



AN INTRODUCTION TO
CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Introduction

In our second lecture of this series, I made the following claim: “Our study of Christian ethics will be a delight to you. We will begin slowly and build from the ground up. My intention will be to make the complex simple, for God intended for us to know Him and to do what is pleasing in His sight. As He promised, ‘the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day’ (Prov. 4:18).”

Over the past five weeks, my prayer has been that we would grow together in our understanding of Christian ethics as taught in the Scriptures so that we might seek to please the One who saved us by His grace and mercy.



Introduction

Today, having already considered the “deontological” and “situational” perspectives, we will turn our attention to the last of the three vertices of the *Triangle of Necessary and Sufficient Conditions: The Existential Perspective*. “This perspective studies the ethical subject – his griefs, his happiness, his capacities for making decisions – but only as interpreted by Scripture and in the context of his situational environment” (Frame). It focuses on the fact that we are made in the *imago Dei* (the image of God). Over the past twenty years, I have sought to make the case from the Word of God that each one of us is God’s image-bearer, sovereignly endowed by our Creator with unique gifts and abilities and called into fellowship with Jesus Christ in order to

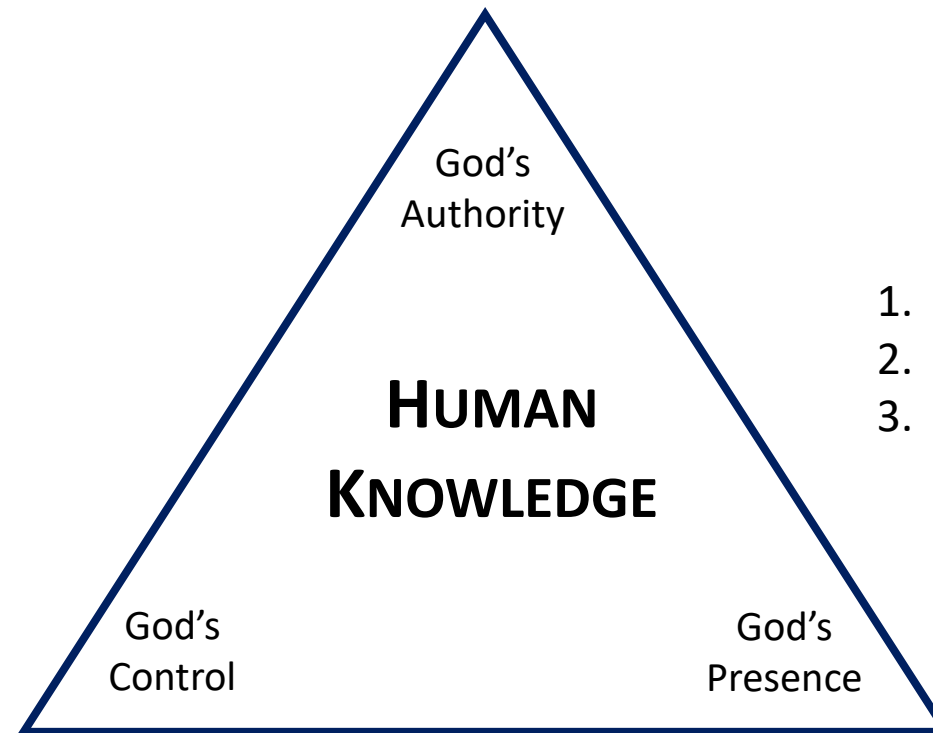


Introduction

love and serve Him wholeheartedly and without reservation until we receive our Final Call to enter into His presence for all eternity. Carl F.H. Henry summarizes our identity as human beings when he writes: “Each of us is a personal being in self-conscious spiritual fellowship with his Maker.” After the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and the subsequent, promised redemption provided by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ in 30 A.D., our hearts are filled with gratitude that we are still God’s image and are striving to become more and more like Jesus Christ as we live by faith and walk in the Spirit day-by-day. Understanding the existential perspective will add additional insights that will help us on our journey of becoming conformed to His image.

