

INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGICAL ETHICS

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CHAPTER ONE

1-INTRODUCTION

1.1-Theology

Theology comes from the Greek words theos (deity/God) and logos (discourse or speech). Narrowly considered, it has to do only with the existence and nature of the divine. Broadly considered, it covers the entire range of issues concerning humanity's relationship to God. A simple and literal definition of "theology" would be "the science of divine things". In modern times, it is the stream of knowledge that differentiates the secular exploration of knowledge from the sacred one because of its starting point: all secular studies begin with reason and experience while theology begins with faith. The starting point for all extra-theological studies is the world (Latin: saeculum); the starting point for theology is the Word of God. So, while one may say that theology is the study of God, the factual definition would be that theology is the science that rationally pursues the understanding of the self-revelation of God in the Scriptures. Yet, theology is simply a tool that is lifeless when not combined with practical faith and proper application. Even the devil has a lot of theological information, but he is the devil simply because he can't have faith in the Truth; he chose to be the father of lies. Theology devoid of faith is diabolical. It is with a sad note that we read something like this: "When the rule of Rehobo'am was established and was strong, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him." (2Chronicles 12:1) "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children." (Hosea 4:6)

So, theology is an active process of teaching, theology is a practical discipline, not merely theoretical. Theology takes place, not only in technical books, but also in children's Sunday school classes, evangelistic meetings, preaching, and discipleship seminars. Theology is the application of the Word to all areas of life. Academic or theoretical theology is one kind of theology, theory and practice are both applications of God's word, and both enrich one another when they are biblical.

Generally, Christian theology is a peculiar synthesis of Hebraism and the Greek philosophic. The special concentration on the ethical implications of theology is called "moral theology" especially in the more Catholic churches or "Christian ethics" in Protestant communions. Theology is concerned primarily with how persons should think, while ethics is concerned with how persons should live.

1.2. Ethics

Ethics is about how we decide what is right and what is wrong. "Ethics is the study of everyday behavior" and so involves every aspect of our lives. The discipline dealing with the principles or conduct governing an individual or group. Consideration of moral principles or values of what is good or right to do. It is about what morals and values are found appropriate by members of society and individuals themselves. Ethics helps us decide what is right and good or wrong and bad in any given situation.

The term ethics derives from the Greek word *ethos* meaning character, conduct, and/or customs; as in I Cor. 15:33 'good morals' / 'good manners'. II Peter 3:11 'manner of living' or 'lives'. In this case it is holy living (*hagiasanastrophais*). It has been called 'the science of conduct.... a systematic attempt to consider the purposeful actions of mankind, to determine their rightness or wrongness, their tendency to good or evil' (Baker's Dictionary of Theology, p.199). Loosely used the term ethics is intended to cover the codes of conduct, social customs and the like which a man, in any given culture ought to follow. It does not mean that he will follow them, but it is at least the general standard set.

Ethics is a brunch of philosophy that studies the rightness or wrongness of human action. In particular, this branch of philosophy is concerned with

questions of how human person ought to act, and the search for a definition of a right conduct and the good life. It is for this reason that the attempt to seek the “good” through the aid of reason is the traditional goal of ethicists. (Albert, Denis & peterfreud 1984, p1-2) It must be noted, however, that there is no single, absolute definition of ethics. This is because ethics as a discipline is constantly evolving as a result of change in socio-cultural and political context. For example, in the Greek tradition, ethics was conceived as relating to the concept of “good life”. Thus the ethical inquiry during this time was directed toward discovering the nature of happiness. In fact, Aristotle’s Nicomachean ethics does not only present a theory of happiness but also provides ways in which happiness is attained. In Judeo-Christian ethical tradition, the ideals of righteousness before God and the love of God and neighbor, not the happy or pleasant life, constitute the substance of ethics.

1.3. Ethics and Morality

To clearly distinguish Morality from Ethics by explaining the meaning, let be briefly address the question “what is morality?” It must be noted, however, that the difference between ethics and morality is not significant. In fact the former is essentially synonymous with the latter. Etymologically speaking Ethics comes from the Greek word “Ethos” while morality from the Latin word ‘Mos’ (or mores, if it’s used in a plural form), both words referring to customary behavior. For this reason, we may use the word “immoral” in lieu of the word “unethical”, or we may use the word “moral” instead of the word “ethical”. This is the reason why we say that a “moral person” or “ethical person” is one who is good and does the right thing, and an “immoral person” or “unethical person” is one who is bad and does what is wrong.

