, etc.
 - (4) Cf. this moral example: I feel rage. Is that rage to be understood as righteous indignation (John 2:14ff.) or is it murderous hatred (Matthew 5:22)? The answer may not be obvious.
 - (a) I may have memorized the whole Bible and still not seen the relevant pattern there.
 - (b) I may have very good knowledge of myself at one level, without seeing the pattern.
 - (c) Thus, it is not a mere question of intelligence or sense-perception.
- v) This discernment presupposes spiritual maturity. A mature Christian can do it better than an immature one. And this maturity is not necessarily equivalent to intelligence or education. Often, uneducated Christians will be among the wisest in noting the patterns and analogies.
- vi) The discernment can come about in unexpected ways.

- (1) It may, of course, come about in expected ways: perhaps a verse of Scripture coming to mind, perhaps a fact of experience not noticed before (like a line on the duck-rabbit not noticed).
 - (2) But, since one may know all the verses, and all the facts, without knowing the patterns, often the insight will come in odd ways.
 - (3) David's sin with Bathsheba is an example.
 - (a) David knew the Scriptures; he knew adultery and murder were wrong.
 - (b) David knew what he had done.
 - (c) Yet somehow, the moral dimension of his acts was missed. Perhaps, he had rationalized; perhaps, he was spiritually cold.
 - (d) Nathan revealed, in a sense, no new facts to David—neither facts about Scripture nor facts about his actions. Rather, he put the facts already known into a pattern which presented obvious analogies with Scripture. The parable of the ewe lamb shocked David into seeing the pattern with full clarity.
- vii) Thus, ethical discourse is never merely a matter of setting forth facts and verses.
- (1) In an ethical debate, one or both parties may be very knowledgeable about Scripture and experience, but unable to make the connections because of immaturity.
 - (2) Thus, it may sometimes be useful, not only to reason, but also to tell stories, to pray, to sing, to share analogies, to do odd things for “shock value” (Ezekiel), to teach by example.
 - (3) Sometimes, ethical agreement may be impossible due to the lack of vision of one or both parties. It may be necessary to abandon the discussion until the immature party has grown. Go out and live the Christian life, then come back and think some more. Exercise your discernment!
 - (4) Thus, for still another reason, we do not dare to try to work out all the answers before engaging in the Spiritual warfare.
- e) The “Doctrine of Guidance”.
- i) Two Extremes.
 - (1) Notion that guidance is essentially an academic process—the process of intellectual study of Scripture (danger in reformed circles.)
 - (2) Notion that guidance is by divine addresses above and beyond Scripture (danger in Pentecostalism).
 - ii) Both these views think that ethical knowledge is essentially a matter of acquiring propositional information. If we have an ethical problem, we merely need to know more facts.

iii) They tend to ignore:

- (1) That we need facts about the situation, as well as facts about revelation (situational perspective).
- (2) That we need the insight to see patterns and analogies.
- (3) That such insight often comes about in other ways than by academic study.
- (4) That the Spirit's work in our time is not the giving of new canonical revelation but is nevertheless crucial—the opening of our eyes to see how Scripture applies.

iv) Thus, guidance does not add to Scripture; but on the other hand, it is far from an academic or impersonal process. The believer is guided in a very personal, we might even say direct, manner. Often, his workings are mysterious, perhaps even mystical in some sense.

vii. Conclusion: The ethical is in some senses prior to the intellectual. If “life is built on doctrine,” doctrine being understood as intellectual understanding of propositional revelation, then it is also true that doctrine is built on life in various ways. There is a reciprocity between the two. Neither functions without the other.

4. The Organs of Ethical Knowledge.

a. The Heart.

- i. The “work of the law” written on the heart (Romans 2:15): all of us know by nature the law of God in its fundamental demands. Even under sin, man's own nature is revelational of God and of God's will. [Cf. I.B.2.b.].
- ii. The word “written on the heart” of the regenerate [Jeremiah 31:33ff.; cf. I.B.2.b.]. This is a more profound relation between the word and our being than that described in i. If the word is written on the heart, then, we not only know God's requirements, but we obey them by nature. Thus, the regenerate heart is naturally inclined to do God's will.
- iii. The heart convicting us of sin, II Samuel 24:10.
- iv. In general, the heart is the “center” of man's being. To say that the heart is a source of ethical knowledge is to say that our nature as a whole reveals God's will, and [in case ii.] even inclines us to do God's will (ethical knowledge as involving actual obedience).
- v. Since man as a whole discerns God's will, we must not press too hard the various divisions of man into “faculties” (reason, will, memory, etc.) or elevate one faculty above another as an ethical authority within man. Those distinctions have some value [see below], but must be seen as in some measure “abstractions”. Nor are they neatly distinguishable from one another.
- vi. On the other hand, if man as a whole is an organ of knowledge, then all aspects of man are involved, somehow in ethical knowledge. Thus, there is some value in making distinctions within man to see in more detail how the knowledge functions.

