



[www.PreciousHeart.net/ti](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/ti)

Volume 5 – 2016

---

**Ethics of Judging between Truth and Love  
when the Absolutely Right Choice Is Elusive**

**by Rev. Dr. Michael G. Maness**

Ret. Senior Clinical Chaplain  
Texas Department of Criminal Justice  
Managing Editor, *Testamentum Imperium*<sup>1</sup>

Love cherished in the soul on earth, will be to us the foretaste of, and  
the preparation for, that world which is a world of love, and  
where the Spirit of love reigns and blesses forever.<sup>2</sup>

Jonathan Edwards, 1852

**Introduction: Commander Bucher Lied to Save Lives in 1968** ..... 2  
**A. Love in Christ’s Competence and Its Greatest Work** ..... 4  
**B. Four Ethical Systems Compared** ..... 5

---

<sup>1</sup> Maness earned his DMin from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (1997); his MDiv from the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth (1990); and his BA from the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, Dallas (1985). He retired as a senior clinical chaplain from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (20 years), and he has a certified professional-diplomate lifetime membership from the American Correctional Chaplaincy Association, a designation no longer given. He led Texas Mental Health, Youth Commission, and TDCJ staff chaplains in a 1999 legislative push that won their first pay-group raise in 40-plus years, led TDCJ chaplains in 2000 that won back 25 staff chaplain positions, and in 2011 led the effort that saved the Texas prison chaplaincy from cancellation, chronicled in his book, [How We Saved Texas Prison Chaplaincy 2011](#) (2015; 414 pp.).

His latest book, [When Texas Prison Scams Religion](#) (2022; 894 pp.) exposes 25 years of nefarious dealings with religion in the TDCJ, especially when TDCJ followed Louisiana’s Angola in the abuse of buying faith from prisoners with favor and totally ignoring the science of psychopathy. He has written over 100 articles and ten books, including, [Would You Lie To Save a Life?—A Theology on the Ethics of Love](#) (2007; 432 pp.); [Heart of the Living God—Love, Free Will, Foreknowledge, Heaven](#) (2004; 728 pp.); [Character Counts—Freemasonry USA’s National Treasure and Source of Our Founding Fathers’ Original Intent](#) (Rev. 2007; 448 pp.); [Ocean Devotions—From the Hold of Charles H. Spurgeon](#) (2008; 440 pp.); [Heaven—Treasures of Our Everlasting Rest](#) (2004; 132 pp.); [Queen of Prison Ministry—Story of Gertha Rogers, First Woman to Minister on Texas Death Row](#), with a foreword by former TDCJ Exec. Dir. Wayne Scott (2008; 100 pp.); [Precious Heart, Broken Heart—Love and the Search for Finality in Divorce](#) (2003; 192 pp.), and his 1997 DMin dissertation, “[A Helping Skills Program at the Gib Lewis State Prison](#), Woodville, Texas” (New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997). His web domain, [www.PreciousHeart.net](http://www.PreciousHeart.net), links to over 100k resources and hosts perhaps the largest collection of papers and data on prison chaplaincy in the world and the most for Texas. He has been managing editor and publisher of [Testamentum Imperium](#) for most of its publication history, [www.PreciousHeart.net/ti](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/ti).

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits: Christian Love as Manifested in the Heart and Life* (Scotland: Banner of Truth Trust, 2000; 1st 1852), 322.

Chart 1. Ethical Systems Compared ..... 5

1. On NCA—Rakestraw’s Non-Conflicting Absolutism ..... 5
2. On GA—Geisler’s Graded Absolutism ..... 6
3. On P—Smith’s Principleism ..... 7
4. DA—Maness’ Dynamic Absolutism, an Ethic of Love ..... 7

**C. Deontology and Teleology—”Time” Critical to “Rightness” ..... 7**

Chart 2. Essence of Deontology and Teleology ..... 9

**D. Absolutes United in Love and Eternity ..... 9**

1. Absolutes Positively Stated Expressions of Love ..... 9
2. Love Struggles in the Small Window of Time ..... 10
3. Love’s Infinity of Variables on the Concourse of Time ..... 11

Chart 3. Unique Arenas of Individuals ..... 11

**E Love’s Simplicity Amid Eternal Complications ..... 12**

1. Manifold Struggles between Legality and License ..... 12

Chart 4. Love’s Struggle between Legality and License ..... 12

2. Teleological and Deontological Analysis of Love’s Choice ..... 13

Chart 5. Teleological-Deontological Analysis of Choice ..... 14

3. Five Implication of Chart 5 ..... 16

**Conclusion: Love and Truth Converge on the Concourse of Life ..... 17**

Chart 6. *Imago Dei* Trinity of Human Abilities ..... 18

**Introduction: Commander Bucher Lied to Save Lives in 1968**

All of us have deep human needs for Truth and Love in our lives. These bring us our greatest treasures and can cause great moral dilemmas. This article is a condensation of my book, *Would You Lie to Save a Life?*<sup>3</sup> During its roughly 25 years of refining and rewriting, two other books arose concurrently from within its research like two long rivers of additional source material.<sup>4</sup> Some paragraphs below reflect an entire chapter in one of those three books.

During most of my 20-year career as a senior clinical staff chaplain of a large Texas prison, I worked on *Would You Lie to Save a Life?* Prison played a large role in the book’s life. The networks in the vast healthcare and military chaplaincies should inform today’s prisons.<sup>5</sup> Yet, as profusely documented, most states and Texas do not value freedom of religion or pastoral care

---

<sup>3</sup> Michael G. Maness, *Would You Lie to Save a Life—a Theology on the Ethics of Love*, illus. by Gustave Doré (AuthorHouse, 2007; 432 pp.), [www.PreciousHeart.net/love](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/love). Buy here >

This article appears in *Can You Hear My Pain Now?—Making Pastoral Theology Relevant Relevant in the Modern World*, edited by Maness and Kevauahn Mattis (Wipf & Stock, 2022). Buy here > <https://wipfandstock.com/9781666798494/can-you-hear-my-pain-now/>.



<sup>4</sup> Maness, *Heart of the Living God: Love, Free Will, Foreknowledge, Heaven: a Theology on the Treasure of Love* (AuthorHouse, 2004; 728 pp.) and *Character Counts—Freemasonry USA’s National Treasure and Source of Our Founding Fathers’ Original Intent* (AuthorHouse, 2007; 448 pp.).

<sup>5</sup> Please see the bibliography “Army, U.S.” for their massive volumes on the chaplaincy corps from 1791 to the present—no other like them, but there should be. Though most of Texas prison chaplaincy history has been deleted, save those data at [www.PreciousHeart.net/chaplaincy/](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/chaplaincy/), if its modus operandi continues, all its history will die too, a terrible waste of massive documented human concern.

enough to vigorously much less comparatively support the prison chaplaincy *profession* as religion's best facilitator.<sup>6</sup> How personal this became is a book unto itself.

In summary, this is all about the ethics of the absolutes of Love and Truth. So, as in the book, I capitalize Love, Truth, Responsibility, and Right Choice throughout to highlight their status. Love wins, but not easily, and the most judgmental will struggle to stay afloat.

The North Koreans hijacked the USS *Pueblo* in January of 1968. They brutally beat the crew. After credibly threatening to kill *Pueblo* fireman Howard Bland, the youngest of the crew, Commander Lloyd M. "Pete" Bucher lied and signed a confession to spying. He saved their lives.<sup>7</sup> I dare say most of us would have done the same, yet some Navy brass wanted to court martial him—a very rough road!

The Koreans held the *Pueblo* crew hostage for 11 months forcing a refining of their confession that the crew turned into a hilarious comic strip of absurdities outlined by Bucher in his autobiography.<sup>8</sup>

The 1973 the movie *Pueblo* won two 26th Primetime Emmy Awards; Hal Holbrook played Bucher, winning both Best Actor and the Best Actor of the Year awards. Bucher fought for decades, and he finally won for his crew their POW Medals in May of 1990.

