

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

- I. Similarities and essential dissimilarities
 1. The relationship of similarities and dissimilarities
 - 1) Similar does not mean identical
 - 2) Similarities do not erase the dissimilarities
 - A Therefore, similarities make a thing similar, but dissimilarities make a similar thing different, and essential dissimilarities make a thing essentially different.
 2. Examples of different similar things
 - 1) Jesus and the thief on the cross
 - A Similarities
 - a Both crucified
 - b Both convicted criminals
 - c Both bled, struggled, etc.
 - B Dissimilarities
 - a Jesus is God, the thief is not
 - b Jesus did not break man's just law, but the thief did
 - c Jesus died for others; it was predetermined by God for Jesus...
(A) Therefore, they are very different events
 - 2) God and man
 - A Similarities
 - a Talk, think, free will
 - B Dissimilarities
 - a Finite/infinite, perfect/imperfect, changeless/changing, etc.
 - 3) Murder (Gen 9:6), Accident (Ex. 21:12-13), Self defense (Ex. 22:2), Government punishment (Romans 13:1-7), War (Gen. 14 & Canaanites etc.), Suicide (Gen. 9:6, Judges 9:54-56).
 - A Similarities
 - a Someone dies prematurely
 - b Weapons, time of day, place, sex, etc.
 - B Dissimilarities
 - a Murder and accident
 - (A) Intent is always different and the physical may be different.
 - (a) Intentionality - intent to murder with a gun and a gun going off accidentally involve different motives or intents.
 - (b) Physicalness - The murderer pointed the gun at the victim vs. the precipitator may have dropped the gun and it discharged.
 - (i) Therefore, to be a biblical ethicist, we must maintain the distinctions and descriptions that the Bible explicitly claims.

- (ii) Those not explicitly stated must be based on the principles and implications of Scripture.
- b Suicide, martyr, and murder
 - (A) Intent is different and physical may be different
 - (a) “The man who kills a man kills a man. The man who kills himself, kills all men; as far as he is concerned, he wipes out the world. His act is worse (symbolically considered) than any rape or dynamite outrage. For it destroys all buildings; it insults all women. The thief is satisfied with diamonds; but the suicide is not: . . . There is a meaning in burying the suicide apart. The man’s crime is different from other crimes—for it makes even crimes impossible”¹
 - (b) Suicide is the apex of all sin, that is to worship the “image of God”, rather than God himself. That is the essence of all idolatry. “Though a million idols are adored by the sons of men, in the end there is only one—the million idols are all masks for the idol of self.”²
 - (c) “God may have called everything into being, but the person who commits suicide imagines that he can make it all go away.”³
 - (d) Budziszewski was an atheist who contemplated suicide because “in order to annihilate God, I had to annihilate myself.”⁴
 - (i) Therefore, suicide is more evil than murder, for murder takes the life of one created in the image of God but suicide seeks to eliminate all of God’s creation, which is the zenith of the deification of man.
 - (e) Martyrdom, “Suicide is the opposite of a martyr. A martyr cares so much for something outside him, that he forgets his own personal life. A suicide is a man who cares so little for anything outside him, that he wants to see the last of everything. One wants something to begin: the other wants everything to end. . . . He [the martyr] sets his heart outside himself: he dies that something may live. The suicide is ignoble because he has not this link with being: he is a mere destroyer; spiritually, he destroys the universe.”⁵
 - (i) The martyr forgets about his life to save another, the suicide is absorbed with the conditions of his life, and seeks to eliminate them through finally becoming a god—he did

¹ *Orthodoxy*, G.K. Chesterton, p 74-75

² *Why I Am A Christian*, p 58 *Why I Believe in God*, J. Budziszewski

³ *Ibid* p 58

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ *Orthodoxy*, p 75

not create it all, but he can eliminate it all rather than living with what God has created.

- C Thus, all murder involves taking a human life, but not all taking of a human life involves murder.
3. In relating some acts of sin to other sinful acts, they are equal in that they are both sin, but unequal in the nature of the sin.⁶
- 1) Some things are *intrinsically* good or evil while others are merely *extrinsically* good or evil.
 - A The nature of something that is intrinsically good or evil is that it can never be otherwise, for to be otherwise is to speak of something else. For example, murder—taking of an innocent life—is intrinsically evil and can therefore never be good, for that is to talk of something that is essentially different, like killing in a just war, martyrdom, or self-protection. Telling the truth is always good since truth telling is based on the very nature of God who is truth (John 14:6).
 - a That which is intrinsically good or evil is based upon the eternal unchanging nature of God and is in concert with His will.
 - B The nature of something that is extrinsically good or evil is that it can be otherwise at a different time; for example, the civil and religious laws of the Old Covenant that Israel was required to obey—sacrificial, sabbatical, priestly—are no longer required; further, to disobey them under the Old Covenant would have been sin whereas to require them under the New Covenant would be sin.⁷ Consequently, the very same act that was good at one time would now be sin.
 - a Determining if something is extrinsically good or evil is based upon either being explicitly taught in Scripture, or by implications and principles drawn from the Scripture.
 - b An example in society could go something like this. Christians are to obey the government (Romans 13:1-7). The government sets the speed limit at 55 miles per hour; therefore, Christians are not to drive faster than 55 miles per hour; however, it is obvious that a speed limit of 55 mph is not intrinsically good since it can be changed by the government to whatever they think is best at the time. The same could be said of laws that require a certain age to vote or building permits, as well as amoral laws like a law that might require inmates be given cake with each meal; in addition, some government laws may take precedence, stipulate exceptions or exemptions, and some may simply be unjust e.g., slavery, forced abortion, not punishing crime.

