

# *Christian Ethics:*



An Integrative Task

# *Key Issues to Discuss*

- Just what is an integrative task?
- What are the challenges of integrating theoretical normative ethics & theology in particular?
- What are some ways we could begin to do this?
- How do we make this practical and livable?

# *Just what is an integrative task?*

- Maybe a first approximation would be that it occurs when one tries to bring at least two (and maybe more) somewhat distinct (or previously thought to be distinct) disciplines into coherence and consistency

## *What are the challenges of integrating ethics & theology in particular (theoretical)?*

- Both theology and world-view have some fairly foundational things to say about the project—it's not completely obvious what is more fundamental
  - Because we often understand theological views through the lenses of our worldview (our metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology) and vice-versa
- Both entities we wish to integrate have various ways they can be construed, important subtleties, and vast landscape--there is a lot to think about and evaluate
- You need to know Biblical theology in a profound way and you need a penetrating analysis of theoretical normative ethics and metaethics



Worldview  
(especially axiology)



Theology

The Integrative Task  
For Christian Ethics

# The Academic Disciplines & Culture



Worldview

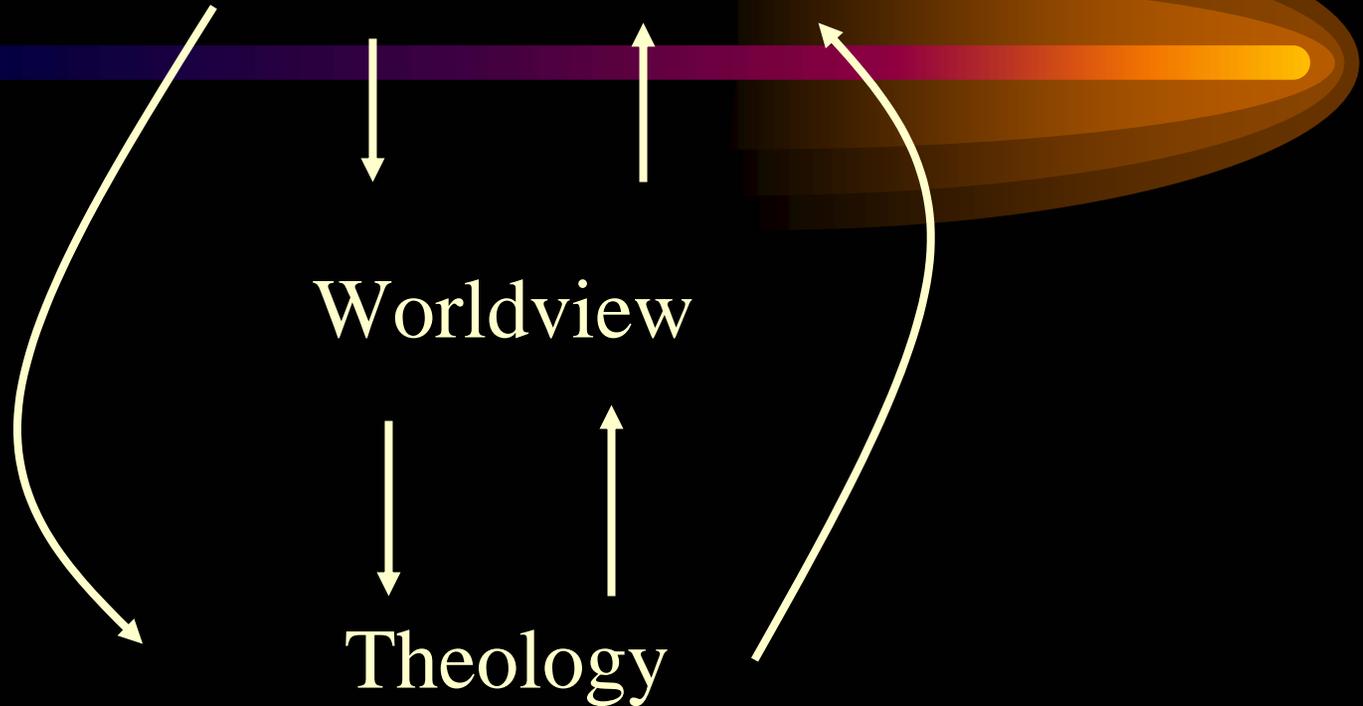
(especially axiology)



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# *All that represents the challenge!*



- Now we look at ways this project could be begun

# *What are some ways we could begin this task?*

- Start theologically—master the Bible
  - Especially asking yourself questions like:
    - Are there absolutes in the Bible? If so, what are they?
    - How do stories (narratives, parables and the like) communicate ethics?
      - What do they have to say about virtues (habits and dispositions) and our character?
    - Are there also divine commands in the Bible which are not absolutes?
      - Are there commands to follow **no matter what their consequences** on others?
      - Are there commands to follow **because of their consequences** for others?
      - Should the consequences reflect the interests of the Kingdom of God, “the greatest number of people”, or the interests of ourselves?

# *What are some ways we could begin this task?*

- Then begin to reflect more carefully on the discipline of ethics
  - Metaethics—analytical
  - Normative Ethics
    - Models—does the Biblical picture fit any of the models or combination of models?
    - Ask yourself the questions you asked in step 1
      - What about commands?
      - What about narratives?

# *What are some ways we could begin this task?*

- Next begin to put your normative theory “together”
  - How do you see the Bible and the life of Jesus expressing either teleology, deontology, and virtue ethics or all of the above
    - Scripture emphasizes proven character
    - It uses narratives to illustrate virtue ethics (the lives of Joseph, David, Nehemiah, Jesus, and Paul among others)
    - There are commands that **appear** deontological
      - No other gods before him, etc.

# *What are some ways we could begin this task?*

- Finally think through how to organize your thoughts and **express it in writing** (including diagrams)
  - What is your theory of obligation?
  - What is worthy of pursuing in life and why?
  - Are there non-moral “goods” you are seeking?
  - Is character a part of your theory—how does it relate to issues of deontology and teleology?
  - How do you handle quandaries?
  - Give brief examples of what this might look like

# *What are some ways we could begin this task?*

- Some advice on writing this out
  - Generally—develop your final paper according to the headings
  - Demonstrate you understand the ethical terms and their proper use in context
    - Some of you use the deontology and teleology (and their various offshoots) in your papers and discussion but don't properly apply them

## *How do we make this practical and livable?*

- Obvious: we seek to bring the theological and theoretical normative insights into the practice of our living
- We do this by thinking hard about the issues of integration, by practice and by evaluation; best done in a community setting
  - We need feedback about both aspects of this integrative process—the community does that
  - That's why you'll get a grade and some feedback on your final paper!