Sadly, the *Pueblo* remains a commissioned ship in the U.S. Navy while parked as a tourist attraction in Pyongyang, North Korea's capitol, moored on the Potong River near their Monument to the Victorious Fatherland.<sup>9</sup> Mercy! We should tow it home, and the remaining crew asked President Trump to do just that in 2018.<sup>10</sup>

I interviewed Commander Bucher in the summer of 1997 at the Black Angus Steakhouse in San Diego. With us were his fellow 1968 crew member, Chief Communications Technician James F. Kell, and my friend, Lt. Col. Will Duke. Great interview. Even three decades later, Chief Kell believed Bucher had saved their lives.

Bucher died on January 28, 2004.<sup>11</sup>

What is the *absolutely* Right Choice in Bucher's dilemma? In short, we are not as competent as Jesus and could not find the Right Choice, though one was and is always available, as was for Jesus. Every decision is unique and short of Jesus' competence. We show how "time" itself has a place in the "rightness" of the choice, and we show how every choice must include the teleological, even the eschatological to be an *absolutely* Right Choice this side of heaven. In

---

<sup>6</sup> See my book, *How We Saved Texas Prison Chaplaincy 2011—Immeasurable Value of Volunteers and Their Chaplains* (2015; 414 pp.). See Larry VandeCreek and Laurel Burton, "Professional Chaplaincy: Its Role and Importance in Healthcare," *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 55, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 81–97, a landmark joint statement of the five largest chaplaincy bodies representing 10,000-plus members, [www.PreciousHeart.net/chaplaincy/Chaplaincy\\_Healthcare.pdf](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/chaplaincy/Chaplaincy_Healthcare.pdf). A host of work supports professional chaplaincy services for centuries, and for one of the largest collections of prison chaplaincy documents in the country, see [www.PreciousHeart.net/chaplaincy/](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/chaplaincy/). Compare U.S. Army's unprecedented massive multi-volume history of its chaplaincy corps in the bibliography.

<sup>7</sup> Lloyd M. Bucher, *Bucher: My Story*, with Mark Rascovich (Doubleday, 1970; 447 pp.).

<sup>8</sup> Bucher, *Bucher: My Story*.

<sup>9</sup> Craig S. Coleman, "North Korea Unveils USS *Pueblo*: American Ship Captured in 1968 Now On Display as Tourist Attraction," *Korea Times* (May 3, 1995).

<sup>10</sup> FOX News reported on September 22, 2018, "USS *Pueblo* spy ship crew tell Trump to bring the vessel home from North Korea," at [www.FOXNews.com/us/uss-Pueblo-spy-ship-crew-tell-trump-to-bring-vessel-home-from-north-korea](http://www.FOXNews.com/us/uss-Pueblo-spy-ship-crew-tell-trump-to-bring-vessel-home-from-north-korea), accessed December 17, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> See [www.USSPueblo.org](http://www.USSPueblo.org) for more.

other words, no choice can be *right* without considering the future, and for the Christian the Right Choice must include a view to heaven.

### A. Love in Christ's Competence and Its Greatest Work

In the decades since the first paper on this, I have offered the dilemma to tables of preachers and teachers dozens of times. Quickly, the room divides. Usually, a minority of diehard Truth-sayers contrast with the majority who would lie, and predictable discussions ensue.

Some defend the truth in all scenarios, and those are often the most judgmental, sometimes even arrogant, stabbing, “Speak the Truth in Love” (Eph 4:15). To *think* and *feel* is often too much trouble for those land-lovers unacquainted with the roiling depths of the ocean's worst moral weather. Dietrich Bonhoeffer acidly said:

It is only the cynic who claims “to speak the truth” at all times and in all places to all men in the same way, but who, in fact, displays nothing but a lifeless image of the truth. He dons the halo of the fanatical devotee of truth who can make no allowance for human weaknesses; but, in fact, he is destroying the living truth between men. He wounds shame, desecrates mystery, breaks confidence, betrays the community in which he lives, and laughs arrogantly at the devastation he has wrought and at the human weakness which “cannot bear the truth.” He says truth is destructive and demands its victims, and he feels like a god above these feeble creatures and does not know that he is serving Satan.<sup>12</sup>

This reflected the shame of Nazi fundamentalism in 1940s Germany.

Beyond 1 Corinthians 13 and our hearts, the intersecting pathos between the theologians, philosophers, poets, and song writers contribute to Love's vitality and wealth and Love's connection to eternity.<sup>13</sup> James Moffatt's magisterial classic *Love in the New Testament* details from the ancients through Christ's birth in Bethlehem—and through Christ's life—how Love came of age in the New Testament.<sup>14</sup> Moffatt noted how some portions of Christianity can only be understood from the “inside.”<sup>15</sup>

A sad Truth permeates Jesus' words “no greater Love has anyone than this, to give their life for a friend” (John 15:13). Really? Must one die for the best of Love to be seen? Sometimes that is the only infallible proof of Love. The one who sacrifices his or her life is—in that very act—contemplating the future and placing the future of the loved one above self. The future of the loved one becomes supreme!

*Sacrifice* is Love's greatest work and the heart of the gospel. Yet, not just in sacrifice, the future plays a critical role in all of our important decisions all our lives; indeed, the future plays a role in *all* decisions *all* of the time.

In the long haul on earth, then, Love's eternal nature extends into heaven where the need for the word *Truth* will cease.<sup>16</sup> In an eternal world pure and clean where Truth is part of heaven's

---

<sup>12</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945), *Ethics*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (New York: Macmillan, 1955): 328–329. He opposed Nazi crimes and was hanged on April 9, 1945, 21 days before Hitler's suicide.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Paul Tillich's *Eternal Now* (New York: Scribner, 1963) and Amos Yong's *Spirit of Love: A Trinitarian Theology of Grace* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012),

<sup>14</sup> James Moffatt, *Love in the New Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929): 32–33, “When Christianity begins, we find ... the Church conscious of a new relationship to God ... the most central and simple term was ‘Love.’ ... It was in their group that for the first time the word was heard, *God is Love*.” We have not seen an equal to this masterpiece on Love for the N.T. Christian.

<sup>15</sup> Moffatt, *Love in the New Testament*, 321–322.

<sup>16</sup> Michael G. Maness, *Heaven—Treasures of Our Everlasting Rest* (AuthorHouse, 2004). Cf. Millard J. Erickson's *Basic Guide to Eschatology* (Baker, 1998; 200 pp.), Jürgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope—On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (SCM, 1967; 346 pp.), Moltmann's *The Coming of God—* [Footnote continued on next page ... ]

very nature, there will be no lies or falsehood. From day one in heaven, we will not need to distinguish Truth from any lie ever again. Forever after, the word *Truth* will cease to have any meaningful use, because all words and actions will be absent of all deceit. All of us in heaven will always be absolutely true to each other. Therefore, the need for the word *Truth* will vanish the instant we enter heaven and begin to live in perfect Love for the rest of our everlasting loving lives.

## B. Four Ethical Systems Compared

<b>NCA</b>	<b>Robert Rakestraw’s Non-Conflicting Absolutism:</b> <sup>17</sup> Absolutes Never Conflict, chooses the impending right, being right
<b>GA</b>	<b>Norman Geisler’s Graded Absolutism:</b> <sup>18</sup> Absolutes are Graded, chooses the greater good, exempting wrong
<b>P</b>	<b>Ebbie Smith’s Principleism:</b> <sup>19</sup> Absolutes Conflict, chooses the greater good, accrediting wrong
<b>DA</b>	<b>Michael Maness’ Dynamic Absolutism:</b> Absolutes Never Conflict, chooses greater good, and guilt remains

Chart 1. Ethical Systems Compared

Consciously or not, most evangelicals will fall into one of these four systems, perhaps most religions too. Our dilemma here is about our Responsibility to Love and to tell the Truth at the same *time!* My experience debating this leads me to stress our Responsibility to:

### Love and tell the Truth at the Same TIME

We are not free to choose one absolute if two have a bearing upon a dilemma, and we contend Love always has a bearing, even eternally.