⁶ This section just deals with the difference in *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* but other things may also make some sins or laws more important, e.g. Jesus reference to “the greater sin” (John 19:11) “the weightier” (Mathew 23:23)

⁷ I am referring specifically to things like offering of sacrifices according to Leviticus, keeping the Sabbath....

- (A) Thus, intrinsic laws like “thou shall not steal” are *essentially* dissimilar to extrinsic laws of government which can change; moreover, an extrinsic good is not only a lower good than an intrinsic good, but it is also categorically different; consequently, it is disanalogous and not suitable for comparison or arguing against obeying intrinsic laws.
- (B) Therefore, when an intrinsic good conflicts with an extrinsic wrong, one should choose to pursue the intrinsic good, which may or may not absolve him from confessing the extrinsic wrong, which may still be wrong depending on what it is and other variables such as, is the law just, are there exceptions, etc. An example would be, if one is to choose between driving over 55 to save a life or driving under 55 and sacrificing a life, one should choose to save the life, even if the lesser is sin and must be confessed as such. This is not to say that the conflict is actual, but merely I pose it in order to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic conflicts.

II. *Is ought* fallacy

1. 1 Geisler p.23-24

1) *Is ought* fallacy involves deducing an ought from what is.

A It is a fallacy because

- a If what is, ought to be, then what ought, is: Therefore, extreme relativism is true and Christianity is false
(A) Lying, stealing, and rape should be because it is.
- b Because God condemns what *is* in many instances and requires what is not but what *ought* to be.
- c Is, is fragmentary knowledge, and impersonal; therefore, incapable of producing a moral imperative.

2. Secular

1) Some people steal.

- A However, that does not tell us if it is right or wrong but merely tells us what is—sociology.
- B God, the Scripture determines if an act is right or wrong (Eph. 4:28)—morality.

3. Biblical incidents

1) In the Bible some murdered (Moses), lied (Rahab), raped (four women Scripture is silent about), crucified (Jesus & thieves), etc.

- A However, that does not tell us if those things are right or wrong, but merely that they happened.
- B God, the Scripture determines if an act is right or wrong.
 - a This is the difference in **descriptive** Scripture—what is—and **prescriptive** Scripture—what *ought*—to be.
(A) Therefore, we know that all killing is not murder, or sin, not because people killed, but because God prescribed certain kinds as murder and certain kinds as non-murder.

4. If we use the *is* verses of the Bible to determine *oughts* even when they conflict with clear absolutes, we are applying the same methodology as relativists.
 - 1) The only difference in a secular relativist and us is what examples we use to deduce our *oughts* from.
 - 2) In addition, if we use the *is* verses to prove the *ought*, we will end up with absurdities like;
 - A Women should not wear makeup because Jezebel wore makeup and she is the only woman whom the Bible mentions that of and she is evil; therefore wearing makeup is evil—this is from a counselee.
 - B Herod killed John the Baptist at a birthday party; therefore birthdays are evil—JW.
5. Failure to distinguish between the **fact**⁸ *is* and **value** *ought* results in relativism
 - 1) What people do is subject to change—sociology—but what people ought to do does not—the former is the fact, the latter is the value.
 - A Sociology describes what is, and is not morality—prescribing what ought.
 - a Hence, relativism confuses the changing factual situation with the unchanging moral duty.
 - (A) Moses murdered—facts changed—the moral duty to not murder—value or moral duty—did not change.
6. Failure to distinguish between the **value** and the **instance of value** results in relativism.
 - 1) We used to put witches to death.
 - 2) We no longer put witches to death.
 - A The value—murder is wrong—did not change, but the instance of value—whether or not witches murder—changed.
 - a Therefore, distinctions are critical to avoid sliding into relativism and/or dealing with someone who is a relativist.⁹

III. Sin of Omission

1. James 4:17
 - 1) To do good does not involve committing any sin—that which the Scripture forbids elsewhere.
 - A Therefore, this is not a command to lie in order to do a “greater” good.
 - a Since
 - (A) The greater good is not mentioned
 - (B) Sinning is never prescribed as good.
 - (C) The passage is internally consistent and consistent with the rest of Scripture only by understanding that; for example, he who knows to help the needy and yet chooses not to help is sinning. There is no call to sin, only to do what is right.

⁸ I am indebted to Norman Geisler for this and the following distinction as well as the illustration of the witches.

⁹ Relativists technically believe there are no absolutes, whereas others who are not relativists believe there are absolutes, but there are also exceptions to them, e.g. generalists.

