

Christian ethic extended response



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Christian ethics can be defined as the way of life appropriate for those who accept the Christian faith. Christian ethics helps someone who accepts the Christian faith to make decisions about what is right thinking or right action. Right thinking helps Christians to determine the motives for their right actions. There are many different variants of Christianity- Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Uniting, Reformed, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Baptist and many others.

Within each of these variants there are some people who are very conservative, others who are fundamentalist and still others who are liberals. This means that there are many different views among Christians about what is right action or right thinking. Christian ethics therefore helps Christians to decide on what is right behaviour and right action particularly concerning euthanasia and abortion. There is much variety in Christian ethics.

Some Christians adopt an absolutist view (following a divine and unbreakable rule which comes to them from the Bible or from the tradition of the Church) while other Christians adopt a more proportionist view (taking the Bible and the tradition into account but also weighing up the alternative and making what seems to be the best ethical decision in the circumstances). There are several sources for Christian ethics, the bible and Jesus Christ, The tradition of Christianity and Reason.

Not all Christians give the same importance to each source. As each source emphasises different Christian ethics. The bible is the sacred writings of Christianity, as Christians believe that the Bible has been inspired by God and that it contains the teachings of its founder Jesus Christ and therefore

the bible is a very important source of ethical guidance for Christians. For fundamentalists the text of the Bible becomes an authority because it is seen to be ' the word of god.

Some Christians (such as many in reformed, evangelical and Pentecostal traditions) interpret the bible quite literally and so apply its message directly to everyday life in a fundamentalist way. They tend to use the Bible as the only source of Christian ethics. Other Christians (such as Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Anglicans) tend not to use the Bible in a fundamentalist manner, but are still guided by its words in order to work out what is right thinking or right behaviour.

At the same time they tend to use other sources to help them decide what is right thinking or right behaviour (eg the traditions of the church, including its leaders and what has been decided in the past, as well as their own ability to think things through and determine what God is saying to them in the present day) Some of the main biblical passages which help Christians to determine what is right thinking and right behaviour is The Ten Commandments.

Most Christians use decisions made by the church or other Christian people in the past to help them make decisions made by the church or other Christian people in the past to help them make decisions about what is right thinking and right action, but some Christians give this much more importance than others. The Roman Catholic Church for example, holds the past traditions of the church as very important, as the teaching of previous

popes and holy men and women are used to help people decide what is right.

The church, sometimes often gathered in large groups (Vatican II in the 1960s) and made decisions about what it is right for people to do. At other times individual popes have made decisions and made pronouncement about what is right for the people. Pope Paul VI, for example, made the decision in 1968 in an encyclical (pronouncement) called *Humane Vitae* to forbid the use of oral contraceptives. Anglicans tend to say that besides the Bible the early teachings of the church and the decisions of modern groups of Christians meeting together are important in the making of ethical decisions.

Their groups are called Synods, where the members of the Anglican Church in one place, called a diocese, meet together and make decisions about what they think is right. The Holy Spirit guides them in making the right decisions. In 1995 for example this Anglican general synod expressed grave concern about the introduction of euthanasia in the Northern Territory and suggested that the church lobby Politicians to increase the availability of palliative care which would make euthanasia unnecessary.

For many Christians, reason or the ability to think and make their own decisions on the basis of argument or conscience is also an importance source of right thinking and right action. These Christians think this is particularly important because often there is little guidance in the Bible about modern ethical dilemmas such as stem cell research. Jesus says nothing about many of the social questions which are important in the world

today (euthanasia and abortion) so many Christians believe they should use the God-given gift of reason to help them find out what is right thinking and action in many of these important areas of modern living. For Roman Catholics, scripture, Tradition and Reason are all seen as equal sources of ethical reflection and it is permitted to begin in any one. Different Christian variants therefore have different sources of ethics and different ways of making decisions about what is right thing or right behaviour. All accept the authority of the Bible as a source for ethics, but some accept the tradition of the church and human reason as an equal source or as other ways of reaching a decision when the Bible has nothing to say about certain issue.

