

FOOTPRINTS INTO AFRICA

CHRISTIAN RESOURCES

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES



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CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES

OUTLINE

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ETHICS ISSUES

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES

STUDY 1

INTRODUCTION

When we think of ethics, we immediately think of some very tricky moral problem, which needs to be resolved. This, however, is a limitation, a narrowing of the field of ethics. Ethics has to do with the full spectrum of human conduct, every action has an ethical dimension.

Ethics and doctrine cannot be separated from one another. What we believe and what we do should be inextricably bound together. The Scriptures never conceive of doctrine as something which has validity for its own sake. All theology is therefore practical ethical theology.

THE APPROACH - these studies in ethics will be broken into three broad sections.

1. Character Formation
2. Decision Making
3. Specific Issues

CHARACTER FORMATION

A discussion of character formation in a course on ethics may seem strange and out of place, but if as J.I. Packer says “Our choosing is a function of our character.” Then it is not strange or out of place at all. On the contrary, it must occupy our attention right at the outset. Certainly most of the writing on Christian ethics generally speaking has been preoccupied with decision-making or specific moral problems and issues. Christian ethics has been issue or problem oriented ethics. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that the subject of moral development, the forming of moral character is absolutely essential, the forming of moral character is absolutely essential if we hope to make or to live godly ethical lives.

1. THE BASIC QUESTION

Character focuses on the question, who is the good person? If the reference is corporate identity or character, E.g. Church congregation, the question will be what is the good community? So what we are concerned with is the kind of person the decision maker is and not yet with the kind of action undertaken by the person.

2. THE DYNAMICS OF CHARACTER FORMATION

A. THE INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY

Character is formed by social processes in a constant ‘conversation’ (interaction) that goes on between the individual and his community. Multiple elements are involved in this conversation, these elements in various combinations result in the transformation of the individual. So our community provides a certain world, which moulds the identity and character of those who inhabit it. The individual

cannot be formed or function part from the community he or she inhabits. At the same time, the individual also fashions the various elements of his social world (community) in his or her unique particular way. There is then a genuine interaction and interdependence of the individual and his community. The formation of character is a “conversational” process in the community. The implications of this for the church are far reaching.

B. THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE “GODS”

At birth, each of us enters a world a community already rich with multiple meanings and experiences. There are the objects of religious devotion, the cultural trends, a certain way of life, a cause, a mission and belief. These objects of trust, love and loyalty and commitment indicate what is prized in the community. They represent what is regarded as dominant and of value deriving worth, they point to what the community deems as the good according to which life should be lived out. Our lives take shape in keeping with these objects which are prized in the community. A very large part of character formation is the internalizing by the individual of these objects of human trust, and loyalty therefore the kind of people we are and are becoming is determined by these objects of trust, that is the “gods”, thus for E.g. if the object of devotion is money and possessions this will ultimately determine the choices and decisions I make, these (“gods”) shape the way I see the world, the way I think about it, and the way I respond to it. This in turn disposes me to take seriously certain kinds of concerns and activities and not others. To regard some matters as important and not others

3. THE ETHICAL TASK WITH REPECT TO CHARACTER FORMATION

In the light of what he has said thus far it is clear that character formation plays a decisive role in human conduct, therefore, we need to constantly be involved in a two fold assessment of our lives ethically speaking:

A. EVALUATE CRITICALLY

As we have already noted the objects of trust held by the community and the individual within the community locate “the good” in accordance with which life is to be lived out, however the Christian cannot simply accept “the good” prevalent within the culture without question (continual reformation). The Christians ethical task is to critically evaluate and judge “the good” found in society generally speaking, and also within the church in order to do this kind of evaluation the Christian will need to ask such questions as, what exactly does “the good” consist of in our world? Does this “good” deserve the status as an object of trust? Should we or should we not as individuals and communities live out our life under this particular “good” banner and command. Critical evaluation is the negative task, the positive is determining “the good”

B. DETERMINE “THE GOOD”

For the Christian God alone is the ultimate “good”, He alone, Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the legitimate subject of ultimate trust, love loyalty, and commitment. This is not to say that there are not other “goods” but they will take their relative places in accordance with the ultimate “good” God.

4. THE BIBLE AND THE CHURCH IN CHARACTER FORMATION.

From our earlier discussion concerning the way society has a moulding effect on our identity (character), it is clear that a multitude of factors play a role in making us who we are, among these factors may even be those not specifically Christian in nature. True as that is, we must nevertheless be absolutely clear that for the Christian character formation should be measured by the teaching of the Bible. But the Bible is not only a measuring rod, the Bible in itself as we interact with it will bring about change (character formation). Similarly, the church community will decisively form us as people for better or for worse depending on the maturity of that Church.

A. THE BIBLE

i) The importance of the Bible for Character Formation

The role of the Scriptures in the nurturing of a basic orientation and in the generating of a particular attitude and intentions is a critical one (**2 Tim. 3:16**)

ii) The whole Bible

Within the Scriptures, there is some material, which is more doctrinal in tone, and some other material which is more ethical in tone, but that does not mean that they somehow have different purposes. It is not as if doctrine is there to inform us intellectually and the more ethical material to inform us orally. On the contrary (**2 Tim. 3:16**) what this means is that in all likelihood only a very small part of moral character is the out come of explicitly ethical discourse. The point there is not which biblical materials generate which perspective and convictions, but rather that biblical materials can and ought to create a framework (cast) which has profound ramifications for character and conduct. Biblical material may enter the process of character formation in ways very difficult to trace, thus some seemingly non-ethical materials such as apocalyptic visions, miracles, even these will have a moulding effect on our lives.

iii) A long-term process.