#### 1. On NCA—Rakestraw’s Non-Conflicting Absolutism

Robert Rakestraw’s Non-Conflicting Absolutist—NCA—would tell the Truth, for there are “no exceptions” to telling the Truth (except silence).<sup>20</sup> Very deontologically, Rakestraw states,

---

*Christian Eschatology* (Fortress, 1996; 420 pp), Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI’s *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, 2nd Ed. (Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2007; 1st 1988; 307 pp.), and Nicholas Wright’s *History and Eschatology: Jesus and the Promise of Natural Theology* (Baylor Univ. Press, 2019; 365 pp.).

<sup>17</sup> Robert V. Rakestraw, “Ethical Choices: A Case for Non-Conflicting Absolutism,” *Criswell Theological Review* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 239–267, [www.PreciousHeart.net/love/Rakestraw-1988.pdf](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/love/Rakestraw-1988.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics—Options and Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989; a revision of his *Ethics—Alternatives and Issues* (Zondervan, 1982, through 13 prints from 1971–82): 113–132. See more on Geisler at [www.normangeislerbooks.com](http://www.normangeislerbooks.com) and more on his Southern Evangelical Seminary (SES) at [www.SES.edu](http://www.SES.edu). It was founded in 1992 by Geisler and Ross Rhoads, former evangelist and then Pastor of Calvary Church in Charlotte. Geisler continues to isolate himself from his peers and criticism, as seen in his recent resignation from the Evangelical Theological Society (outlined in an interview in *Criswell Theological Review* 1:2 (Spring 2004): 139–145; and is criticized further in my book, *Heart of the Living God: Love, Free Will, Foreknowledge, and Heaven: a Theology on the Treasure of Love* (AuthorHouse, 2004). In his presidential intro to his own seminary (as of 6-5-2004), he said students come to his seminary because “they can get something here [SES] that they cannot get anywhere else, namely, training under some of the top apologists and Bible teachers in the country to evangelize the world and to defend the historic Christian Faith.” So he really knows how to *grade*.

<sup>19</sup> Ebbie C. Smith, “The Ten Commandments in Today’s Permissive Society: A Principleist Approach,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 20, no. 1 (Fall 1977): 42–58. He taught ethics for many years at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. This article in its earliest draft was a paper presented in his class at SWBTS, and for the book I secured his and John P. Newport’s endorsement.

<sup>20</sup> Rakestraw, “Ethical Choices,” 239–240.



If, as we believe, an absolute is a universally-binding moral norm or directive which admits of no exceptions or exemptions outside of the absolute itself, then we must maintain that when a conflict situation arises in which specific absolutes are brought to bear upon the decision, whatever else we may do, we cannot disobey, lay aside, or transcend any of these divine absolutes.<sup>21</sup>

While we agree there, Rakestraw based that upon a claim that “ends *never* justify the means.”<sup>22</sup> That becomes a claim of competence to being able to make Right Choices, even a claim of competence equal to Jesus. Another problem is his application: NCA denies the integration of teleology (ends) in the determination of the Right Choice. NCA would tell the Truth, for Bucher’s conflict is simply between a lie and the Truth. Therein for NCA, Love has little-to-zero relevance and no decisive impact in Bucher’s dilemma regarding the Right Choice! No *use* for Love?—that is not how the world turns. That’s not how we *live*.

## 2. On GA—Geisler’s Graded Absolutism

Norman Geisler’s Graded Absolutism (GA) would lie, and the saving of lives is considered a higher absolute than Truth.

There are higher and lower moral duties—for example, Love for God is a greater duty than Love for people. These ... sometimes come into unavoidable moral conflict; In such conflicts we are obligated to follow the higher moral law; When we follow the higher moral law *we are not held responsible* for not keeping the lower one [*italics mine*].<sup>23</sup>

Geisler’s GA easily negates Bucher’s problem. Saving life is *higher* than maintaining a small Truth. GA is convincing if one does not read anything else. GA’s core rests upon nine pages of loosely fitting paragraphs in his revised *Christian Ethics*. The problem with GA is two-faced: he claims to value the absoluteness of absolutes in a straight face, then he crooks his face to say he must “grade” the absolutes. His gradation contains an elitism, especially when he briefly tries to expound upon the “traceability” of laws to God’s nature. Perhaps Love is implied in the gradation, but where? He never articulates the place of Love.

Geisler has the amazing ability to determine the gradation. Perhaps unintentional, yet his gradation unequivocally assails the *absoluteness* of absolutes, the most elementary meaning. Geisler does not work very hard on clarifying either his ability or his gradation, though he does try to answer a few objections because he knows something is awry. His “absolute in its *sphere*” and “when there is a conflict” indicate that his GA is an ethic where “conflicting absolutes” is itself the absolute.<sup>24</sup> Undressed, that feels the cold and windy.

Geisler is essentially speaking *ex cathedra*, or so he wishes.

Sphere here, sphere there—“Trust me, sweet darling” makes as much sense. Make the sphere clear. Even a high strato-*sphere* would be better than the nebulous, invisible, and intractable GA spheres. What does *sphere* mean? How is the “very gradation ... absolute”? What is “absolute” about a gradation, even in a strato-sphere?

Where does breathable atmosphere end and outer space begin?

---

<sup>21</sup> Rakestraw, 255.

<sup>22</sup> Rakestraw, 252.

<sup>23</sup> Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics—Options and Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989; a revision of his *Ethics—Alternatives and Issues* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982, through 13 prints from 1971–82]): 132, and that was the last paragraph of his section on section (113–132, 9 pages) on graded absolutism. See also Geisler, “Biblical Absolutes and Moral Conflicts,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (July 1974): 219–228.

<sup>24</sup> Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 124, “God does not change, and principles based on his nature are likewise unchanging. Furthermore, each particular command is *absolute in its sphere*.... Absolute in order of priority”; cf. “Biblical Absolutes,” 219. *Italics mine*.

### 3. On P—Smith’s Principleism

Ebbie C. Smith is a Principleist (P) who would lie to save lives, and P accredits the lie. P admits that the lie is short of God’s ideal and allows for both complexity and the wrongness of the lie. P would later accredit the wrong, making the whole package okay for the good that the choice accomplished, following the precedents in the cases of Rahab and the Hebrew midwives. Unlike NCA and G, P does not find the absolutely Right Choice. P will seek “the reasons a command was given and the ideals behind the law.”<sup>25</sup> Therein, P makes room for Love’s struggle with a deference to God.<sup>26</sup>

### 4. DA—Maness’ Dynamic Absolutism, an Ethic of Love

Maness’ Dynamic Absolutism (DA) claims there are times when the absolutely Right Choice in perfect Love is too hard to find. There are no conflicting absolutes, yet dilemmas still befall us where there *appears* to be a conflict. The astronomical difference between the *actuality* and the *appearance* of a conflict is unfurled here between the two absolutes of Love and Truth. In the appearance of a conflict, when we seem unable to see clearly, there is always at least a third absolutely Right Choice in perfect Love where no conflict exists.

In Bucher’s dilemma, the demands of Love *appear* to be greater than the demands of Truth. Subjective and impossible to fully articulate, yet the signing of a scrap of paper to save life—*criminy*—demands much from Love and depresses a lot from Truth.

In Bucher’s dilemma, Jesus would be more competent. Differing competences are seen in all vocations. A banker may see ten ways to invest, a policeman five ways to respond, and a surgeon three ways to cure where the normal person may see none. Jesus always knew.

