

SCOTT RAE'S

View of Christian Ethics

HEART OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

- Christian ethics “is a blend of both virtues and principles”
- Morality is ultimately rooted in God’s character
- God issues the commands that he does because he is the kind of God that He is
- The virtues are primary and moral principles or God’s commands are derived from them.

HEART OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

- Other types of moral reasoning supplement the primary place of virtues and principles.
- There are different types of moral reasoning in Scripture
 - Mosaic Law and prophets are heavily deontological
 - Wisdom literature contains measure of utilitarian reasoning
 - Some appeals to ethical egoism
 - Some appeals to natural law

OT ETHICS

- The Law as the Core of Ethics
- The 10 Commandments as Moral “First Principles”
- Obedience as personal loyalty to God
- Holiness as the Unifying Theme of OT Ethics

OT: OVERLAP OF PERSONAL & SOCIAL ETHICS

- Could overlap a great deal in a theocracy
- Overlap seems to be different in a democracy
 - Abortion debate as an example
 - But murder is still thought of as wrong

OT: THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF OT ETHICS

- Israel as a Kingdom of Priests and a holy nation - ideal society
- Law mandated individual behavior and in so doing structured society
- We see reminder of personal sin in the set up of structures in their society that violated the Law

OT: THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

- Through OT God's people were called to stand against injustice--because god is a God of justice
- Mosaic Law had proactive structures to prevent exploitation of the poor and vulnerable

NT ETHICS

- Less emphasis on institutional morality and social ethics as it is on morality for the church
- Both OT and NT, the broad objectives were to bear witness to His rule over the earth--but way achieved is apparently different
- NT church didn't attempt to structure institutions and effect social change--but doesn't mean we can't
- Why didn't NT Christians try for more?

NT: AN ETHIC OF VIRTUE: BECOMING LIKE JESUS

- High value on principles (action oriented) and also place high value on virtue (being)
- Jesus is the ideal person--ethical obligations subsumed under “becoming like Christ”

NT: AN ETHIC OF LOVE

- Any account of NT ethics that doesn't include Love as the central virtue is surely incomplete

PRINCIPLES REAPPLIED WITH VIRTUE

- Virtues ultimately ground moral principles; yet great emphasis on the principles expressed in God's commands.
- Jesus essentially deepens and reapplies the principles of the law that were misused by Jewish religious leaders--He doesn't nullify the law he critiques misunderstanding and misapplication
- Pharisees exemplify abuses of unbalanced commitment to principles with her sister of rigid rules

MEMBERS OF KINGDOM PEOPLE OF CROSS/RESUR.

- NT ethics follow from what membership in the Kingdom demands
 - ethics and discipleship overlap significantly
 - little distinction between moral and spiritual life except the former deals mainly with believers responsibilities to the church in the world

MEMBERS OF KINGDOM PEOPLE OF CROSS/RESUR.

- Consistent NT pattern emerges:
 - Jesus and the apostles initially preach the message of the Kingdom and then
 - It's ethical implications

MEMBERS OF KINGDOM PEOPLE OF CROSS/RESUR.

- Ethical implications were addressed quickly since it was inconceivable to the early church that someone would profess Christ cannot adhere to the moral demands of life in the Kingdom
- Paul taught attempts of unregenerate people to be moral fall short of what God requires
- What membership in the Kingdom looks like was powerfully shaped by the cross and resurrection of Jesus

NT: SPECIAL PLACE FOR POOR

- Jesus spent most of his time (other than with disciples) with poor and others outside the social mainstream
- Luke 14: 12-14: gives a banquet the poor and the marginal members of society should be invited instead of friends--they cannot repay favor (forces host to show unconditional grace toward poor and models God's love)

THE DYNAMIC: INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT

- Jewish religious leaders relied on spiritual discipline to develop holiness and Greeks depended on education to produce morality
- Instead of providing internal source that assists in decision making and enables one to mature spiritually

DIVINE COMMAND THEORY

- Strong emphasis in Scripture that God's commands are to be obeyed -- an important part of Christian ethics
- A divine command system is one in which the ultimate foundation for morality is the revealed **will** of God
 - Some forms ground in God's **character** (a possible solution)
- Problem (intellectual) comes from Plato's Euthyphro

DIVINE COMMAND THEORY

- Goodness and General Revelation
 - Another way to approach a solution to the Euthyphro problem
 - Natural law--posits that moral precepts exist prior to God's commands given in special revelation
 - Objective moral values exist outside of special revelation
 - Logically independent of Scripture
 - Objective goodness has always existed (in God's character) but is revealed through natural law prior to God's giving human beings the Bible

DIVINE COMMAND THEORY

- Natural law is simply general revelation in the area of moral values
- His commands must be consistent with His character and the moral laws he has revealed in general revelation
- this is alleged to be a system where one would obey the divine commander w/o being a traditional divine command theorist or an ethical voluntarist.

PROBLEMS WITH DIVINE COMMAND THEORY

- Still two problems with divine command ethics that must be addressed:
 - calling God “good” presupposes a prior notion of goodness that must be independent of God and religion
 - criticism confuses epistemology and ontology or the essential nature of a thing
 - just because a person must know something about what is good before calling God good, it does not follow that “goodness is essentially independent of God”