As we can see, the terms ethics and morality can be used interchangeably. However, there is a fine line that divides the two. In other words, we can

distinguish one from the other in some respects. The first idea that come to our mind when we ask the difference between morality and ethics is that the latter generally refers to the systematic study of the rightness and wrongness of a human action, while the former is generally understood as the rightness or wrongness of a human action. In this way, we can say that ethics is the specific branch of philosophy that studies the morality (that is, the rightness or wrongness) of human act. With this, we may initially conclude that ethics is the science of “morals”, morality is the practice of ethics.

Morality is used to describe our principles or convictions about what is right and wrong and our ultimate values. Ethics or Moral Philosophy refers to the study of those principles and values, analyzing them critically and working out how we make decisions. Christian ethics often begins with the specific situation and asks what principles should apply in this case.

1.4 Theological Ethics

Ethics is theology, viewed as a means of determining which human persons, acts, and attitudes receive God’s blessing and which do not. ethics is not a branch of theology, but theology itself, the whole of theology, viewed in a certain way. All theology answers ethical questions. Even the more theoretical kinds of theology, are explorations into what we ought to believe. That ought is an ethical ought. So, when we ask what we ought to believe about, say, the order of the divine decrees, we are asking an ethical question.

All theology, then, is ethical. It is also true that the subjects we usually call ethical, like murder, stealing, and adultery, can be integrated with the rest of theology more thoroughly than in most theological systems. In a theological curriculum, it would be possible to deal with ethical issues (even those issues we normally think of as ethical) throughout, rather than postponing them to a special course. We could discuss the creation ordinances, the moral laws given to Adam and Eve before the Fall, in the course of describing the prefall condition of the human race. Then we could teach the Decalogue in connection with the Mosaic Covenant, ethical methodology in connection with theological thoughts, and so on. In fact,

however, ethics covers the whole range of human life and all the teaching of Scripture.

1.5 Sources of Orthodox Christian Ethical Disciplines

Christian ethics provides us with a new world of ethical values, which however, include the ethical values of common ethical life and its philosophical understanding. Christian ethics, however, has its authority and its roots in God. It therefore is an ethic which is founded on the very nature of ultimate reality. It is more Orthodox to think of Christian ethics as the completion, or the fulfillment of a natural, non-revelatory ethic, and it, as an introduction to Christian ethics, without separating them into two distinct and unrelated ethics. Eastern Orthodox ethics will emphasize the continuity between natural ethics (creation) and revealed ethics (redemption). What is emphasized here is the existence of the personal, free Triune God who is the source of the moral experience, and consequently, the source of all reflection and teaching about the discipline of ethics.

There are minor and major sources for the discipline of Christian Ethics. Characteristic of the first are the non-revelatory sources. The chief non-revelatory sources for Christian Ethics are the philosophical moral sciences. There are six moral disciplines which deal with the experience of morality. The positive science of morals provides a historical description of human behavior as it relates to moral standards. It describes how people have behaved in the past, or, how people are behaving in the present. The second a "normative science", which has as its task to provide analysis and reasoning on ethical norms and to prescribe what men ought to do, and what men ought not to do. A third moral science is philosophical ethics. In this discipline the metaphysical and metaethical questions are discussed on exclusively non-revelatory bases. The fourth is casuistry, in which standards are applied to particular and concrete cases. It seeks to give concrete and specific moral directions in particular situations. The fifth may be characterized as moralizing, or practical ethics, whose goal and purpose is the improvement of the conduct of the person or persons receiving the instruction. Usually this is done in the home, school and the pulpit. The final "moral science" is the art or the practice of living the good life. The ancient

Greeks called this the art of living well. Additional sources for Christian ethics from the non-revelatory sphere, which provide much data from Christian ethics are the disciplines of psychology, anthropology, sociology, economics, political science, the philosophy of history, biology, physics, medicine, literature, language, semantic studies, etc.

The Christian sources for Orthodox Christian ethics are of much more importance than any of those previously discussed. A primary source for Orthodox Christian ethics is Holy Scripture. Orthodox Christian Ethics is totally dependent upon the doctrines, theological teachings and dogma of the Orthodox Christian Church. The relationship of Christian ethics to practical theology is very clear since its teachings are embodied in preaching, in religious education, in counseling, in the sacrament of Holy Confession, in canon law, etc.

Canon law is unique as source for Orthodox Christian ethics because it is the only place where the consciousness of the Church has expressed itself in extremely concrete and even quantitative ways in reference to ethical issues. However, Orthodox Christian Ethics will draw on the canonical tradition without blind literalism. The changing conditions of the times, from the Patristic period to our own, do not permit literal application of patristic statements to the ethical life without some consideration of the altered circumstances. As noted previously, Orthodox Theology will serve as the fundamental source for Orthodox Christian ethics. Finally, the virtuous life of the saints will be important for Christian ethics, in that their lives embodied the experience of the Christian ethics, in that their lives embodied the experience of the Christian ethic. One very useful source of the lives of the saints will be found in the worship services of the Church, especially in its hymnology, where the consciousness of the Church has been able to identify virtues and modes of behavior which are especially appropriate to the Christian life.