## C. Deontology and Teleology—“Time” Critical to “Rightness”

Every Right Choice involves both *teleology* and *deontology*, and so time itself becomes an integral element in the rightness of every choice. Like many philosophical words, these two pull together rich concepts having few clear perimeters. In my book, we went into detail on their history and usage to condense their essential meanings.<sup>27</sup>

Christian fundamentalists often snub “ends” with a grimace, and in so doing mulch the teleological nature of the Golden Rule.<sup>28</sup> In addition to arguing for the existence of God, the teleological arguments have served to argue for immortality and creationism.<sup>29</sup> With the

---

<sup>25</sup> Smith, “Ten Commandments,” 4; He also says a method of finding ideals behind the Law is similar to the linguistic principle of “dynamic equivalence” in translating, *Syllabus*, 57–59.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, “Ten Commandments.” Cf. T. B. Maston, *The Christian, the Church, and Contemporary Problems* (Waco: Word Books, 1968): 187: “It should be remembered ... the lesser of two evils involves some evil, which means that the evil in the decision is to be kept under the constant judgment of the perfect ideal.”

<sup>27</sup> See H. Richard Niebuhr, “The Meaning of Responsibility” in Wayne G. Boulton, Thomas D. Kennedy, Allen Verhey’s *From Christ to the World—Introductory Readings in Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994): 195–204 (referencing Niebuhr’s *The Responsible Self* [New York: Harper and Row, 1963]): 200–201, 203. See *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Premium Service, 2004): s.v., deontological ethics, which included Immanuel Kant and W. D. Ross; and s.v., teleological ethics, which included Thomas Hobbes, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Henry Sidgwick, Herbert Spencer, Niccolò Machiavelli and the 19th-century German Friedrich Nietzsche. See Stephen Darwall, *Deontology* (Hoboken: Blackwell, 2003): 1–2, his intro.

<sup>28</sup> See Maness, *Would You Lie to Save a Life?* chap. 5.B.2. “Is the Golden Rule Absolute?”

<sup>29</sup> See Neil A. Manson’s masterful *God and Design—The Teleological Argument and Modern Science* (London: Routledge, 2003; 376 pp.), J. D. Barrow and F. J. Tipler’s *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), and William A. Dembski’s two fine books, *No Free Lunch—Why Specified Complexity Cannot be Purchased without Intelligence* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002) and *The Design Inference—Eliminating* [Footnote continued on next page ... ]

cosmological argument, William Lane Craig has argued for creation and the existence of God, and his arguments are supported with a sophistication that at times requires some understanding of physics, and no one has written more on foreknowledge than Craig.<sup>30</sup> The teleological arguments for God and for the “ends” of a grand design have powerful and elegant ethical implications.<sup>31</sup>

Classical Theists argue that God has exhaustively settled all of the future. Such makes mush out of most of the N.T. view that God is *still* working in the world today. Some of the future is settled, like the return of Christ and our future heavenly rest, yet some of the future is not settled. Importantly, the future is *not* settled above God’s ability to save today and *not* settled above God’s ability to prevent a victim’s tragedy tomorrow. No one’s destiny is so settled that God cannot work today. We have not been given a fake sense of hope in the Bible. Father Time is not greater than Father God, and genuine Love demands that every lost soul and future victim have real hope *today*.<sup>32</sup>

Because deontology and teleology are critical, even burdensome words, here are two condensed definitions:

---

*Chance through Small Probabilities* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998). See this very readable inquiry, with up-close interviews, by Dembski and Michael Ruse, eds., *Debating Design: from Darwin to DNA* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See also Lee Strobel’s *The Case for a Creator: a Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence that Points Toward God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004; 341 pp.); William Lane Craig’s *Philosophy of Religion—a Reader and Guide* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002; 634 pp.); Michael J. Behe, William A. Dembski, and Stephen C. Meyer’s *Science and Evidence for Design in the Universe* (Papers presented at a conference sponsored by the Wethersfield Institute, New York City, September 25, 1999; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000); 234 pp.); Michael J. Behe’s *Darwin’s Black Box—the Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998 [1st 1996]; 307 pp.); and Jane Maienschein and Michael Ruse’s *Biology and the Foundation of Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; 336 pp.). “Intelligent Design” has some top-flight advocates that evolutionists too often refuse to countenance.

<sup>30</sup> No one has done more research on foreknowledge, I believe, than William Lane Craig; here are just a few of his books (not including his many articles): *The Only Wise God—The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2000; 157 pp.), *Time and Eternity—Exploring God’s Relationship to Time* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001; 272 pp.), *Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom—The Coherence of Theism, Omniscience* (Leiden: Brill, 1990; 360 pp.), *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez* (Leiden: Brill, 1997; 298 pp.), *The Cosmological Argument from Plato to Leibniz* (New York: Macmillan, 1980; 305 pp.), and *The Kalam Cosmological Argument* (New York: Macmillan, 1979). See also Craig and Quentin Smith’s *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

<sup>31</sup> Some of these arguments intermingle with natural theology. Cf. Marvin Halverson and Arthur A. Cohen, ed., *A Handbook of Christian Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon: 1972 & 1980, 1st 1958), 246–256, esp. articles on “Natural Law” by Samuel Enoch Stumpf and “Natural Theology” by David Cairns.

<sup>32</sup> We compared both sides in *Heart of the Living God: Love, Free Will, Foreknowledge, Heaven: a Theology on the Treasure of Love* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2005; 728 pp.). Clark H. Pinnock’s novel and conservative-shaking *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God’s Openness* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001; 218 pp.) is a seminal contribution, though some evangelicals have twisted openness beyond reason. Cf. Bruce A. Ware’s pointed *God’s Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000; 240 pp.), John S. Feinberg’s massive *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005; 879 pp.) and John M. Frame’s likewise massive *The Doctrine of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg: P & R; 896 pp.) powerfully challenge openness. See also John P. Newport, *Life’s Ultimate Questions* (New York: W Publishing Group/Harper Collins, 1989; 644 pp.): 443–452; and Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Westmont: IVP, 1969): 24–30.



**DEONTOLOGY: “Dutiful” because of inherent “Rightness”**  
*and so ... “Means” are chosen regardless of “End”*

---

**TELEOLOGY: “Rightness” chosen in view of “Consequences”**  
*and so ... “End” are usually chosen over “Means”*

### **Chart 2. Essence of Deontology and Teleology**

We went into great detail in the book on these two terms.<sup>33</sup> In their connotations, deontology has carried with it a huge aspect of inherent “rightness,” and teleology has carried with it a huge aspect of using ends in “method.” Without the loss of any deontological values, the N.T. brought us to a teleological/eschatological worldview.

The watcher in the night tower is Responsible for the city within the walls of his or her watch. The watcher’s Responsibility looks ever forward into the future of the night with a vigilance to the threatening horizon. We Love and disciple *on* the concourse of time with a constant vigilance *down* the concourse of time into the future. Clearly then, *without* encountering consequences (and “end” in heaven) as crucial to the determination of the “rightness” of a choice, there is no real Love at all. We argue that Love has never been wholly/solely deontological, for its highest nature is seen in the teleological, and even toward glory in the eschatological hope of heaven.

## **D. Absolutes United in Love and Eternity**

### **1. Absolutes Positively Stated Expressions of Love**

Absolutes need positively articulated statements.<sup>34</sup> All universal absolutes are pre-Fall principles and will continue to exist without change as a part of God’s nature.<sup>35</sup> Love and the absolutes are not mere divine expectations. Love is an absolute and also the vehicle of the other absolutes, and so Truth is not truly identical with or truly separate from Love. The absolutes express a facet of Love connected to eternity, and principles like the Golden Rule help that expression.

The sum of all absolutes is the good and unhindered *will* of God. Newman Smyth said, “The good ... the right” is the “will of God.”<sup>36</sup> Carl F. H. Henry said, “The idea of the good must be identified with the will of God”; furthermore, “The man who does the will of God does what is intrinsically good. At the same time, he does that which will yield to him his greatest personal happiness as well as best promote the general welfare.”<sup>37</sup> Emil Brunner said, “The Good is simply and solely the will of God. But the will of God is the will of God for the Kingdom.... Nothing is good save union with the sovereignty of God through this will.”<sup>38</sup> Karl Barth said,

---

<sup>33</sup> *Would You Lie To Save a Life?—A Theology on the Ethics of Love* (2007; 432 pp.): 4.E.3.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Ebbie Smith, *Syllabus*, 14; he explains the meaning through positively stating them.