- b. Synteresis (or synderesis).
- i. In Thomas Aquinas, *synteresis* is reason as the faculty by which the first principles of morality are known.
 - ii. These cannot be derived from anything more ultimate, but are a “habit” of the soul.
 - iii. As such, they form the major premises of ethical syllogisms (“All stealing is wrong,” etc.).
 - iv. The concept roughly coincides with our description of the “work of the law” written on the heart [a.i., above]. As such, it is unobjectionable.
 - v. By making this a faculty of reason, however, Thomas suggests that this is something autonomous, as Aristotelian reason was conceived to be.
- c. Conscience.
- i. In Thomas Aquinas, much moral theology.
 - a) Take the moral syllogism, “All stealing is wrong; embezzling is stealing; therefore, embezzling is wrong.” As we saw above, the first premise is supplied by *synteresis*.
 - b) The second premise is supplied by “an inferior kind of reason”.
 - c) Conscience (*syneidesis*) draws the conclusion, embezzling is wrong. Thus, conscience is essentially a syllogistic rational process, though Thomas agrees that the term “conscience” may also be applied to *synteresis*.
 - ii. In Scripture.”
 - a) “Conscience” (*syneidesis*) in the New Testament is used in ways roughly parallel to some Old Testament uses of “heart”. The word “conscience” is not found in the English Old Testament (KJV), but there are places where it is a possible translation of “heart”. Cf. II Samuel 24:10 with New Testament references. We would be inclined to say that David’s “conscience” smote him. This suggests that conscience is our inmost being, conceived as a means of ethical knowledge.
 - b) Conscience is not the law, or the work of the law [a.i. and a.ii., above]; rather, conscience bears witness to these revelations of God (Romans 2:15, cf. Murray’s commentary). It is, therefore, not autonomous, but rests upon the revelation of God.
 - c) Conscience is, therefore, a source of ethical knowledge: Acts 23:1, 24:16; Romans 9:1, 13:5; I Corinthians 8:7-12, 10:25-29 in context; I Timothy 1:5.
 - d) There is no Scriptural reason to restrict the work of conscience to the work of deriving conclusions from ethical premises.
 - i) Conscience is certainly that which perceives the revelation and attests its truth.
 - ii) Conscience convicts us of sin [above examples].

- iii) Conscience is certainly involved in the perception of patterns and analogies [above, 3.] whereby we derive the minor premises of moral syllogisms (“Embezzling is stealing,” e.g.).
 - (1) It may be identified with that “moral sense” we discussed earlier which Scripture also speaks of under other names (*aisthesis, aistheterion*). That function of conscience is presented in Scripture as something highly important, the solution to much ethical perplexity. It is not to be relegated to “an inferior kind of reason” as in Aquinas.
 - (2) We identify this with conscience simply because, according to Scripture, conscience perceives our obligations. This implies that conscience perceives, not only the law, but the application of the law.
- e) Sin infects even the conscience, I Corinthians 8:7, 12; I Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:15. Cf. the expression “good conscience” or “pure conscience”. Sometimes, however, these expressions refer not to the sin or goodness of the conscience itself, but to the sin or goodness of the person, to which the conscience testifies.
 - i) Therefore, conscience is not infallible. If “seared,” it can fail to do its work of bringing sin to our attention.
 - ii) There is some paradox here. On the one hand, conscience sometimes fails; on the other hand, no one is ever without sufficient knowledge of God’s will to be responsible for sin. We ought to assume, then, that conscience is never entirely destroyed in the sinner. (Cf. the problems about the sinner’s having “knowledge” and having the “image of God”.)
 - f) It is always wrong to disobey conscience, even when conscience errs, I Corinthians 8:7, 10, 12 in context. To disobey conscience is, by definition, to do what we think is wrong. And doing what we think is wrong always involves a spirit of rebelliousness against God.
 - g) It is not, however, always right to obey conscience. Obeying conscience is right only when conscience itself is right.
 - h) Thus, we have a duty to train the conscience. The conscience must be sensitized by Scripture and the Spirit so that it becomes a more reliable guide.
- d. Experience.
 - i. Scripture never deprecates knowledge obtained through the senses, as is done by rationalistic philosophers. The facts about Christ have been “heard and seen”. The gospel is based on reports to this effect by witnesses. (Cf. the emphasis on witnesses in biblical jurisprudence.)
 - ii. It is by means of our senses that we learn the content of Scripture and the facts of our situation.
 - iii. Sense-experience, in itself, is insufficient to teach us our duty (apart from divine authority, the Spirit, etc.). Yet, it plays an indispensable role in the discernment of our duty.