The development of moral character is a matter of long term nurture, thus the attention of Christian ethics is not in the first place to a currently provoking moral issue but to the on going educational (biblically speaking) life of the Church.

B. THE CHURCH.

i) The importance of the Church Community for character formation

The “scene” so critical to the moral life is not something we can provide for ourselves by ourselves, it involves relationships with others. Our “scene” is a community achievement. Christian ethics (Koinonia-fellowship), generally speaking therefore if you wish to know the moral values a person holds to, simply look at the corporate identity or character of the community to which they belong. When we go back to the early Church and also further back to Israel we find that the question that was asked concerning appropriate conduct was, what action on our part is in keeping with who we are as the People of God.

ii) The Church with the Bible.

An essential part of what it means to be the Christian Church is that we are the community with the Bible. Without the Bible the Church cannot be the Church

iii) Church activities as means to character formation

We need to understand that the activities of the Church as a gathered community are not ends in themselves, their purpose is the development of moral agents called to responsible living in a broken world. Preaching, Christian education, Prayer etc., are all activities crucial to the moral life and it is the Bible which provides the foundation for them all. **Birch & Rasmussen - “If basic Biblical understanding is not incorporated by Christians before moral and ethical crises arise then Biblical resources are unlikely to play any significant role.”**

iv) Church structures and character formation.

The deeply social nature of our being implies that Christian Ethics must include within its range of concerns, the structures and institutional patterns of the Church community. In his discussion of Wesley’s Methodist structures, **Howard Snyder** observes, **“Wesley saw the connection between experience (the Christian life) and structures, perhaps no one in Church History was more keenly aware of the relationship between Christian experience and appropriate nurturing structures.”** Our structures must facilitate the process of character formation.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In summary, we can speak of the importance of the Church and the Bible as shapers of Moral identity as follows:

1. The Christian has no enduring identity as Christian apart from the Church.
2. Essentially the Church is the shaper of moral identity by being an integrating community for the Christians, various loyalties and loves, commitments and convictions, values and goals. The Church provides a “centering” for the

multiple claims and influences that impact the Christian life, such integration must occur in the final analysis in accord with the churches declaration that God in Christ is the centre of all our values and basic loyalties.

3. The direction of influence in the moral life

We have spoken of the moral life moving from character to action or from who I am to what I do, but this is not the whole truth, there are very strong influences that flow in the other direction. What I do also affects who I am. **Aristotle** put in “**Nichomachean Ethics**” “**We become just, by doing just acts, temperate, by doing temperate acts, brave, by doing brave “acts”.**

OUTLINE

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES **STUDY 2**

THE CRISTIAN AND CREATION

1. UNSATISFACTORY APPROACHES

- a. Domination
- b. Resignation

2. THE BIBLICAL APPROACH

- a. It's God's creation
- b. It's a good creation
- c. Humans are stewards of the creation
 - i. Stewards manage the creation
 - ii. Stewards demonstrate love for God and neighbour

3. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE BIBLICAL TEACHING

- a. Be grateful for it
- b. Enjoy it
- c. Look after it
- d. Use its resources wisely

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE CREATION (THE ENVIRONMENT)

1) UNSATISFACTORY APPROACH

a. Domination (Rampant exploitation)

If dominion over nature becomes the predominant idea, then the respect for nature is lost and harsh domination result.

The brotherly respect for God's creation, which Francis of Assisi spoke about and exemplified, is all too easily replaced by an arrogant disregard, which many critics of the church confuse with orthodox Christian doctrine. For instance, Lynn White (Professor of History at the University of California) blames the Bible's teaching that man is meant to exercise dominion over creation for the destructive way nature has sometimes been treated.

This is, of course, unfair because Biblically great respect for nature is evident (see for instance the instructions concerning the land). However, there have been times when Christians have been notoriously weak on this issue, for example the "Black Stocking Calvinist" of Holland who taught that ill-treating animals is quite permissible because only people have souls.

b. Resignation

On the other hand, if respect for nature is over emphasized and the idea of man's rule is lost, then the result is pantheism and ultimately resignation.

You see, according to the pantheist, a human being is not worth any more than a tree or a hippopotamus. His extreme respect or reverence for nature eclipses man's rightful place as ruler of nature. Pantheism ultimately leads to resignation to the status quo, to allowing nature to take its course, thus stifling any human management of the natural resources. This too will be catastrophic. (Note for instance the ongoing debate over the Kruger National Park elephants.)

Without any sense of shame, man can kill a rat, eliminate a virus, or change the course of a river.

2) THE BIBLICAL APPROACH

(a) It's God's Creation

Genesis 1:1, Psalm 24:1

(b) It's a "good" Creation

God declared His creation to be very good. (Gen. 1:31)

It is now a "fallen" creation. But in God's eyes, it is still "good". So "good", in fact, that God is working through Christ to restore it to the "very good" that is was in the beginning. (Romans 8:18-21)

(c) **Humans are stewards of the Creation**

Gen. 1:28, Psalm 8:6-8

- **Stewards manage the creation**
Gen. 1:26, 1:28, Gen 2:15
- **Stewards demonstrate love for God and neighbour.**

Stewardship of the creation is a love for God and a love for neighbour issue. Stewards look after the creation because they love God and therefore they love His creation.

