

Moral Theology

Should we think or
should we obey?



Jesus and the Rich Young Man (Matthew 19:16-22)

“And behold, one came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?” And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” He said to him, “Which?” And Jesus said, “You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The young man said to him, “All these I have observed; what do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.”

Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?"
(Matthew 19:16)

- There is a connection between right actions and eternity.
- The experience of joy at correct moral actions is an experience of eternity.

What We Do in Life Echoes in ETERNITY

~ *Maximus*

The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.

(Psalm 112:6)




THE VOICE BLOG

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Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good.” (Matthew 19:17)

- The question of right and wrong is ultimately a religious question;
- New natural law theory, which tries to discuss the good without reference to God may be possible in theory but must recognize its limitations.

The **BOISI CENTER** for
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Natural Law, God and Human Dignity

Robert P. George
Princeton University

The Prophetic Voices Lecture
March 25, 2010

www.bc.edu/boisi

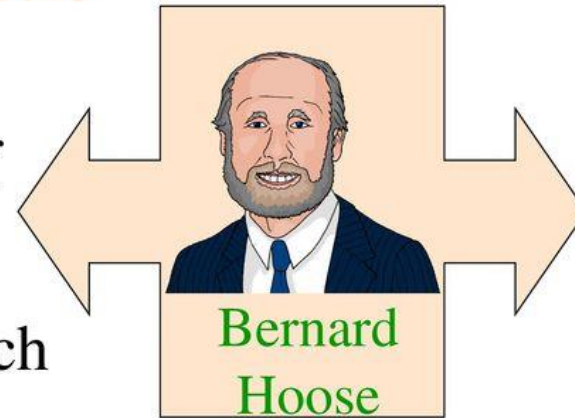
The image is a detailed engraving of St. Gregory the Great, depicted as a seated figure in a monastic habit. He has a halo and a dove above his head, symbolizing the Holy Spirit. He is holding a book in his left hand and a mitre in his right. The engraving is signed 'GREGOR. X.' at the bottom left and 'BVCERUS' at the bottom right.

“If you would enter life, keep the commandments.”
(Matthew 19:17):

The ten commandments remain sure norms for right action; therefore the moral theory of *proportionalism* is contrary to Catholic teaching.

Proportionalism

As a **general rule** follow the teachings of the Roman Catholic church and **natural law**



Occasionally the **situation** will demand performing **ontic evils**

So that a greater, **proportionate**, good is achieved.

All these I have observed;
what do I still lack?”
(Matthew 19:20) “If you
would be perfect... come,
follow me.” (Matthew 19:21):

*Keeping the commandments is
necessary but by themselves, will
leave a person still feeling that he is
missing something.*

If striving to keep the
commandments does not lead to
the desire to imitate Christ, it
would be a tragedy

There is a God-shaped hole
in the human heart that only
God can fill.



—Augustine
Bishop of Hippo

He planted eternity in the human heart (ecclesiastes 3:11)

- even though by his nature man is inclined (*inclinatur*) to his ultimate end, he cannot reach it by nature but only by grace, and this owing to the loftiness of that end. – St Thomas Aquinas *Commentary on Boethius' De Trinitate* q. 6, a. 4 ad 5



Questions for reflection / Discussion

1. When you were a child, you may have heard adults saying “you better behave, if not Mata (the Police) will arrest you”. Now that you are a bit older, what did you think of that statement at that time? And what did you think of it now?
2. Has your experience of being taught “right and wrong” been a source of wisdom for you? Or did it seem like right and wrong have been decided by those who have more power and are simply getting you to obey?
3. Was your experience of Jesus/Church something like the Moses joke? i.e. a constant preoccupation with “how far” can I go? Or was your experience of Jesus/Church something different?
4. Do you see your own experience of the moral life in that of the rich young man? Why or why not?
5. After this podcast, how will you speak/teach about morality differently? What would remain the same? Why?