- iv. Scripture is understood only insofar as it makes some connection with our present experience (meaning as application). We understand the meaning of Scripture by drawing analogies with the patterns of our own experience [above, D.3.]. This is not in a technical philosophical sense, but it is experience, and it involves sensation.
 - v. Thus, we are better equipped to explain Scripture when we have experienced the realities to which Scripture refers (e.g. when we have gone through the same trials and triumphs that the biblical characters have gone through).
- e. Reason.
- i. “Reason” is one of the most ambiguous concepts in human thought. Some meanings:
 - a) Logic (especially in rationalism, cf. G.H. Clark).
 - b) The “laws of thought” (law of non-contradiction, etc.).
 - c) Following a certain method of inquiry.
 - d) The psychological capacity for making judgments based on various data. I will assume this definition below.
 - ii. There is plenty of work for reason to do in the area of ethics.
 - a) Moral syllogisms.
 - b) Determining causal relations between means and ends (situational perspective).
 - c) Scripture exegesis.
 - d) Analysis of the situation to which Scripture applies, etc.
 - iii. Like “conscience” (with which the concept of “reason” overlaps), reason is infected by sin (cf. apologetics courses). Thus, like conscience, reason is not infallible. We may therefore say (as we said about conscience) that to disobey reason is always wrong (God does not want us to live irrationally), but to obey reason is not necessarily right. Reason must be trained to operate on godly presuppositions, to use godly methods, to be sensitive to what really matters.
 - iv. Like conscience, reason may never suppose itself to be autonomous. The function of reason is to understand and apply the law, not to create it. And even the understanding and application must be done obediently.
- f. Will.
- i. “Will,” in general, is our ability to choose to act in a particular way. Thus, will is always involved in any moral act or decision.
 - ii. Will is also involved in moral deliberation (which after all is itself a series of moral acts and decisions).
 - a) We choose to reason on certain presuppositions rather than others.
 - b) We choose to take the language of deliberation in one sense rather than in another (cf. existentialism).
 - c) We choose to accept one reason as valid and another as invalid.
 - iii. All of these choices, on the other hand, may be based on reasons.

- iv. Thus, it appears that reason and will are mutually dependent. We accept reasons because we choose them, and we choose because we find those choices reasonable. Will and reason, therefore, are not neatly distinguishable. (Cf. earlier discussion of “doctrine” and “life”.)
- g. Imagination.
 - i. The word “imagination” in the English Bible is almost always used in a bad sense (Jeremiah 3:17, etc.). It represents, however, various Hebrew and Greek terms which bear little relation to the term “imagination” as commonly used today; thus, we cannot condemn a positive use of the term out of hand.
 - ii. Today, “imagination” can be a synonym for creativity, for the power to see patterns and analogies, for the power to conceive of possible situations in which something of importance takes place. As we’ve seen, ethics presupposes all of these skills.
 - iii. Imagination can help us in conceiving possible alternative courses of action, types of terminology, etc.
 - iv. Imagination may warn us against hasty generalization by presenting us with possible situations in which our principle does not apply (counter-examples).
- h. The Emotions.
 - i. Scripture does not discuss “the emotions” as an independent item of concern, any more than it discusses “the intellect” or “the will” in such a way.
 - ii. Yet, it speaks a great deal concerning particular emotions—griefs, joys, anxieties, awe, terror, woe, lust, and also about concepts which have a large emotional component: love, hate, happiness, etc.
 - iii. According to Scripture, regeneration reorients our emotional life.
 - a) We learn to love God and hate evil, to rejoice in the good, to be content in the face of difficulty, etc.—the opposite of the unbelieving emotional disposition.
 - b) Regeneration does not necessarily make us more emotional or less emotional. We may assume that in this respect believers differ from one another. Yet, our emotional life, however active it may be, is now the Lord’s. Thus, our joys, sorrows, etc., are different from what they were.
 - c) As there is a change in our emotions by grace, so there is a command to work out this new principle (gift and task, “already” and “not-yet”).
 - i) It is sometimes said that feelings cannot be commanded, or even taught. Hegel (*Early Theological Writings*) thought that Christianity was even more reprehensibly authoritarian than Judaism, because while Judaism commanded actions, Christianity commanded feelings.