Moreover, Stewards look after the creation because they love their neighbour. As such, they do not pollute rivers, lakes, and air. After all, people need clean water and clean air.

Stewards manage refuse generated by people so that disease (for example, as a result of rats) is minimized in communities

3) **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE BIBLICAL TEACHING**

a. **Be grateful for it.**

Our gratitude to God goes hand in hand with our gratitude for the creation (the “home”) that God has provided for us.

b. **Enjoy it**

Enjoyment of the creation implies a constraint on exploitation since it is clearly irrational to destroy or damage what we enjoy.

c. **Look after it**

We need to consider how we can look after the creation. We conserve as far as possible and we restrain the greed that ultimately leads to destructive exploitation of the creation.

d. **Use its resources wisely**

Jesus’ parable of the talents has a bearing on this issue. The resources inherent in the creation must be used well and wisely.

OUTLINE

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES

STUDY 3

DECISION MAKING.

1. TWO UNSATISFACTORY APPROACHES TO DECISION MAKING

A. THE CONSEQUENTIALIST APPROACH

B. LIMITATIONS OF THIS APPROACH

C. THE ‘LOVE ONLY’ APPROACH

2. A MORE SATISFACTORY APPROACH

A. INTRODUCTION

i) The Bible as fundamental source book

ii) Christian Ethics is Church ethics

B. METHOD

Step one.

Consider all the factors

Step two

Establish principles

Step three

Establish an order of priorities

DECISION MAKING

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES

STUDY 3

DECISION MAKING

While character has an important part in determining the choices we make and the actions we undertake, it is not the only component in the moral life. Taking specific stands on specific moral issues and acting in accordance with the stands taken, has its own place in ethics. To answer the question - who is the good person, isn't yet always to have answered the question, what is the right course of action? That requires further consideration, this is because there are times when several plausible choices and actions are possible.

VARIOUS APPROACHES WHICH CAN BE USED TO ARRIVE AT A DECISION

1 THE RULE BOOK APPROACH (Deontological)

This view is technically referred to as the deontological view from the Greek what ought to be for ease of understanding we may refer to the Pharisees as an example of this kind of approach. There is a rule for every situation.

i) Merits of this Approach

Firstly rules do provide signposts for the moral life, they take some of the pressure of the person in the decision making position. So the problem is not with rules per se but with the proliferation of them.

Secondly, these are rules that always hold good for every situation which can be realistically conceivable.

ii) Limitations of this Approach

Firstly the proliferation of rules to cover every situation can distract attention from the principles which underline the rules on extreme examples of this during the New Testament period, were the Scribes and Pharisees, they are the absolute epitome to the rule book approach to morality with the praise worthy aim of providing ready made moral decisions for every conceivable situation, they stitched rule upon rule. Jesus' outspoken condemnation of the Pharisees casuistry is enough to make any Christian cautious of taking this path to moral solutions. At its best, the rulebook approach is inadequate because there are often exceptions to the rule. Jesus' many confrontations with the Pharisees shows how easily, such rulebook morality can make us lose sight of perhaps more important principles. E.g. the Pharisees had classified the Sabbath under 39 different headings by, doing so they were attempting to honour the fourth commandment. In the end, the mountain of petty legislation which surrounded the Sabbath became so complicated and complex that the average person despaired and more importantly other main line moral principles were frequently lost sight of. The rulebook tends to overlook the spirit of the law.

A. THE CONSEQUENTIALIST APPROACH

This is like the rulebook approach, one of the more traditional approaches to ethics in our modern world. This approach has become increasingly dominant, life has become less governed by absolute rules, so nowadays when a case is being made for some position on a particular issue the likelihood is that the evaluation of consequences will feature prominently, if not exclusively is the argument. E.g. Capital Punishment. Talk of consequences inevitably raises the question what sort of consequences, according to Utilitarianism (the philosophical idea which has dominated consequentialist thinking), consequences should be calculated in terms of utility and usefulness. If we ask what sort of usefulness, then the answer will be pleasure rather than pain, happiness rather than suffering.

i) Merits of the Approach

- a) It contains a hard core of realism
Action or the lack thereof do have consequences and we need to acknowledge that fact.
- b) The consequentialist is willing to take responsibility for the results of his actions
The Christian who sticks to the rules at all costs, even when the consequences look likely to be disastrous, will argue that doing what is right overrides the consequences.

