

Christian ethics

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



INTRODUCTION (DEFINITION) Christian ethics are theological teachings which govern decision making and the moral position of the Church based on various sources of guidance. These are traditions, church authorities, human experience, the Natural Law, the Bible; in particular Jesus's Commandment of love, the Beatitudes and the 10 Commandments " You shall not steal" (Ex 20: 15). **HISTORICAL SETTING** Christian ethical teachings vary between denominations for example, the Catholic Church places particular emphasis on Natural Law and authoritative bodies.

The Protestant Church turns to scripture as its main source of ethical guidance due to the belief in " sol scriptura" (salvation through scripture alone, a belief originating in the Reformation of the Church.) Despite these differences, the Bible remains the common source of morality among all denominations. **SPECIFIC EXAMPLE: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS/CLIMATE CHANGE** Christian environmental ethics are specifically concerned with the belief in humanity's role as stewards of the Earth and how this role should be responsibly undertaken being a privileged bestowed by God.

Prominent issues within Christian environmental ethics include Climate Change and deforestation. Climate Change is defined as a long term change in the Earth's climate, especially a change due to an increase in the average atmospheric temperature. There are many factors believed to be contributing to Climate Change. These include an overconsumption of fossil fuels which when used emit greenhouse gases. The Church's stance on Climate Change is that it is the result of humanity abusing the role as stewards of the Earth by taking more than they need from it.

Using the words of Pope John Paul II, Climate Change is caused by modern society being given to “ instant gratification and consumerism. ” There are many national and international Christian initiatives which aim to address Climate Change such as Caritas Australia’s “ A Just Climate” campaign. Established in 2011, this campaign aims to promote ecological sustainability to minimise the impact of Climate Change. Its focus is the poorer communities of the world, being the most vulnerable to the effect of Climate Change such as rising sea levels.

Its methods include: community awareness programs and facilitating participation of poor communities in national discussions. Internationally, the Ecumenical World Council of Churches (WCC) is an example of the Christian communities response to Climate Change. It has been present since 1992 at every United Nations Climate Change Conference and is especially concerned with the effect Climate Change has on the world’s poor, promoting the concept of sustainable communities.

Its motivation lies in Genesis 2: 15 in which God entrusts Adam with the Garden of Eden “ the Lord God, took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ” Today, humanity like Adam has the obligation to the world as responsible stewards. Using the words of Pope Benedict XVI “ The wonder of God’s creation reminds us of the need to protect the environment and to exercise responsible stewardship of the goods of the Earth. ” INTRODUCTION- DEFORESTATION

Deforestation is the loss of forest cover being converted into things such as agricultural land, golf courses and cattle paddocks. Consequences are wide ranging and include soil erosion, extinction of tree species as well as the

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endangerment or extinction of animal species which inhabit these forests. The Church's opinion of deforestation is similar to that of Climate Change. Responsible stewardship of the land would not have caused not have caused such damage as deforestation has done.

Society's role as custodians of the land is demonstrated in the Bible by the quote "The land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants" (Lev 25: 23). This excerpt illustrates society's role as caretakers of the land and that their responsibility is to preserve the world. From this and other teachings found in the Church, it can be seen that the Christian ethical stance on deforestation is that taking from the Earth should not be motivated by overconsumption but by sustainability.

As Pope John Paul II said "Man cannot make arbitrary use of the Earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will." Various Christian organisations established for the protection of the environment include Catholic Earthcare Australia (CEA), founded in 2003 by Australian Catholic Bishops. Its aim is to promote understanding of the sacredness of nature and functions as an advisory agent on ecological matters for Catholic Bishops and initiating sustainability programs.

An example of this is the publication of "On Holy Ground" which is a faith based program for reflecting on environmental issues created by the CEA in conjunction with the Catholic Education Office (CEO). An international example of the Church's response to deforestation and other sustainability issues is Pope Benedict XVI's address at the opening mass of World Youth Day Sydney, 2008. He states "There are also scars which mark the surface of our earth: erosion, deforestation... in order to face and insatiable

consumption. With such a large audience the message of sustainability was spread to many countries. CONCLUSION Ethical issues are significant to the adherents of Christianity as they provide a means to living based on the teachings of Jesus who preached love and respect for God's creation. The growing environmental concerns of Climate Change and deforestation are examples of modern society's neglect of the Earth and, by extension their obligations to caring for it. Christian adherents are therefore called to encourage change and sustainability in the world around them.