- 2) This is actually an example of *is* and *ought*, vs. 13-17.
- IV. Arguments from silence are invalid
1. Argument for Rahab's not sinning when she lied
 - 1) Rahab lied in her attempt to serve God and help the Israelites—greater good.
 - 2) Rahab is honored for her faith in Hebrews chapter eleven.
 - 3) God did not condemn her lying
 - A Therefore, her lying was good—not sin.
 2. Problems with the argument
 - 1) First premise is not a given.
 - A May not be the greater good.
 - B May have been seeking to preserve herself and her family from the inevitable—it was not complete trust.
 - C The Scripture commends her “hiding” them and her faith; therefore, the lying could have been a part of her old life, pragmatism, weakness of faith.
 - 2) Non sequitur, the conclusion does not follow from the premises for the following reasons.
 - A Because God did not condemn her lying in the context of the event, does not necessarily mean that He commends it.
 - a Randy did not say he was not a communist; therefore, Randy must be a communist.
 - b When a subject is not addressed, it does not tell you the person's thoughts on the subject.
 - (A) Cannot prove anything from a negative—argument from silence.
 - c Satan told Eve, “you shall surely not die”, a complete lie. Yet God did not say it was sin there, so was it true?
 - B Because God did not condemn her lying there does not mean that He has not condemned lying.
 - a This violates the analogy of faith principle.
 - (A) He has repeatedly done so throughout the Scripture.
 - b God does not have to address every sin every time.
 - (A) To require that He does is to make irrelevant—non-applicable—everything He has said before that time.
 - (B) It is to bind every word to each event.
 - (a) I do not have to write a paper on lying and murdering every time the subject comes up in order to be against it.
 - C Because God honored her faith does not mean that He honored everything in her life. If it did, you would have God honoring sin—harlotry, lying, and whatever else she has done. God honored the faith of Abraham, Moses, Peter, etc., but never Abraham's adultery, Moses' murder, or Peter's pride.
 - a I can love and honor my children without honoring or loving all of their behavior
 - b When we honor a staff member or elder, we are not honoring their failures, even if we do not mention that we disapprove of such things.

- c Rahab was blessed in spite of her lie, not because of it.
 - 3) The third premise is false
 - A He did condemn all lying, and therefore condemned her lying in the same way that He does not condemn my lying when it happens but before it happens.
 - 3. The conclusion that her lying was okay because it is recorded in the context of the story, or even played a part in the outcome, is an example of the *is-ought* fallacy.
 - 1) It is the fallacy of making that which the Scripture *describes* equivalent to that which Scripture *prescribes* in determining what is to be normative.
 - 4. To argue that the spies would certainly have perished if Rahab had been truthful is to ignore or depreciate providence—that God *could* have protected the spies in some other way, and Scripture 1 Cor. 10:13.
 - 5. To excuse Rahab for indulging in a common practice is to condone what God condemns. The lie of Rahab was recorded but not approved.
- V. A lie is not and is:
- 1. A lie is not
 - 1) An action without words. That is deception. (I think)
 - A It is true that all lying includes deception, but it does not seem true that all deception is lying.
 - B Proverbs 30:8 refers to deception and lies.
 - C Lies seem to be verbal, Rev. 14:5, etc.
 - D Deception seems to be a lie and/or an action, 1 John 3:7 connects deceive with practice; Zech. 13:4 Not put on a hairy robe to deceive; Obadiah 7 connects eating bread, ambush with deception; Rom. 16:18 connects lying and deception with words.
 - 2) Partial truth, 1 Samuel 16:1-5
 - A Samuel had to go anoint a new king because God had rejected Saul. Samuel was afraid for his life, so God said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD’.”
 - a This was true, but not all of the truth.
 - (A) Had he not taken a heifer and not sacrificed, it would have been a lie; hence, the question asked, “Why have you come?” was answered.
 - (a) Concealment of more truth or other purposes is not necessarily lying.
 - (b) Had he been asked, have you come for further purposes? He would have had to come clean.
 - (i) Contrast with Abraham (Genesis 12:10-20), who told a partial truth, which was sin. However, Abraham’s partial truth was a complete lie. He answered that Sarah was his sister in response to the implied question, “Is Sarah your wife? (v. 12)”.
 - 3) Intentionally holding back some truth is not lying. John 16:12; 1 Corinthians 3:2

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- A If this were not true every time someone spoke they would either have to say everything they know about that particular subject or lie: hence, God the father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are liars.
2. A lie is:
- 1) Made up of three components
 - A The facts stated are contrary to reality.
 - B The intention of the speaker is to deceive.
 - C There is a moral context, which demands that we speak the truth.
 - a Examples of lacking one of these
 - (A) Weatherman often tells us things that are contrary to reality, but we do not call him a liar—immoral.
 - (a) He has one and three, but not two.
 - (B) Games often include statements that are contrary to reality, intent to deceive, but they lack the proper moral context—there is no expectation of truth telling in most games.
- VI. The dilemma resolved.
- 1. Since the facts—what is—changed in each circumstance, but the value—what ought did not change
 - 1) To lie, as a last resort, is sin because the Bible says so, Rev. 21:27, 22:15.
 - 2) To kill an intruder, as a last resort, is not sin because the Bible says so, Ex. 22:2.

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