B. LIMITATIONS TO THIS APPROACH

- a) It is unrealistic to evaluate actions only in terms of the consequences which flow from them
Actions have their own intrinsic significance.
- b) Consequentialists assume that they have worked out the consequences of a certain action

C. THE “LOVE” ONLY APPROACH

This approach stands opposed to the previous two, those who essentially abstract as such, they forget that what really is at stake in our choices is the quality and depth of personal relationships. The question is am I treating my neighbour with the honour, respect, and the seriousness which they deserve, that these personalists would argue is the fundamental question. The proponents of this view argue that ethics should be people orientated, as to the quality which should characterize everything which goes on in the sphere of personal relationships, they would argue the quality of love **Joseph Fletcher** - **“The ruling norm of Christian decision is love nothing else.”** (From Situation Ethics 1966.) Such a position leads to the justification of all manner of surprising actions, thus far for E.g. In Situation Ethics, Fletcher argues that the prostitute in removing a man's doubts about his virility is doing a loving act and therefore fully justified. The rule not to fornicate is put aside in favour of “love” principle. Proponents of this “love” only approach do not reject the moral rules and regulations, however, as Fletcher puts it “these are love's servant and subordinates are to be quickly kicked out of house if they forget their place and try to take over” For Fletcher therefore “love” must be given full expression even if it leads at times to acts of lying, stealing etc.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The three approaches discussed so far cannot be ruled out altogether, there is some truth in each of them, but in each case, there is massive distortion. Biblically speaking we find that each of these approaches comes into play to some extent in the various Biblical moral imperatives, however, each one individually or even altogether are not able to serve as a reliable framework for making decisions, which lead us to explore a better approach to decision making.

2. A MORE SATISFACTORY APPROACH

A. INTRODUCTION

- i) The Bible as a fundamental source book for decision making
For Christians the Bible remains the fundamental source for finding out God's will for making decisions
 - a. Context
In using the Bible, the basic principle of context must always be kept in mind. In order to discover the relevance of any particular piece of moral teaching. The first step is to examine the context in which it appears, this will act as a safeguard against drawing false conclusions, (Mk. 10:17 ff) advocates of the monastic life use this text as a justification for the necessity of the vow of poverty. Many of the Bible's demands whatever their setting in time and place must be seen in their broader theological context, which defies the eroding effects of historical change. Pride, jealousy, love, kindness, and all the other basic moral categories found in Scripture are as lasting as human nature itself.
 - b. Complicating factors
In most cases, the bible correctly interpreted will give us the moral guidance we seek easily and quickly. But the world being what it is there will be situations for which the Bible will not give us easy and quick answers. Broadly speaking there are two kinds of situations that will pose problems
 - (i) The first concerns those moral situations on which the Bible has nothing directly to say.
 - (ii) The second concerns those situations when the Bible say too much, by this I mean when equally fundamental biblical principles seem to come into conflict.

B. METHOD

We are still laying the groundwork which is necessary for the business of making these difficult decisions which confront us from time to time. What we will be doing in this section is establishing a method or procedure to arrive at the correct moral decision.

Step 1. CONSIDERING ALL THE FACTORS

All too often, when we make decisions of any kind we neglect to take some detail into account. It is vital that we consider all the factors, the way to do this is to have a brain storm on a particular topic and jot down

everything that we think of having relevance. The more people there are who do this the less likely it is that some important factor will be omitted. Often it is helpful to set oneself a basic limit to aim at.

Step 2. ESTABLISHING PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

In all decision making it is vital to get our priorities right. In order to do this we need to do two things. Firstly we need to discover what the principles actually are which are involved in the situation. This is especially crucial if there is some conflict between principles, E.g. Sabbath work, and Sabbath compassion. If it comes down to a choice between principles, which one has precedence over the others.

First Principles

For the Christian the discernment of the first important principles will proceed as follows:

1. Has Scripture some particular teaching (principles) which are relevant here? This will mean seeking to clarify the theological and moral principles at stake.
2. Has tradition something relevant to say on the issue
- 3, One must not overlook the Holy Spirit's testimony within the Church.

a) Scripture

b) Old Testament (creation)

You should not be surprised to find that God reveals something of Himself and His nature in the world and the people He has made. There are various strands in the analysis of creation as a source of Christian values

1. Natural law.

This means that we can learn something of what God intends for us based on the nature of things or on the nature of people. God has made the world and us in it so that some things are good and right for us and other things are harmful and wrong for us. This goes back to the way things were at the beginning of all things.

2. Man made in God's image

Mankind shares with the rest of creation a common Source, yet man is different from the rest of the created order, this is expressed by the picture of man being made in God's image. There are many different attempts to express exactly what image means in relation to man. But in the moral aspects of image, it is possible to be simple and direct, to be made in the image of God is to be a responsible being answerable to God. This implies that man is not free to live in any way he sees fit, there are some patterns of life that are appropriate for the nature and purpose of man.

3. The Fall of man

The Genesis account shows that man disobeyed God, this spoiled everything to such an extent that it is no longer absolutely clear what the original natural law was or even what the essential image of God in man is, that morality cannot be built on creation alone.

OUTLINE
STUDY 4

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

1. **JUST WAR**

2. **HOLY CRUSADE**

3. **PACIFIST**

1. **JUST WAR POSITION**

A. **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

B. **THE ARGUMENT FOR A JUST WAR**

2. **THE ARGUMENT FOR THE HOLY CRUSADE**

3. **PACIFIST.**

WAR

STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES

STUDY 4

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, Christians have expressed three distinctive positions with respect to participation in war:

1. Just war
2. Holy Crusade
3. Pacifist

1. JUST WAR POSITION

A. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Derived from the stories by the post-Constantian Church Father (AD. 400)

The just war theory has been the general position held by the church down to the present day. Ambrose introduced it, Augustine developed and popularised it, and Vittoria, a medieval moralist, completed it.

