

Christian Ethics: Ethics as Theology

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Morality and Ethics

Morality: L. *mores*, habit, custom

“moral” (*moralität*) the rightness of actions and decision, “oughtness” and obligation

Moral and amoral decisions

Ethics: G. *ethos* “ethos”, habit, custom (cf. Luke 2:42)

“Ethics” (*ziflichkeit*), the goodness of behavior, teleological, the pursuit of the “good”

Summa bonum

Levels of Thinking

Worldview: Anthropocentric or Theocentric

What is the nature of God, the world, and man? What is “good”?

Sources of Authority

Nature, Reason (Philosophy/Science), Revelation, Community/Tradition

Methods of Moral Reasoning

Deontology (rules), Teleological (outcomes), Existential (attitudes, virtue)

Principles (Beneficence, Justice, Veracity, Autonomy)

Rules (Policies, Laws, Codes)

Decisions (Specific Issues)

Worldviews & Ethics

What is the nature of “God”?

Theology: Theistic, Deistic, Atheistic

What is the nature of the Universe?

Metaphysics/ontology: Created by a Sovereign God, product of chance, naturalistic

What is the nature of Man?

Anthropology: Image of God, rational animal, product of evolutionary chance

How do we know what we know?

Epistemology: Revelation, authority, reason, empiricism, feeling

What is our destiny?

Teleology, Eschatology: Eternal significance, entropic doom and nihilism

Logical Conclusions

Naturalistic Worldview

No ultimate basis for meaning and value

Man not unique; no basis for treating man differently from animals

No normative moral sanctions; ethics reduced to individual or collective sentiment; choices have no ultimate significance

Illness and death are part of natural, meaningless order of things; death simply a point in amoral continuum, inimical only for unfounded emotional reasons

Christian Worldview

Meaning & value rooted in the character of God

Man unique, radically different from animals, to be treated with respect

Ethics has a normative base; ethical principles are binding; choices have eternal consequences

Illness and death are abnormal but not the final enemy; they are used by God to accomplish His purposes

Theology and the Nature of “the Good”

What is “good” and why do we seek it?

Socrates: Is the “good” good because the gods approve it, or do the gods approve it because it is good?

Plato: Good as the highest, all-embracing, dominant idea or form, that which preserves and supports

Aristotle: The goal of all human relations and actions

Matthew 19:16-18 (The Rich Young Ruler) “...no one is good, except God”

Implications

All “good” comes from God; God’s character defines what is “good”
One can only be “good” in the derivative sense as reflecting the character of God and being in relation (through faith) with God
The “good” we seek in “ethics” is God Himself and His glory
Autonomy in ethics (seeking the “good” apart from God) is the nature of sin and death

Reflecting the Character of God: The Imago Dei

Only three Biblical texts

Gen 1:26-28 (after the creation of man)

Gen 5:1-12 (after man sins)

Gen 9:6-7 (after the flood)

Fundamental importance of what it means to be human

♩³ “*nephesh*”; embodied soul, also of animals

Defining ourselves in terms of God, in His image (♩ “*tselem*”) and likeness (♩ “*demut*”)

Defining ourselves in terms of ourselves is prideful and sinful

What is the Imago Dei? (Maybe the wrong question.)

Physical properties, mind (nous), rationality, imagination (image), soul

Irenaeus: image/likeness; nature/supernature, reason/faith, *superadditum bonum*

Boethius: rationalis naturae individua substantia (undivided substance of a rational nature)

What does it mean to be made in the Imago Dei?

Focus on relationship and role

Our relationship to God

To reflect His character

To do His will

To rule His kingdom

Our relationship as Male and Female

Unity in diversity, not monads

Made for harmonious relationship

Emphasis on male /female unity (marriage) and fruitfulness as a consequence of the Imago Dei

Made for community and fellowship

Our relationship with Creation

♩ “*radah*” have dominion

Stewardship, vice-regent of the Sovereign

The Imago Dei after the fall

Satan’s lie: to be like “god”

Something else is required other than the “Imago Dei”

We will know “good” and “evil” apart from God’s word, autonomously

Relationships remain (the Imago Dei), now corrupt (a curse, no longer a blessing)

The Imago Dei Renewed in Christ

Christ is the perfect image and representation of God, THE Imago Dei

Prophet, reflect the character of God

Priest, do the will of God

King, rule God’s kingdom

“Ethics” is Sanctification

Being renewed in Christ, THE Imago Dei

Eschatological dimension of renewal

Addressing ethical issues “between the times”