<sup>35</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977; 1st 1957; 615 pp.): 264, “Even unfallen man needed supernatural revelation in order to have some content of an approved morality.... From the very outset of human life, the ethical situation was defined by duties and convictions that were not accessible from natural reason alone.”

<sup>36</sup> Cf., Newman Smyth, *Christian Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1908): 68–70 and 170–174.

<sup>37</sup> Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics*, 189 and 209–218: Rom 12:2, the perfect will of God; cf. 278–349: chapters 12 and 13 on the biblical particularization of the will of God.

<sup>38</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative* (Louisville: Westminster, 1947; 728 pp.), 56; cf. 132–151.

“Good means sanctified by God.”<sup>39</sup> All these and more are being pleasing to God, *being* like Christ: many parts link together to form a contiguous whole within the single absolute of *loving* obedience to God.

Therefore, “Do not murder, lie, steal, or commit adultery” reflect the absolutes, but are not in themselves absolute. The absolutes are “loving, being truthful, sharing, respecting, and being pure”—*being* like Christ. Love and the absolutes had relevance in eternity past and have relevance throughout the eternal future for God and Christ; biblical absolutes are universal and timeless, for they had their origin in the eternal nature and absolute righteousness of God. The Decalogue did not exist from eternity; yet it will remain for eternity as a part of divine Truth, as Jesus said (Matt 5:18). Once in full reception of our inheritance of perfect Love and righteousness—and after heaven has begun—the Law’s purpose will cease in eternity to have *ethical* relevance as a separate entity for ethical light and guidance into Love and God’s will. God Himself will be our light.

Is Truth itself just one of the absolute manifestations of Love? We think so. Truth has an absolute practicality for us here on earth. Yet, the glory of heaven will be a more natural life in Love and Truth than Adam and Eve had before their fall. Heaven is not a return to Eden, but a new and far superior life. With glorified bodies and God as our light, the word *Truth* will no longer be consciously needed in a life with zero deceit; Truth will become an inherent part our life, as much as light is now and more so when God becomes our light. We will perfectly Love for the rest of our everlasting loving lives.<sup>40</sup>

## 2. Love Struggles in the Small Window of Time

The most painful aspects of the Bucher’s dilemma are seen in the small window of time where the crisis peaks. We have four Christian views in DA, P, GA, and NCA, and we have the appearance of a conflict between the absolutes of Truth and Love in the saving of life.

**Small Window of Time OPENS** at the point where the Koreans calloused and believed they *must* murder, and importantly it opens at the point where Bucher and his men *perceive* that the Koreans *will* murder.

**Small Window of Time CLOSES** after Bucher decided to sign the confession ... or was killed.

When the Time Zone of hope for rescue passes inside this small window, Bucher and his men believe—convinced—they have come to an end. The young *Pueblo* fireman Howard Bland is first. All the Koreans want is a lying signed confession to being in Korean *water*. Lie about being in the wrong *water*! The window closes when Bucher makes a choice ... or when Bucher himself is killed.

Bucher is given a pen to sign the confession. A murder hangs in the air dependent upon the scratch of Bucher’s pen. If he waits any longer—in his understanding—death will result. If he signs the confession, at least in this Time Zone, Bucher and his men will not be killed. Here are Bucher’s own words:

---

<sup>39</sup> Karl Barth, *Ethics*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (New York: Seabury, 1981): 16.

<sup>40</sup> See Michael G. Maness, *Heaven—Treasures of Our Everlasting Rest* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2004) and its bibliography here: [www.PreciousHeart.net/bibs/Heaven\\_Bib.htm](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/bibs/Heaven_Bib.htm). Compare Richard Baxter (1615-1691), *The Saints’ Everlasting Rest* (Scotland: Christian Heritage, 2001; 704 pp.; original 1649); Alister E. McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003); J. Oswald Sanders, *Heaven: Better by Far—Answers to Questions About the Believer’s Final Hope* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1993); Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977); Jerry L. Walls, *The Oxford Handbook on Eschatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and, C. S. Lewis’ masterful, *The Great Divorce: A Fantastic Bus Ride from Hell to Heaven—a Round Trip for Some, but Not for Others* (New York: Macmillan, 1946).

The name was read from the list ... Fireman Howard Bland ... youngest crew member. Would these animals dare kill him before my eyes? The vision of that tortured South Korean hanging from a strap with his compound fracture, blinded eye and multiple contusions reappeared on the wall of the room in full, horribly vivid reality. Yes, this breed of politics did not give a damn about the life or death of their own kinsmen—let alone any round-eyed Americans! I could not even contemplate leaving Bland’s life at their mercy for the sake of my signature on a scrap of paper containing nothing but blatantly obvious lies and propaganda.... I had resisted as long as I could, but now I could do none other than finally give in to a totally foreign brutality. I made up my mind: ‘**All right ... I will sign.**’ [The colonel hissed and thrust the pen into Bucher’s hand, instructing the others to help Bucher.]<sup>41</sup>

What a struggle of Love! Even waiting was a choice; at this time waiting appeared to be a fatal choice. At the precise moment that Commander Bucher made the choice to sign and took the pen, all of them entered into a new Time Zone—saved to live—and the small window closed. In that Small Window, we see more clearly how Love and Truth *appeared* to collide (book extrapolated many details). Bucher could not find the absolutely Right Choice; but he did choose life, and that appears to be the closest we can get, this side of heaven.

### 3. Love’s Infinity of Variables on Concourse of Time

Regarding our obligations to Love, we cannot give up our search for a cure to cancer, and we should not give up on Bucher’s dilemma until we have found the absolutely Right Choice in perfect Love. Ethics is the science of “what we ought to do,” even when the cancers of hate flood the world. Nations in world wars have staked their futures upon what they considered “right.”

Love is even more important than any science, for there is no scientist who would trade his or her discovery of the greatest formula (or cure) for the *Love* of his or her family. Reverse that, and we see that the reason the scientist searches is *because* of Love for his family.

On the battlefield struggling to find Love, you and I work within our unique selves and situations that are different from every other person in millions of ways with respect to psychology, experience, spiritual background, and general knowledge. Each unique person is placed into several unique arenas at the same *time*, as seen below.

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>A UNIQUE Historical/Social Time Frame</b></li><li>2. <b>A UNIQUE Set of Circumstances within that Time Frame</b></li><li>3. <b>A UNIQUE Set of Relationships—with God and with Others</b></li><li>4. <b>A UNIQUE Personality</b></li><li>5. <b>A UNIQUE Set of Drives and Fears</b></li><li>6. <b>A UNIQUE Fund of Knowledge</b></li><li>7. <b>A UNIQUE Set of Abilities.</b></li></ol> <p style="text-align: center;">—And each of these are changing every hour of every day.</p> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### Chart 3. Unique Arenas of Individuals

There are more ways to categorize these. All these unique arenas are in intensive view by the man or woman *in* a death-defying crisis.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Lloyd M. Bucher, *Bucher: My Story* (Doubleday, 1970), chapter XII, 227–253. Brackets mine, reflecting “hissed” used by Bucher while condensing his larger context. Bold mine.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics, Volume 1: Foundations*, ed. William H. Lazareth (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966): 578, “Ethics ... is similar to that in medicine. The problems do not arise with the ordinary cases, but in the borderline cases, those involving transitions or complications. It is the abnormal rather than the normal case which brings us up against the real problems. Hence the real test, even in respect of foundational [Footnote continued on next page ... ]

The unique arenas are an integral part of the whole enterprise of Love and ethics, where a unique person is impelled in unique dilemmas to apply teleological principles like the Golden Rule. All the effort is *dynamic* within the confines of Truth and with a heart of Love that teleologically seeks first the kingdom of God. *Dynamic* means the ever-looking vigilance within the ever-changing—living—uniqueness that unfolds down the concourse of time for each person. Hence, that is why we call our ethic *Dynamic Absolutism*.