B. THE ARGUMENT FOR A JUST WAR.

The main elements of this position are as follows:

- a) It must be just in its intent, namely the restoration of peace, justice, and order.
- b) It must vindicate and establish justice.
- c) There must be reasonable hope of victory
- d) The decision to engage in war must be made by and waged under the proper authority, that is the rulers or rule of the state.
- e) The conduct of war is to be just, that is there must be no excessive unnecessary violence and killing of civilians.
- f) There should be no engagement in war, except as a last resort, that is after all means have been exhausted to keep the peace.
- g) Destruction imposed upon the enemy is to be measured by the principle of proportionality, namely that the evil of the war be no greater than the evil to be corrected, and a proper proportion between the degree of guilt and the level of punishment.
- h) War must be waged in the spirit of love.
This principle is interpreted as an inner-disposition.

2. THE ARUGUMENT FOR THE HOLY CRUSADE.

The Holy Crusade theory of war is based on the idea that a war is holy because God wills it. To fight is a religious privilege, a service God, crusades against the Muslims in the

12th Century, in this case, the call to arms came from the church. Participation in this war was seen as a religious privilege against the enemies of God, during the Reformation and the same kind of crusading spirit prevailed. In the USA, the revolutionary war took on a crusading quality with the minister of church giving support to the Colonial forces. Some of the churches of the Calvinist tradition looked upon the Civil War in the USA as a crusade against slavery. Many church groups regarded WW1 as a just and holy crusade to eliminate war, the war of all wars and to make the world safe for democracy. WW2 witnessed a decline in the crusading spirit and war came to be looked upon as a grim business, a job that had to be done to preserve freedom. Today only a very few would advocate the holy crusade.

3. PACIFIST

A. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The early church was pacifist in its view towards engagements in war.

C.J. Cadoux: “All through the centuries up to the present there have been a minority Christian group which have held to the pacifist view.”

B. THE ARGUMENT

Exponents of this position take Christ and the early church as norms of conduct regarding war. The following apply:

- a) Primacy love is emphasized
Such love is self-giving for the good of others, it is both calculating (**Mt. 5:10**) and all inclusive of friend and foe. (**Mt. 5:38-48**)
- b) Overcoming evil with good.
We see this principle stated by Jesus himself E.g. (**Luke 6:35**) **Paul Rom. 12-20-21, Peter 1: 3:9**) this principle is embodied in the action of Jesus who did not retaliate. (**1 Peter 2:21-22**) while on the cross prayed to the Father to forgive those who were putting him to death, another example is Stephen.
- c) Good ends do not justify bad means.
(**Rom. 3:8**), if through violence you accomplish a more just society that does not legitimize the use of violence.
- d) Christian pacifists who are descendants of Anabaptists will argue this position in terms of a broader framework with respect to the churches place in the world. **Augsburger**, a Mennonite. **“As Christians we are not here to provide an ethic for society or the state but to clearly define an ethic for the disciples of Jesus.”**
- e) Pacifists, especially descendants of the Anabaptists, argue that war is waged on the basis of that which we consider our primary loyalty, normally the good of the nation. These pacifists contend that the good of the nation whatever that might be cannot determine our actions.

C. **OBJECTIONS**

1. **Pacifists overlook the fact of sin in our world**

Sin needs to be restrained, this is true, sin is a reality in our world and as such, sin needs to be restrained. The Church itself disciplines and excommunicates , in other communities the “discipline and excommunication” also occurs through the police and prisons, but this is essentially different from a war situation where judgements are not made concerning individuals but nations.

2. **The pacifist position leads to growth in injustice in international affairs**

Pacifists would argue that war does not necessarily lead to justice and that we have not yet begun to fathom the power of God working through a people of peace.

3. **The pacifist position means we must not defend ourselves against a ruthless, violent aggressor, meaning wholesale extermination.**

Pacifists would respond that this might be, and probably would be the case, but we need to ask whether a good death does not ultimately become the seed of the church as **Tertullian** put it.

OUTLINE

STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES **STUDY 5**

LIFE AND DEATH ISSUES IN MEDICAL SCIENCE

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brave New People (IVP)
A child at any cost

Gareth Jones
Mary Mealyea

INTRODUCTION

1. DEATH ISSUES

A. EUTHANASIA

B. ABORTION

2. LIFE ISSUES

A. GENETICS

B. ARTIFICIAL FERTILIZATION

C. CONTRACEPTION

LIFE AND DEATH ISSUES IN MEDICAL SCIENCE.

STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES

STUDY 5

1. DEATH ISSUES

A. PRINCIPLES

- a) Dominion over the creation.
God has given man dominion over His creation, which means we have freedom to manipulate it, creation is not sacred in itself, we can therefore tamper with it.
- b) Dignity of people.
We are called to care for people and not to do anything that will further dehumanize people. This means we do not use people to further out own selfish ends.
- c) Sanctity of life.
In practical terms, this means that we must not directly deliberately harm an innocent person.