- ii) Scripture, however, assumes that feelings ought to be changed to conform to God's will, and that they can be changed, by thought and by new habits.
- d) Scripture teaches about the emotions, not only by commanding us to change them, but also by:
 - i) Presenting sin in its true ugliness (*contra* Eve, Genesis 3:6).
 - ii) Presenting the new life as something beautiful and delightful (rationale for emotive sermons).
- iv. Emotions and knowledge.
 - a) Emotions, like reason, have a "hermeneutical" component; i.e. they assign (or discover) meaning in various data which they express. Anger, fear, and delight represent certain assessments of the meaning of the facts at which one is angry, fearful, or delighted.
 - b) It may be said, therefore, that the emotions presuppose, or ought to presuppose, reason; for our feelings ought to be based on true assessments of meaning, and a true assessment is a rational assessment.
 - c) The opposite, however, is also true. Reasoning presupposes emotions. Illustration: writing a book review is a highly "rational," even "academic" or "theoretical" activity. Yet, it is a job that requires a subtle interplay of emotions and reasoning. I read a chapter; I feel a certain way about it. I return to verify or falsify my feeling. Perhaps, the feeling changes as I analyze. Perhaps, the initial analysis agrees with the initial feeling. Or perhaps, feeling and analysis disagree, in which case, it is evident to me that the analysis is incomplete.
 - i) Note that feeling can be said to "lead" the intellect in some senses. My feelings indicate what, to me, is in need of analysis.
 - ii) Once I am entirely satisfied emotionally, the analysis usually ends.
 - iii) If I had no emotions at all about the book, I would not keep on reading it, much less write about it.
 - iv) It is hard to imagine any theoretical or rational inquiry which is not dependent on emotion in some such way. Cf. "cognitive rest" in DKG.
 - d) Emotions and reason, then, form a single complex set of capacities by which we seek to respond rightly to our world. (Other capacities are also part of the complex—sense-experience, imagination, etc.) Each involves the other.
 - e) Scripture never suggests that emotions are naturally more sinful or less sanctified than reason, or *vice-versa*. Man, as a whole, is depraved and, as a whole, is redeemed. At some particular point, however, emotion may signal an inadequacy in our reasoning [iv.c), above] or *vice-versa*. (Checks and balances.)

- f) Scripture never suggests that emotions in general must be subordinated to reason or *vice-versa*, (the former in Greek thought, the latter in, e.g., Hume). (*Contra* Gordon H. Clark, “The Primacy of the Intellect”.)
 - i) The emotions and the reason ought to agree, to be sure.
 - ii) “Disagreements between emotions and reason” are best understood as disagreements between one set of emotion-reasons and another set of emotion-reasons. One set will have a more emotional cast, the other, a more rational cast, but neither will be totally devoid of either emotion or reason.
 - iii) In cases where “reason and emotion disagree,” the resolution may involve a better analysis or a better (more godly) emotional response to the previous analysis. The direction of the solution is not dictated by the nature of reason and emotion as such.
 - iv) Illustration: you are persuaded rationally that there can be no good in Pentecostal worship; but, when you attend a service, you find yourself (surprisingly!) clapping along, singing, shouting Amen from the heart. Do you simply rebuke your emotions for contradicting your intellect? Do you simply abandon your previous conviction because it no longer “feels right”? Neither. Think it through, pray about it, study Scripture, train yourself in godly emotions. It could go either way.
- v. Summary: Emotions are aspects of our ethical sensitivity, our *aistheteria*. We dare not neglect them as we seek to “prove what the will of the Lord is.”