

Lesson 2. Ethical Views

Resources: Geisler, Norman L. (2010) Christian Ethics. USA: Baker Academic.

Kaiser Jr., Walter C. (2009) What Does the Lord Require. USA: Baker Academic

I. Six Major Ethical Views (From Geisler, Christian Ethics)

a. Antinomianism

- i. Falls into the category of non-absolutism
- ii. Literally means “against/instead of law” and holds that there are _____ .
- iii. Antinomians believe:
 1. There are No God Given Moral Laws
 2. There are No Objective Moral Laws
 3. There are No Timeless Moral Laws

b. Generalism

- i. Believes in _____ but insist that none of the moral laws are absolute.
- ii. There are exceptions to every moral principle
- iii. Since their moral beliefs are not binding upon all people at all times, at any given time any action could be justified.

c. Situationism

- i. Adheres to the belief that there is _____: The law of _____
- ii. They fear both the radical left and the radical right and feel they are landing in the middle

d. Unqualified Absolutism

- i. There are _____ and _____ to them
- ii. They are for all times and for all people
- iii. These moral absolutes never conflict.

e. Conflicting Absolutism

- i. There are moral absolutes and no exceptions to them
- ii. They are for all times and for all people
- iii. We live in a fallen world and moral conflicts do occur
- iv. When two duties conflict, we have a moral responsibility to both
- v. _____ can never be broken without guilt
- vi. Do the lesser evil and confess the sin and ask forgiveness

f. Graded Absolutism

- i. There are moral absolutes and no exceptions to them
- ii. They are for all times and for all people
- iii. Sometimes moral absolutes will conflict
- iv. There are higher and lower moral laws
- v. There are unavoidable moral conflicts
- vi. No Guilt is imputed for the unavoidable

II. Examples of Ethical views applied (From Geisler, Christian Ethics)

- a. Lying is neither right nor wrong: there are no laws. _____ asserts that lying to save lives is neither right nor wrong. It affirms that there are no objective moral principles by which the issue can be judged right or wrong. The issue must be decided on subjective, personal, or pragmatic grounds, but not on any objective moral grounds. We are literally without a moral law to decide the issue.
- b. Lying is generally wrong: there are no universal laws. _____ claims that lying is generally wrong. As a rule, lying is wrong, but in specific cases this general rule can be broken. Since there are no universal moral laws, whether a given lie is right will depend on the results. If the results are good, then the lie is right. Most generalists believe that lying to save a life is right because in this case the end justifies the means necessary to attain it. However, lying is generally wrong.
- c. Lying is sometimes right: there is only one universal law. _____ claims that there is only one absolute moral law, and telling the truth is not it, Love is the only absolute, and lying may be the loving thing to do. In fact, lying to save a life is the loving thing to do. Hence, lying is sometimes right, indeed, any moral rule except love can and

should be broken for love's sake. Everything else is relative; only one thing is absolute. Thus, the situationist believes that lying to save lives is morally justified.

- d. Lying is always wrong: there are many nonconflicting laws. _____ believes that there are many absolute moral laws, and none of them should ever be broken. Truth is such a law. Therefore, one must always tell the truth, even if someone dies as a result of it. Truth is absolute, and absolutes cannot be broken. Therefore, there are no exceptions to telling the truth. Results are never used as a rationale to break rules, even if the results are desirable.
- e. Lying is forgivable: there are many conflicting laws. _____ recognizes that we live in an evil world, where absolute moral laws sometimes run into inevitable conflict. In such cases it is our moral duty to do the lesser evil. We must break the lesser law and plead mercy. For instance, we should lie to save the life and then ask for forgiveness for breaking God's absolute moral law. Our moral dilemmas are sometimes unavoidable, but we are culpable anyway. God cannot change his absolute moral prescriptions because of our moral predicaments.
- f. Lying is sometimes right: there are higher laws. _____ holds that there are many moral absolutes, and they sometimes conflict. However, some laws are higher than others, so when there is an unavoidable conflict, it is our duty to follow the higher moral law. God does not blame us for what we could not avoid. Thus, he exempts us from responsibility to follow the lower law in view of the overriding obligation to obey the higher law. Many graded absolutists believe that mercy to the innocent is a greater moral duty than telling truth to the guilty. Hence, they are convinced that it is right in such cases to lie in order to save a life.

III. An ethical outline from Ps 24; Who shall ascend and Who shall stand?
(Walter C. Kaiser Jr., What Does the Lord Require)

- a. He that hath clean hands-Outwardly clean
- b. He that hath a pure heart-Inwardly clean

- c. He that hath not lifted up his soul to vanity. “Whose hearts are not carried out inordinately towards the wealth of this world, the praise of men, or the delights of sense, who do not choose these things for their portion, nor reach forth after them, because they believe them to be vanity, uncertain and unsatisfying.”-Matthew Henry
- d. He that hath not sworn deceitfully-Keep promises and tell the truth