B. SPECIFIC ISSUES

- a) Abortion
 - i. Pro-life position
This position argues that abortion contravenes the fundamental principle of the sanctity of life, we are to care for life as far as we are able.
 - ii. Pro-death position (pro-choice)
The proponents of this view argue that:
 - i) Life does not begin at conception
 - ii) The population problem demands that abortion becomes one of the means to reduce the size of families
 - iii) They would argue that it is better to abort than have a child that is not wanted.
 - iv) The mother's so called rights as the carrier of the child to override the rights of the unborn child.
 - iii. Objections
 - i) The Scriptures teach that life begins at conception
Life is a process which begins at the point of conception , so we ask what makes a born child more human than an unborn one, after all that born child is still dependent on the mother.
 - ii) We have no right to resolve the population problem through legalized abortion, this constitutes the ultimate barbarism.
 - iii) Abortion is an option when parents do not want to keep the child. Christian communities must them become places of refuge for such children

- iv) The idea of a mother's rights meaning the right to not have to be bothered with the child she is carrying is preposterous, nothing can condone murder.

iv. Dilemmas

i) Rape

Is aborting a child as the result of rape justified?

The simple answer is that the mother and child are the victims not the perpetrators, therefore they must be given the maximum support possible.

ii) Deformed children

Modern technology allows us to predict with reasonable certainty the health of a child, while that is still in the womb of the mother. The question then is does the foreknowledge give us the right to abort in cases where it is predicted that the child will be less than perfect. In any case where do we draw the line. It needs to be understood that the level of our humanity is measured precisely by the way we care for the less privileged, the vulnerable in our society.

iii) Mothers life in danger.

On very rare occasions, there is a need to make a choice between the mother's life and the child's life.

b) Euthanasia

This is a deliberate taking of life and is applied normally to those who are terminally ill. This is not the same as asking that nature run its course, which I believe is justified. Euthanasia is the deliberate taking of a life and this cannot be taken away deliberately. What must happen with the terminally ill is that they be cared for.

2. LIFE ISSUES

A. PRINCIPLES

- i) Mans dominion over creation
- ii) Dignity of people
- iii) Sanctity of life

D. SPECIFIC ISSUES

i) Genetics

a) Broad issue

Genetics is a very new issue, the ability to harness and manipulate animal and human genes is a very recent development.

b) Objections

- i. Some argue that this is tampering with the basic raw materials of life.
- ii. The possibility of the most horrific misuse.

c) Countering the objections.

- i. This raw material the genes are not sacred things and therefore we can tamper with them
- ii. Possible misuse cannot be an objection, misuse is always possible in any area of human life

- ii) Cloning
Through a complex process of genetic engineering, it is not possible to produce duplicates of existing animals and humans. All that is required is a small part of that person or animal. These duplicates would be replicas of the original. But these human creations cannot be exact replicas because there is more to people than their genetic make up. We are what we are as a result of the total influences that impact upon our lives. E.g. family background, community, friends, books you read. Cloning however, becomes the ultimate dehumanization when people and animals can be mass-produced, without any need for love, the sexual act, men and women relationship.

C. ARTIFICIAL FERTILIZATION

- i) Three Issues
 - a) IVF and AIH
 - i. Test tube baby technology (IVF)
Where the egg of the woman and the sperm of the man are used. In some cases this involves the so called “test tube baby technology”(IVF) Where the eggs are fertilized in the laboratory situation and then implanted into the woman. This technique involves substantial human interference, but this interference is not creating life, it is creating a situation in which it is possible for life to come into being.
 - ii. Artificial insemination (AIH)
Where you artificially inseminate the husband's sperm into the wife's uterus (AIH).
The wife's egg and the husband's sperm are being used for both of these techniques.
 - b) Situation where you cannot use either the sperm or egg. This second situation is where a donor egg and sperm are used, in this case, you might carry out artificial insemination or the test tube procedure might be carried out. The problem with this situation is that a third person is introduced into the conception process, The question is this. Does this technically mean that adultery has taken place, moreover does this procedure not amount to our desiring at all costs to overcome every deficiency in life
 - c) When the wife cannot carry the child herself a surrogate mother is used. The problem here is that the surrogate mother becomes an instrument towards an end, that is to carry a child for the couple
 - d) Contraception
This is a stage further back from artificial fertilization and cloning. The control of life is still in view, but it does not seem to involve dehumanization of persons or using them in any way. Our ability and mandate to control and manage our world seems to give us permission to prevent life from starting in the first place, by abstinence or some artificial means. E.g. the pill.

OUTLINE

THE BIBLE AND HOMOSEXUALITY

STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES **STUDY 6**

1) INTRODUCTION

2) THE BIBLICAL TEACHING

- a) Specific texts
- b) The implication of these texts
 - i) The Bible forbids homosexual practice
 - ii) The Bible does not condemn homosexual bias.

3) THE HOMOSEXUAL RESPONSE

- a) Response to Genesis 19 and Judges 19:14-28
- b) Response to Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13
- c) Response to the Apostle Paul

4) CONCLUDING COMMENTS

- a) Doctrinal foundations
- b) Homosexual practice and orientation
- c) Christian witness and homosexuality

THE BIBLE AND HOMOSEXUALITY

STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES

STUDY 6

1) INTRODUCTION

The term “homosexuality” refers to a situation where a man has a sexual relationship with another man. In the case of a woman having sexual relations with another woman, the term “lesbianism” is used.

Our study seeks to answer the question: Are homosexuality or lesbianism valid expression of human sexuality from a Biblical perspective?

2) THE BIBLICAL TEACHING:

a) SPECIFIC TEXTS

There are four main biblical passages, which specifically deal with this issue.