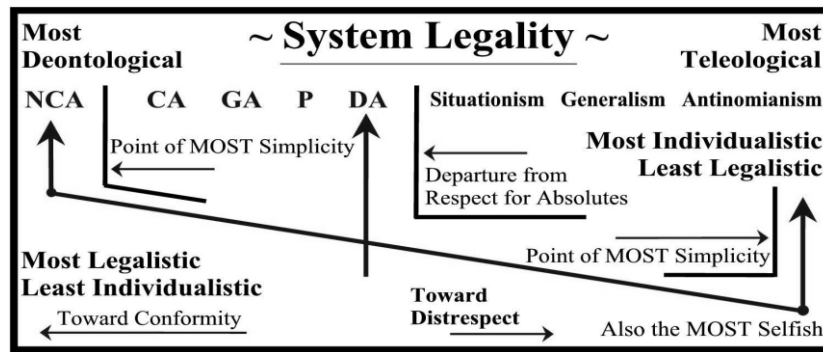
“Time” is critical. In looking back or ahead to the future for the rightness of a given choice, God judges not only one’s understanding but also judges the constricting elements of time. God judges the entire house, not just the Small Window of time.

Dynamic Absolutism (DA) forwards that the element of “time” is crucial to the determination of “rightness” in every situation, making the teleological a necessary ingredient in every Right Choice. If we do not, we deny the ethical practicality of faith, hope, and Love, as they all *point beyond themselves* in their own definitions and beyond ourselves in our use of them on the concourse of time. Not a mere Responsibility, God who has given us the gift of contemplating the future. Made in the image of God, our hope in heaven is as sure as the promises of God. With teleological principles like the Golden Rule, and with Love’s eternal connections, we have one foot on earth and one in heaven, ethically, and so a Right Choice in perfect Love is somehow *in* time connected to our thinking of tomorrow’s heaven.

## E. Love’s Simplicity Amid Eternal Complications

### 1. Manifold Struggles between Legality and License

Four ethical systems justify a choice: NCA tells the Truth; GA, P, and DA lie to save life. See below how they line up rather neatly with respect to Love’s struggle between legality and license.



**Chart 4. Love’s Struggle between Legality and License**

The “most legalistic/least individualistic” on the far-left contrasts with the “least legalistic/most individual” on the far right.<sup>43</sup> Somewhere between them is the line of departure from a respect of absolutes (center), and moving right of that line is an *increasing* departure from a respect for absolutes. Those farthest to the right tend to walk the wasteland of the lawless antinomian caveman and criminal.

---

principles, is whether an ethics has been proved in the crucible of the borderline situation and emerged with even deeper insights.”

<sup>43</sup> Obviously, “right” or “left” has no ethical bearing, as the chart can be easily reversed. CA, or Conflicting Absolutism, is explained in the book as another system in the line up of System Legality.

In Chart 4, the four systems line up neatly into comfort zones within legality and individualism.<sup>44</sup> As the most deontological, NCA is the most comfortable in legality and least comfortable in individuality. The chart shows how each system considers deontology *with* or *without* teleological concerns. If NCA's maxim "end never justifies the means" is true, then the Golden Rule not only appears useless, it actually becomes useless.<sup>45</sup> Next, GA takes confidence in its exemptions, followed by P who focuses on what is accredited as "right." DA follows as the most teleological.

## 2. Teleological and Deontological Analysis of Love's Choice

The complexity in Chart 5 below tackles three questions:

1. How do the choices by DA, P, GA, and NCA relate to the deontological and teleological aspects inherent in their choices?
2. How do the deontological and teleological aspects relate to each other?
3. Are there any implications from these relationships?

Dealing with these questions cause complication to metastasize into at least 8 quadrants of Responsibility for DA, P, and GA, and 8 quadrants for NCA; and those 16 contrast with the 8 quadrants in the supermarket scenario in which all four chose the same choice. Positively said, the grid shows the artfully interwoven nature of a precious choice; we are fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps 139:14). Chart 5 shows the elegant complications in the delicate ethical relationships within Bucher's choice to Love with a lie; therefore, his choice is at the same *time*:

- Deontologically wrong** because of the inherent value of Truth,
- Deontologically right** because of the inherent value of Love,
- Teleologically wrong** because of the long-term effects normally associated with Lying against Truth, and
- Teleologically right** because looking forward Love saves lives.

This big grizzly bear was hard to take down. Every choice can be broken down into fundamental parts between the deontological and the teleological. The best part of Chart 5 is also its most subtle, for it also reveals the many ethically elegant facets of Love *in* action.

---

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Geisler, *Christian Ethics*: situationism, 43–62; generalism, 63–78; antinomianism, 29–42. Situationism usually holds to one absolute like Love that is relative. Generalism/utilitarianism does not believe in absolutes but does in ethical laws with good results. Antinomianism does not believe in any objective criteria at all, from God or utility, and therein nearly everything is individually relative.

<sup>45</sup> Rakestraw, "Ethical Choices," 251–52.



<b>Teleological / Deontological Analysis of Choices</b>													
	<b>Commander Bucher's Dilemma</b> Lie may save the lives; Truth may bring murder								<b>Theft at Supermarket</b> Ch clear for all systems				
Each System	DA, P, GA Choices				NCA Choice				DA, P, GA & NCA Ch				
Chooses #1	1. Lie & Save L/Love <b>Ch 1</b>				1. Truth &/or Murder <b>Ch 2</b>				T/Honesty & M/Hunger <b>Ch 3</b>				
Over #2	2. Truth & Murder				2. Lie & Save Life/Love				L/Theft & S/Satiation				
	More Teleological Ch				More Deontological Ch				More Deontological Ch				
Top Row	G	G	B	B	G	G	B	B	G	G	B	B	
Over Left	Tel	Deon	Tel	Deon	Tel	Deon	Tel	Deon	Tel	Deon	Tel	Deon	
Side Column	Ch	Ch	Ch	Ch	Ch	Ch	Ch	Ch	Ch	Ch	Ch	Ch	
<top row over>	S	S	L	L	T	T	M	M	T	T	M	M	
<b>G Tel Ch</b>	T	T	T	T	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	
<top row over>	S	S	L	L	T	T	M	M	T	T	M	M	
<b>G Deon Ch</b>	T	T	T	T	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	
<top row over>	S	S	L	L	T	T	M	M	T	T	M	M	
<b>B Tel Ch</b>	M	M	M	M	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
<top row over>	S	S	L	L	T	T	M	M	T	T	M	M	
<b>B Deon Ch</b>	M	M	M	M	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
Column Totals for G & B	L = 0		L = 8		L = 4		L = 4		L = 4		L = 4		
Choices	T = 4		T = 4		T = 8		T = 0		T = 8		T = 0		
Respectively	M = 4		M = 4		M = 0		M = 8		M = 0		M = 8		
	S = 8		S = 0		S = 4		S = 4		S = 4		S = 4		
Grand Totals for G & B	L = 8				L = 8				L = 8				
Choices Together	T = 8				T = 8				T = 8				
	M = 8				M = 8				M = 8				
	S = 8				S = 8				S = 8				
~ Abbreviations ~			Tel G Ch =		One a system determines is "Right" from Consequences								
			Deon G Ch =		One a system determines is "Right" in itself								
Tel = Teleological		Tel B Ch =		One a system determines is "Wrong" from Consequences									
Deon = Deontological		Deon B Ch =		One a system determines is "Wrong" in itself									
DA = Dynamic Absolutism				G = Good				L = Lying					
P = Principleism				B = Bad				T = Truth					
GA = Graded Absolutism				Ch = Choice				M = Murder					
NCA = Non-Conflicting Absolutism								S = Saving Life / Love					

Chart 5. Teleological-Deontological Analysis of Choice

See color version at [www.PreciousHeart.net/love/Chart-24-a.jpg](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/love/Chart-24-a.jpg)<sup>46</sup> The color version allows more detail in the divisions. See that DA, P, and GA chose a more Teleological Choice in 8 quadrants, and that NCA chose a more Deontological Choice in 8 quadrants.