The Triangle of Necessary & Sufficient Conditions

DEONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE



Human Knowledge

1. Knowledge of God's norms
2. Knowledge of our situation
3. Knowledge of ourselves

SITUATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

Deontological Perspective: Right Standard

DEONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

What Does the Whole Bible Say About “X”?

- Law, History, Prophecy, Gospels, Epistles
- Poetry and Song
- Parables
- Apocalyptic Writings

SITUATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

Situational Perspective: Right Goal

DEONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

What Are the Facts of the Situation?

- The Glory of God
- God Himself
- The World
- Nature
- History
- Extra-Biblical Data

SITUATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

Existential Perspective: Right Motive

DEONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

If I Am to Please God, How Must I Be Changed?

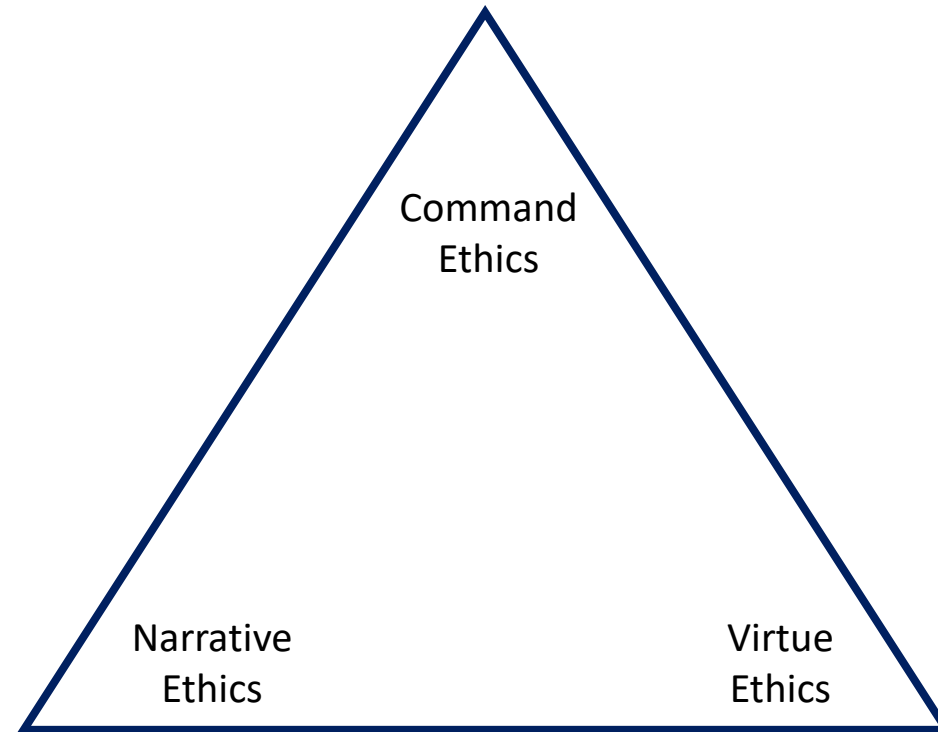
- God is Good
- Goodness is God
- God's Example to Us of Ethical Perfection
- God's Relationship to His Creatures

SITUATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

The Triangle of Necessary & Sufficient Conditions

DEONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE



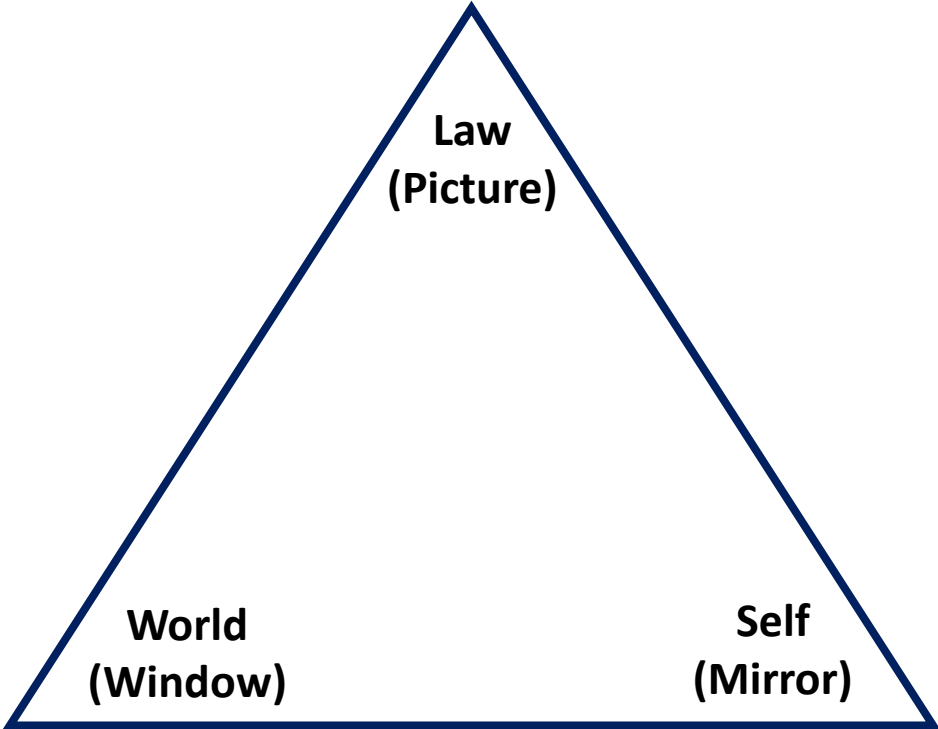
SITUATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE



A Practical Guide

DEONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE



SITUATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

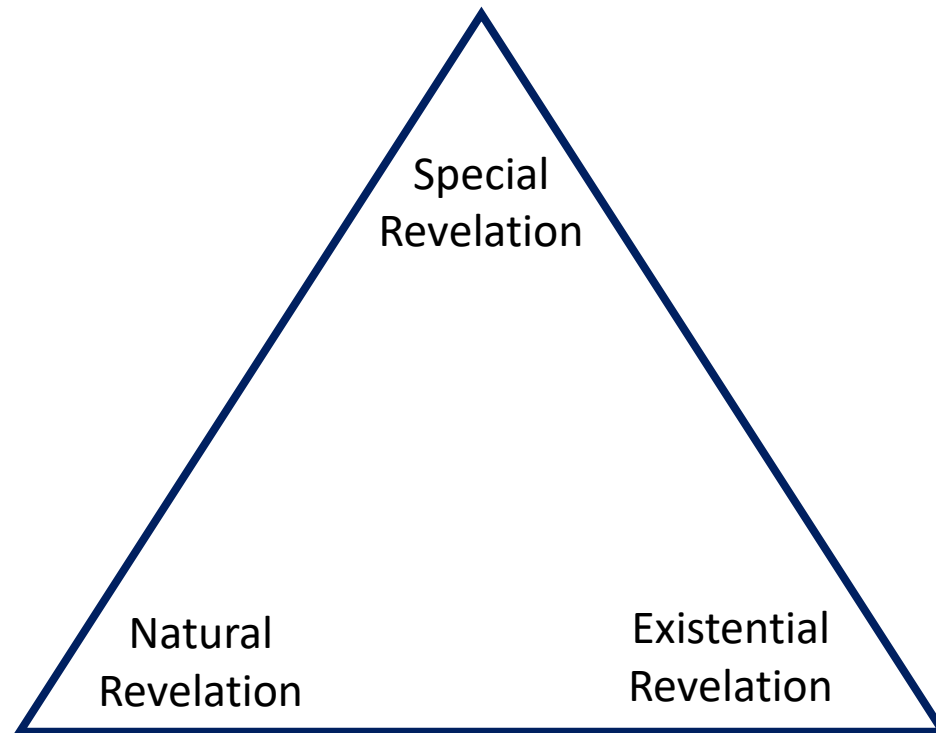


The Fundamental Principle of Christian Ethics

- “**Imitation of God** is the fundamental principle of Christian ethics” (Frame).
- “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matt. 6:12).
- “A new commandment that I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (Jn. 13:34).
- “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and every one who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (I Jn. 4:7-8).