- i) Genesis 19:1-3 and Judges 19:14-28
- ii) Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13
- iii) Romans 1:18-32
- iv) 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:8-11

b) THE IMPLICATION OF THESE TEXTS

- i) The Bible forbids homosexual practice
- ii) The Bible does not condemn homosexual bias as a specific sin
Homosexual bias is to be understood as the symptoms of human sin – the Fall – in general. The person who has homosexual or lesbian bias, but does not practice homosexual or lesbian relations is not sinning.

3. THE HOMOSEXUAL RESPONSE TO THE BIBLICAL TEACHING

We will concentrate on the homosexual response to the conservative-evangelical exegesis of the Scripture texts, which have a bearing on this issue.

- a) It is argued that the incident described in Genesis 19 and Judges 19:14-28 demonstrates the extremely serious view God takes of all homosexual assault, but it says nothing about the rightness or wrongness of tender homosexual relationships where there is full consent on both sides.
- b) The Law of Moses (Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13) condemns homosexual behaviour alongside adultery and incest. But in condemning these activities, it uses a

word (translated “abomination”) which is normally reserved for idolatry. It is, therefore clear that God’s judgement on assault and idolatry stands.

But does He also condemn a homosexual/lesbian relationship where there is no force used to coheres one or the other person to grant sexual favours to the other person, and no desire to worship false gods?

- c) It is argued that Paul is blunt in outlawing homosexuality (see Romans 1:18; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:8-11), but he is not outlawing “inverted” homosexual relationships. What he is condemning is “perverted” homosexual relationships. In other words, he is not outlawing “natural” relations, that is, what is a natural part of your makeup. Rather, he is condemning “perverted” relations, that is, what is not “natural” to you.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

1. DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS

The doctrinal foundations on which Paul builds his teaching sweep all such doubts and hesitations aside. In Romans, his verdict on homosexuality is based on God’s creation plan for man and woman. By “natural relations” he means “natural for man and woman as God created them’ – and homosexuality played no part in the Creator’s scheme. In 1 Timothy, the condemnation of practicing homosexuals is built into Paul’s own updated version of the Ten Commandments; and these commandments, as we know, reflect the main principles of creation as they are outlined for us in Genesis. It comes as no surprise to find that in 1 Corinthians the veto on homosexual conduct occurs in a list of behaviour-patterns which find no place in God’s kingdom – where the Creator’s will is perfectly done. The conclusion is unmistakable. Deeper foundations could hardly be laid for biblical teaching on any subject. Modern distinctions, important though they are, are undercut. The Bible puts an emphatic ban on all homosexual behaviour.

2) HOMOSEXUAL PRACTICE AND ORIENTATION

We need to distinguish between practice and orientation.

A person who has a homosexual orientation but refuses to practice this orientation is not sinning. The single homosexual life is God-honouring.

3) CHRISTIAN WITNESS AND HOMOSEXUALITY

We may not reject the homosexual out of hand.

We must reach out to him with the Gospel just as we reach out to other unsaved sinners.

There seems no reasonable doubt that homosexual conduct must be clearly labeled as sin. But the Bible distinguishes sharply between sin and the sinner. Everyone has weaknesses of some sort, and homosexual tendencies are not to be put in some special class of their own. As sinners, we all need the support of other Christians, and homosexuals need this

supportive fellowship more than most because loneliness is their worst enemy. Some fear that the danger of ostracism, if they own up to their feelings in a Christian fellowship, is too great a risk to run. Where this is true, the church bears a large measure of blame. God accepts us as we are, and his church can hardly do less. But God also seeks to change us, and again the homosexual is no exception to the rule. Some Christian homosexuals find that their whole sexual orientation undergoes a radical change when they open their lives to God's power. Others have to fight the same old temptations, in God's strength, all their lives. But, as many heterosexual men and women have found, the single life is not a second best if it is part of God's will. Jesus himself lived a perfectly fulfilled human life, even though he never married.

OUTLINE

STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES **STUDY 7**

THE CHRISTIAN AND POLITICS

1. **OUR VIEW OF THE CHURCH**
2. **OUR VIEW OF THE STATE**
3. **OUR VIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE.**
4. **THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE CHURCH**
5. **THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE STATE**
6. **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND STATE.**
7. **THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THIS VIEW**

THE CHRISTIAN AND POLITICS.

STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES

STUDY 7

1. OUR VIEW OF THE CHURCH

Our view of the church has remained very much the same for the past 1700 years. It is viewed as an institution among other institutions, in the context of the modern state.

2. OUR VIEW OF THE STATE.

Very simply the state is the country's government, in the modern world the state defines and determines our view of reality.

3. OUR VIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND STATE

A. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

From the time on Constantine, until quite recently (the time of Enlightenment, 1700s) the church and state were viewed as two institutions of authority alongside one another in any given country. Generally speaking, the relationship between these two institutions was seen as complementary. One dealt with civil matters, and the other with spiritual matters, one was the civil authority and the other the spiritual authority. Even at the best of times this view did not work well. The basic reason for that is that you cannot keep these two authority structures in that kind of balance. When this happens either the church rules or the state sidelines the church as the state becomes more prominent in the world, it has become decisive in the way we live our lives.

4 THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE CHURCH.

The New Testament refers to the church as the new people of God. In Peter's classical expression (**1 Peter 2:9**), it is a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. The New Testament views itself as an entity distinct from that which is not the people of God.

5. THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE STATE.

The Bible does not have a view on the state as such. We find nowhere expressions such as loyalty to the state or the church and state or anything of that nature. The absence of these expressions is expressive of Biblical teachings. God's reality is not state and church, but God's people (the church) and not God's people.