<sup>46</sup> Note that Chart 5 here is Chart 24 in my book, *Would You Lie to Save a Life?*, and the color version that helps distinguish the divisions at [www.PreciousHeart.net/love/Chart-24-a.jpg](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/love/Chart-24-a.jpg).  
[Footnote continued on next page ...]

In “Ch 1” in the first upper-left quadrant, see that S is over T, indicating that Saving Life with Love was chosen over Truth, and that is basically interpreted at a G-Tel-Ch = Good Teleological Choice over a B-Tel-Ch = Bad Teleological Choice. In the first upper-left quadrant, because Love and Truth both have uniquely good teleological aspects, the choice to Love is a *good* teleological choice that was chosen over the *good* teleological elements that are usually associated with Truth. And so forth goes the variations in each of 8 quadrants of each system of DA, P, GA; likewise in “Ch 2” within NCA’s 8 quadrants in Bucher’s dilemma. This is a first in many ways.

The full relevance of the totals remains to be developed, along with the possibility of other quadrants. After the choice is made, see how each choice is either more teleological or more deontological, and each contains both a greater good and a lesser evil.

While skinning the grizzly bear, and trying to *chart* the relations, it took some time to discern the “teleological bad choice” of Truth, which we connected ethically to the likelihood of murder.

When we scraped the bear hide for curing, we saw subtle variations *within* each choice. Each choice has 16 relations of continuums (this-over-that) in the 8 quadrants. Each choice of the four systems, then, yields 32 fundamental elements of unique ethical finesse within each choice by NCA, GA, P, DA; that is, each of the 32 elements in each of the four systems vary slightly one from another. Therefore, the 32 elements illuminate a unique ethical strand within each of the four ethical systems; furthermore, within the four systems, we see at least 128 uniquely finessed and truly elegant fundamental points of view within Bucher’s dilemma.

Looking at the left set of the three choices illustrated in Chart 5, where DA, GA, and P chose to lie to save a life, we see several perspectives in each of the 16 continuums in the 8 quadrants. A long-term good softens a long-term bad when we choose to Love (a specific right) to save life with a lie (a specific wrong). Here, a more teleological Truth (of Love) was chosen over a more deontological Truth (telling Truth and not lying), based primarily on the greater demands of Love over the demands of Truth in our Responsibility to look ahead and *down* the concourse of Time. Exclusively for DA, the lie was still wrong (deontologically) but less wrong than murder (teleologically); or, and importantly, the Truth was more wrong (teleologically viewing Bucher’s partial responsibility in a prospective murder) than the lie (deontologically viewing Love in saving of lives).

We scraped the bear hide much more in the book. Once a system makes a choice, the choices can be charted. Prima facie, this appears like a tautological quagmire but is not. The grizzly bear hide in Chart 5 renders neatly, even elegantly 32 elements in 16 continuums in 8 quadrants of complex relations between the teleological and deontological jewels of each system’s choice; and that is at least 128 unique and even elegant elements among all four systems.

In summary, the DA choice to Love with a lie that saves life was *as close* to the absolutely Right Choice in perfect love as we were capable of finding—this side of heaven.

Furthermore, Chart 5 is the perspective of DA, for NCA does *not* view Truth as a participation in murder, as hard to understand as that appears here to DA. Murder is the DA judgment upon the NCA option, because NCA would choose Truth even if murder was the reasonably expected result inside the small window of time. With teleology and with DA’s “*time*

---

Notice “Ch 3” is a third scenario of Supermarket Theft contrasted in the book.

important to *rightness*,” we conclude that if Bucher had chosen NCA’s Truth, then that would have forced some culpability in murder. We believe Bucher felt the same.

That chart was a big grizzly bear to skin. But once stretched out, its wondrous symmetry made the heart warm as it laid bare the elegant complexity of each unique choice, and it makes Love exponentially richer. There may be a better way to skin that bear. But there it is, taken out of the wild and on display, in a way, the first mapping of a choice’s genome with its 32 fundamental elements in the grandeur of their teleological and deontological elegance.

The bear hunt is not over. For Bucher’s honor, we need to continue to search for more of this bear’s kin still hibernating in the Alaskan mountain ranges of ethical complexity. Let’s continue to hunt for the elusive absolutely Right Choice in perfect Love in Bucher’s dilemma.

### 3. Five Implication of Chart 5

While Chart 5 proves little in itself—just a bear hide after all—the chart does show in one look a multitude of relationships in two significant areas of complexity hitherto unexplored:

1. *Many* interrelations of the teleological and the deontological natures of one choice chosen over another choice;
2. *Some* of the relations of a particular choice made by each system.

Herein, we saw clearer our Responsibility to Love at the fundamental level. The chart reduces a lot of rhetoric in the attempt to picture the fine relations between the teleological and deontological, and surely there are more relations. Though fine, even subatomic, the distinctions between the quadrants illustrate the complex elegance of 32 elements of each system’s *best* choice. And even though three of the systems make the same choice—GA, P, DA—each of those three justifies their choices in a different manner. The 32 elements resident in all four systems of NCA, GA, P, DA showcase the extraordinary *minimum* of 128 fundamental elements.

Importantly, if we ever find the elusive Right Choice, oddly enough, it will not have 16 continuums with 32 elements, for the *absolutely* Right Choice has no “bad” elements; the Right Choice will have only 2 quadrants with 4 continuums, with 8 good fundamental elements. And if we do find the Right Choice, we assume it will be clear, something that all Christians can see and agree upon. Just like when Jesus asked, “Let him who has no sin, cast the first stone” (John 8:7), “rightness” immediately became crystal clear to all; immediately, all agreed that all were sinners. So then, similarly, once the Right Choice is clearly seen, the other systems’ choices fall off the chart, including mine. Stripped of 24 elements, what remains is that the absolutely Right Choice has at least 8 good fundamental elements.

Therefore, regarding Love in ethics, there are at least five implications that Chart 5 illuminates.

- 1st—On the nature of the totals found—Is there a bridge between a choice and that choice’s rightness supplied by *math*?
- 2nd—On how it undergirds our thesis that each system’s choice has elements that are *both* teleological and deontological.
- 3rd—On the nature of *choosing* itself and how every choice has an emphasis that is either more teleological or more deontological.
- 4th—On the ease of finding decision once the Right Choice has been found to be *elusive* and beyond grasp at the crucial *time*.
- 5th—On what Chart 5 *does not* say in that when many right options are available decision-making should *still* be as complicated for the individual.

Chart 5's complex relations bring speculation. When Distinguished Professor Stephen Hawking said, "We have, as yet, had little success in predicting human behavior from mathematical equations,"<sup>47</sup> he was talking about extrapolating the final spin of atoms and bridging the gaps between the physical, the biological, and the volitional. We adduce from these totals a small implication about a bridge between a choice and that choice's "rightness," a bridge supplied by math in some form, even if perturbingly remote and elemental.

If there is any substance to the hypothesis of a mathematical bridge at all, one is forced to wonder the nature of other developments from math and science on ethics. Indeed, Einstein and colleagues figured on paper first the nature of the atomic bomb. The angles of a triangle are only perfect in the equation  $a^2+b^2=c^2$ —thank you, Pythagoras.<sup>48</sup>

Love found a way through the complex and elegant symmetry between the teleology and the deontology elements of a choice. What other mysteries are there to Love's divine symmetry?