The Existential Perspective: Right Motive

DEONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE



- “I cannot know myself rightly until I see myself as God’s image” (Frame).
- How am I a part of the problem and a part of the solution?
- What am I thinking, feeling, believing?
- What are my motives?
- Will I choose to obey?
- Have I prayed?

SITUATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE



Virtue Ethics

- As believers we must focus on a description of the regenerate heart.
- Biblical virtues are what God requires of us as His children.
- Biblical virtues motivate us to do good works.
- “We are not only scribes, poring over God’s statutes (normative), and pilgrims, walking toward a goal (situational), but also children, trusting their heavenly father, knowing that he will prove true (existential)...” (Frame).
- Some of the more important biblical virtues are faith, repentance, hope, love, and the fear of God.

You Are Loved and Accepted by God



Dr. Edmund Clowney

1917-2005

President of Westminster Theological
Seminary from 1966 to 1984

“Your calling is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14). You are accepted in God’s beloved Son (Eph. 1:6); you are made holy in Christ Jesus, called to be a saint with all who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place (1 Cor. 1:2).”

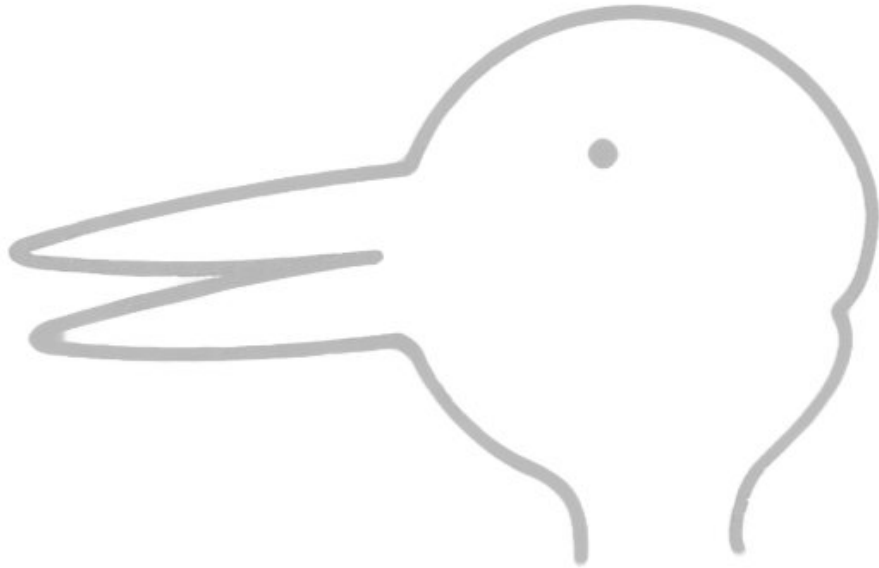


Moral Discernment

- We come to know God's will through Scripture.
- We come to know the will of God through ethical discipline (Rom. 12:1-2), nonconformity to the world, the renewal of our mind, walking as children of light (Eph. 5:8), and abounding in love (Phil. 1:9).
- Guidance also comes through wise counsel (Prov. 11:14; 15:22; 24:6).
- "Much of the work of application lies with us, led by the Spirit and by the general principles of Scripture" (Frame). We may not be able to "see" moral patterns and analogies.



Duck-Rabbit



- “Seeing as” is not the same as “seeing.”
- One person looking at the picture on the left will see a duck; another as a rabbit.
- They see the same lines on the paper.
- So it is with us when we see our lives in the light of Scripture.
- We need the Holy Spirit to illumine and confirm the revelation already given.