6. **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE.**

The Bible does teach that part of God's creation structure in His world is that of authority (**Rom. 13:1-7**). We are told that all authority must be respected and that we must give to it what is proper and does not contravene out citizenship of God's people . Thus, whenever I happen to be in God's world, I must give proper respect to authority. So **Romans 13** is telling me about an authority structure in general and how I relate myself to it.

7. **THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THIS VIEW**

1. Our identity is determined by our membership of God's people, not our membership of a national entity.
2. My loyalty to God's people and my president Jesus must override my loyalty to my country.
3. This view finally destroys the dualism between the secular and spiritual that are part and parcel of our view of reality
4. With this view the church will never be co-opted by the state and we are clear about our identity.

OUTLINE

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES

STUDY 8

WORK EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

1. THE VARIOUS VIEW OF WORK

- A. THE GREEK ROMAN VIEW**
- B. THE MEDIEVAL VIEW**
- C. WORK AS A PAID JOB, UNPAID WORK DOWNGRADED**
- D. WORK AS A MEANS TO FREEDOM**

2. THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF WORK

- A. THE BIBLE SHOWS US A GOD WHO WORKS**
- B. THE BIBLE SHOWS US MAN WORKING**

3. PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

- A. IT IS BAD FOR A PERSON TO REFUSE TO WORK**
- B. IT IS WRONG TO DEPRIVE A PERSON OF WORK**
- C. ALL HUMAN ACTIVITIES ARE EQUALLY GOD GIVEN**
- D. WORK MUST NOT BE REGARDED AS AN ANTITHESIS OF HUMAN FULFILMENT**
- E. WORK IS NOT THE TOTALITY OF OUR LIVES.**

WORK EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISSUES

STUDY 8

1. THE VARIOUS VIEW OF WORK

A. THE GREEK-ROMAN VIEW

The Greek-Roman class took a low view of work. Work was based on dependency and necessity and was viewed as degrading. It was fit only for sub-humans (slaves) Even the language emphasized this perspective, so the Greeks had no word for work. Work was the opposite of leisure, so leisure was “scola” and work was “ascola”

B. THE MEDIEVAL VIEW

The view of work that developed in the Western European Christian culture in the medieval period tended to be influenced by the Greek-Roman view Augustine for instance distinguished between the contemplative and active life the first as superior. This view promulgated by Augustine led to a thinking where the highest calling was a priestly or monastic calling. In fact, the terms calling and vocation came to refer only to such occupations.

C. WORK AS A PAID JOB, UNPAID WORK DOWNGRADED.

(The rise of Capitalism)

Benjamin Franklin’ declaration that time is money goes to the heart of this view. Real work is paid work, hence activities such as visiting the sick, the housewife, Bible Study are not seen as work, but as free time activities

D. WORK AS A MEANS TO FREEDOM (The Marxist view)

The Marxist tries to ascent from necessity to freedom (salvation) by means of work, this is a major social projection in Marxist societies, to take humanity from the realm of necessity and bring it into the realm of freedom. So Marx praised capitalism in that it “forces the development of the productive powers of society and creates those material conditions which alone can form the real basis of a higher society, a society in which the full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle.”

2. THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF WORK

The Bible refutes any view which either elevates work to an idol or demeans work. The following is the Biblical evidence pointing to the integrity of work.

A. THE BIBLE SHOWS US A GOD AT WORK.

With great daring, the Old Testament describes God as a manual labourer, working with his hands and fingers at it were to make the world.

(Is. 45:9, Ps. 8:3+6. Gen. 2:2+3, 1:31).

B. THE BIBLE SHOWS US MAN WORKING.

And confers on his work dignity, e.g. Adam was told to work the garden (**Gen. 1:28, 2:15**), Paul exhorted the Christians to work (**2 Thess. 3:6**), in fact Paul made no distinction between physical and so called spiritual work, he used the same terms to refer to both manual labour by which he earned a living and his apostolic service. Then even the new heavens and new earth will include work (**Isaiah** prophesied that much in **65:21+22**)

3. PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

A. IT IS BAD FOR A PERSON TO REFUSE TO WORK.

Paul writes with brutal bluntness if anyone will not work let him not eat (**2 Thess. 3:10**) The book of Proverbs is more colourful “**Go to the ant you sluggard, consider her ways and be wise (Prov. 6:6)**”

B. IT IS WRONG TO DEPRIVE A PERSON OF WORK

To deprive a person of the opportunity to work is to rob that person of something essential to their full humanity, that is why the church ministry may legitimately include the provision of employment opportunities.

C. ALL HUMAN ACTIVITIES ARE EQUALLY GOD GIVEN

The Christian echoes Tyndale's declaration “to wash dishes and to preach is all one, as touching the deed to please God.” All human activities are equally God given and worthy of honour, unless of course they involve something immoral.

D. WORK MUST NOT BE REGARDED AS THE ANTITHESIS OF HUMAN FULFILMENT

E. WORK IS NOT THE TOTALITY OF OUR LIVES

We cannot achieve salvation through work and we cannot elevate work to the status of an idol. As creatures made in the image of God we are called to do many other things, other than work. We are called to worship, to rest, to be quiet before God, to play, to develop intimate relationships with others.