Christians are mostly against euthanasia. The arguments are usually based on the beliefs that life is given by god, and that human beings are made in Gods image. Some churches also emphasise the importance of not interfering with the natural process of death. Human beings are valuable because they are made in Gods image, human life possesses an intrinsic dignity and value because it is created by god in his own image for the distinctive destiny of sharing in Gods own life.

People have a unique capacity for rational existence that enables them to see what is good, to propose euthanasia for an individual is to judge that the current life of that individual is not worthwhile, such a judgement is incompatible with recognising the worth and dignity of the person to be killed, therefore arguments based on the quality of life are completely irrelevant nor should anyone ask for euthanasia for themselves because no one has the right to value anyone, even themselves, as worthless.

The process of dying is spiritually important and shouldn't be disrupted, many churches believe that the period just before death is a profoundly spiritual time and they think it is wrong to interfere with the process of dying as this would interrupt the process of the spirit moving towards god. The Fifth Commandment clearly states that it is wrong to take another human life "you shall not murder"(Exodus 20: 13). The bible doesn't give any specific teaching on euthanasia, but many Christians would use this commandment to argue that euthanasia is not permitted.

The Roman Catholic Church regards euthanasia as morally wrong. It has always taught the absolute and unchanging value of the commandment "you shall not kill". Pope John Paul II has spoken out against what he calls a 'culture of death' in modern society and said that human beings should always prefer the way of life to the way of death. Life is a thing of value in itself, its value doesn't depend on the extent that it brings pleasure and well-being. This means that suffering and pain don't stop life being valuable and are not reason for ending life.

The church believes that each person should enter the dying process with all its mysteries with trust in god and in solidarity with their fellow human beings, they should die with dignity of letting themselves be loved unconditionally . The Roman Catholic Church doesn't accept that human beings have a right to die, humans beings are free agents but their freedom doesn't extend to the ending of their own lives. Euthanasia and suicide are both a rejection of Gods absolute sovereignty over life and death. A human being who insists that they have the right to die is denying the trust of their fundamental relationship with god.

The church regards it as morally acceptable to refuse extraordinary and aggressive medical means to preserve life. Refusing such treatment is not euthanasia but a proper acceptance of the human condition in the face of death. Some features of Christianity suggest that there are some obligations that go against the general view that euthanasia is a bad thing as Christianity requires respect every human being and their decisions to end their life with dignity “ Do unto others as you would have to you” The Church of England shares the Roman Catholic view that abortion is ‘ gravel contrary to the moral law.

As the 1980 statement of the board of social responsibility put it, ‘ In the light of our conviction that the foetus has the right to live and develop as a member of the human family, we see abortion, the termination of that life by the act of man, as a great moral evil. We don’t believe that the right to life as a right pertaining to persons admits of no exceptions whatever, but the right of the innocent to life admits surely of few exceptions indeed’, this statement acknowledges that under some circumstances abortion could be permissible. The Church of England has not attempted to deal with every issue associated with abortion.

The Roman Catholic church says deliberately causing an abortion is a grave moral wrong, based on the doctrine on Natural Law and on the written word of God. The Church says that human life begins at conception from that moment a unique life begins, independent of the life of the mother and father. Each new life that begins at this point is not a potential human being but a human being with potential. Pope John Paul II took a very strong line on

abortion, describing it as murder. The inalienable rights of the person must be recognised and respected by civil society and the political authority.

These human rights depends neither on single individuals nor on parents, nor do they represent a concession made by the society and the state, they belong to human nature and are inherent in the persons by virtue of the creative act from which the person took his origin. Among such fundamental rights one should mention in this regard every human being's right to life, from the moment of conception until death. Not all Catholics agree with the Vatican line on abortion and believe it is the right and the responsibility of each Catholic to follow his or her own conscience on moral matters, even when it conflicts with Church teaching.

Pro Choice Catholics rarely regard abortion as morally good, although it may sometimes be the best moral choice that can be made in a particular situation. Catholic women in the USA are as likely as women in general population to have an abortion and are 29% more likely than Protestant women. Christian ethics guide people into making the right decisions and right behaviour, but there is no certain rules on abortion, therefore there are different guided decisions and ethical theories.