Chart 5 helped me see clearer a difference between two views of life in general: a focus on *hunting* good is better than a focus on *avoiding* bad, as in the glass is half full. We want live a life "to Love" more than "to avoid hate." At first, it hard to articulate the elements, and the scraping of the bear skin was demanding and stunk a lot. Spiritually speaking, we are far better off *loving* God and others as a mode of life than focusing upon *avoiding* Satan's kingdom.

Though the Right Choice eluded us in Bucher's dilemma, we still had guidance, for in Love and through DA we proceeded with clear teleological principles like the Great Commands and the Golden Rule as we sought first God's kingdom. Therefore, on this side of heaven and for every choice short of Jesus' competence, Chart 5 reveals that every single unique *good* choice uses Love within a complicated and beautifully elegant symmetry of at least 32 fundamental elements.

Moreover, though complicated on the elemental level that does not mean that anyone must articulate any of the 32 elements in order to live well. One does not need the ability to explain the law of gravity to know that carelessness on a roof top can result in a broken bone should one fall off. An Olympic ice skater need not articulate the physics of a triple axel in order to perform one, and more people admire the skater's skill than care much for the physicist's art. There is a large difference between explaining Love and *loving*. Any day of the week—we all know—God and our family and friends prefer the Love over the ability to explain Love. The real measure of Love is how careful the person is with respect to what they do understand and with respect to what they actually *do* in Love and Truth.

### **Conclusion: Love and Truth Converge on the Concourse of Life**

In my book *Would You Lie to Save a Life?*, we also detailed seven fine lines between God's sovereign abilities and our free will, and we discerned at least 23 variables in every decision this side of heaven.<sup>49</sup>

The natural-born ability to Love is converted and even connected to heaven when we are spiritually born again; thereafter, Love never dies and always looks ahead and down the concourse of time, even heavenward. On earth, our ethical struggle is a sacred trust in Love with a somewhat open future in our divine gift to make unique choices in a grand stewardship of time. In our *Imago Dei*, all humans are spiritual beings with two natural-born innate God-like abilities:

---

<sup>47</sup> Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam, 1988): 168.

<sup>48</sup> The Pythagorean Theorem: "The sum of the squares of the legs of a right triangle equals the square of its hypotenuse."

<sup>49</sup> See Maness, *Would You Lie to Save a Life?*, chap. 15.B.1 and chap. 1.B.2 with Chart 33.

(1) to Love and (2) to make unique choices in time every time.

Believer or not—every person is born with these two abilities.

Once spiritually born again, our natural-born *Imago Dei* abilities *to Love* and *to make unique choices* are miraculously freed and spiritually rewired—i.e., reconciled to God. Our faith, hope, and Love are no longer merely and solely earth-bound endeavors. Our highly treasured abilities *to Love* and *to make unique choices in time* are enriched through our living real-time spiritual relationship with God. We have been raised from the dead with a higher ability to Love; we are freed and set loose to more fully exhibit our *Imago Dei* on earth in view of our heavenly inheritance. Once born again, our natural-born *Imago Dei* abilities increase, and a third ability appears in our life with the perception of a Scarlet Thread that links us to the potential of choosing absolutely Right Choices in perfect Love. A Scarlet Thread unique to every person, as it was for Christ who followed His Scarlet Thread fully and without error. Therefore, our born-again *Imago Dei* includes a trinity of divinely gifted human abilities:

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Our ability to Love,</li><li>2. Our ability to make unique choices in time, a stewardship of time,</li><li>3. Our ability to see and touch the availability of a Scarlet Thread of absolutely Right Choices in perfect Love.</li></ol> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

#### Chart 6. *Imago Dei* Trinity of Human Abilities

When a person becomes a Christian, their *Imago Dei* abilities are increased as if they learned to fly, and more so, for we are transformed from an earthly disconnected person—in the dark—into a heaven-bound child of God. We receive a portion of our eternal inheritance on earth, and so once *born* of and *related* to God—being *in* Christ—our Love is given a resurrection ability, an eternal caliber of endurance, and a philosophical depth that connects Love to eternity itself. We possess eternal life this side of heaven. Therein, we are divinely freed from darkness and divinely empowered to perceive a Scarlet Thread of absolutely Right Choices in perfect Love that unfurls before us down the concourse of time on earth toward heaven.

Because of the clouds, we do not always find the thread.

Even God Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are his children, and as such we are entitled to a peace that passes understanding while on earth, something a non-Christian cannot know. Our ability to Love increases on earth as it reaches beyond earth toward heaven. Though we only know now in part, we look for a heaven-promised golden treasure of Love that—then—we shall enjoy in heaven when we shall become like Christ. Only then we shall obtain the full measure of our ability and competence that was solely Christ’s on earth; for then we shall be able to *always* grasp the Scarlet Thread forevermore, *always* choosing unique absolutely Right Choices in perfect Love every second of time throughout the duration our everlasting loving lives.

Our Love and our ethic are eschatological, or they are nothing. But you do not have to tell that to two people in Love. You only have to tell those who wish to analyze Love.

Christians are mountain climbers, struggling with Love all the way to the top. In mountain climbing, we must be careful. We need to watch our steps so that those below will not be hit by a disturbed stone. We certainly need concern for system making, lest we trip others up unknowingly. We have seen what devastation that carelessness causes, as with those who *grade* absolutes and make the very gradation absolute. We have also seen those who lift their own



maxim of “the end never justifies the means” over the absolute of Love. Those are devastating to Love, turn our relationships into investigations, and they rather categorically short circuit Love.

Furthermore, my position on the mountain is never measured in competition with other climbers. If I succumb to the temptation to believe I am higher up than another, then that might just mean that the air got too thin, and I am not getting enough oxygen to my brain. I might be getting light-headed. I should take a break, look at the map again, and get my head back together. Lest I go out of my mind, or worse, pass out and fall off the mountain of Love altogether. Mountain climbing is dangerous, especially if you lose your way or lose your mind. Do not lose the map.

Do not get lost in the snow, and there is a lot of snow.

We can always Love. The greatest gift of God to humanity is Love—see His Son—the heart of two Great Commands. The simplest point also becomes infinitely profound and freeing. Look at Bucher’s horrendous *ethical* dilemma and Viktor Frankl’s tortures as a Jewish prisoner of the Nazis, and see that we *can* still Love in hell on earth.

In all of its beauty and vast golden treasure, Love places our hearts in two *times* at once. We Love God and others on earth, and at the same *time* our hearts look down the concourse of time for how to Love tomorrow in faith, hope, and Love, all in view of our heavenly home—in Christ connected to eternity. Our progress in faith, hope, and Love is a sacred trust and stewardship of *time* bequeathed to us at creation and again after our spiritual resurrection. Our being made in the Image of God and then being raised to a new freedom as a new creation are manifested most splendidly in our ability to make unique choices in an eternally-connected Love and be Loved uniquely—every time, all of the time, even throughout the rest of our everlasting loving lives. As for now, we struggle together to do our best to exhibit faith, hope, and Love, but the greatest of these is eternal Love.



**This article appears slightly edited in the following book:**

Michael G. Maness and Kevaughn Mattis, eds. Foreword by Gerald R. McDerMott, Samford University. *Can You Hear My Pain Now?—Making Pastoral Theology Relevant in the Modern World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022; 444 pp.), composed of 24 articles from scholars around the world, chosen from among 300+ articles published by *Testamentum Imperium*, [www.PreciousHeart.net/ti](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/ti).

Buy *Can You Hear My Pain Now?* here:  
<https://wipfandstock.com/9781666798494/can-you-hear-my-pain-now/>



**This article is a condensation of my book:**

*Would You Lie to Save a Life: A Theology on the Ethics of Love* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007; 432 pp.), see more here, [www.PreciousHeart.net/love/](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/love/).

Buy the book here:  
<http://bookstore.authorhouse.com/Products/SKU-000313881/Would-You-Lie-to-Save-a-Life.aspx>



[www.PreciousHeart.net/ti](http://www.PreciousHeart.net/ti)