1.6 Issues discussed under Ethics /related to 10 commandments/

No Other Gods & No Carved Images

Why is a right relationship with God the first requirement for studying ethics? What things are we tempted to value more than God today? Is all

artwork prohibited, or only that which is used for worship? Is it wrong to make images of God for artistic purposes? What about pictures of Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit?

Purity of Speech:- Lying and Telling the Truth

What does it mean to take God's name "in vain"? What guidelines does Scripture give us regarding obscene language, oaths, vows, and humorous speech? Is it ever right to lie? Is there a difference between a spoken lie and actions that deceive people? Does the Bible teach anything about plagiarism or punctuality?

The Sabbath Commandment:

Why did the day of worship change from Saturday to Sunday? Is it wrong to work on Sundays?

"Honor your father and your mother." :- Authority of Parents:-

Why does God want children to honor their parents? Should adult children continue to be obedient to their parents? Is spanking wrong? What are the advantages of public schools, Christian schools, and homeschooling?

Equality and Leadership in Marriage

How can husbands have a leadership role in marriage if men and women are equal in value before God? How should a husband's headship and a wife's support of that headship work out in practice? What are the arguments used by feminists today?

Civil Government & Other Authorities

Why did God establish civil government? What should governments do? Is it ever right to disobey the government or to try to change the government? What is the right relationship between church and state? Does the Bible support monarchies, or does it favor some sort of democracy? How should Christians relate to people who have authority in the workplace, in the church, and in school?

"You shall not murder.":- Capital Punishment; War; Self-Defense; Abortion; Suicide Euthanasia; Aging and Death; Racial Discrimination; Health; Alcohol and Drugs

Is it ever right for the government to put a criminal to death? How can we know if a war is a "just war"? Is it right for a Christian to serve as a soldier?

What are the arguments in favor of a pacifist position? Is it right for nations to have nuclear weapons? Is it ever right for Christians to use physical force to defend them against physical attack? Is it right to use a weapon if available? Is it right for a Christian to own a gun? What does the Bible teach about the protection of an unborn child? Is there scientific evidence that the unborn child is a distinct person? What about abortion in the case of rape or to save the life of the mother? Is it wrong to put to death a person in great pain who has no hope of recovery? How can we know when to stop medical treatment near the end of someone's life? Should the law allow doctors to perform euthanasia when a patient requests it? Can a person who commits suicide be forgiven? What are the blessings that come with aging? Is it right for Christians to spend money on cosmetic surgery? Why is it important to have a will and other end-of-life documents? What about cremation? Why is it wrong to discriminate against others on the basis of racial differences? Does the Bible say anything about interracial marriage? Why does God want us to care for our physical bodies? What should we think about sleep, vaccinations, organic foods, tattoos, and circumcision? What are the dangers of alcoholic beverages? Is it wrong to use alcohol in moderation? What are the dangers related to the legalization of marijuana?

“You shall not commit adultery.”: Marriage ; Birth Control; Infertility, Reproductive Technology, and Adoption; Divorce and Remarriage Pornography; Homosexuality and Transgenderism

What are the essential elements for a marriage to occur? Why does Scripture place a high value on sexual intimacy within marriage, but prohibit it outside of marriage? What safeguards can help protect a marriage against adultery? Is it wrong for a couple to live together prior to marriage? What does the Bible say about singleness? Should we think that birth control is morally acceptable? If so, are there types of birth control that are morally wrong? What birth-control methods are morally acceptable? How do biblical principles help us evaluate modern reproductive technologies, particularly artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, embryo adoption, and surrogate motherhood? Why does the Bible view adoption so positively? Why is viewing pornography wrong? Is

divorce morally acceptable in a case of physical abuse? If a divorce is granted for biblically legitimate reasons, is remarriage always allowed? Can a divorced person become a church officer? Do the biblical passages about homosexuality still apply today? Can people be “born gay”? How should we evaluate the claims of certain people that they are “transgender”?

“You shall not steal.”; Property; Work, Rest, Vacations, and Retirement; Increasing Prosperity: Poverty and Wealth; Personal Financial Stewardship; Borrowing, Lending, and the Question of Debt; Business Ethics Stewardship of the Environment

The Goodness and Necessity of Private Ownership of Property Why does God enable human beings to own property? Does God approve of increased human flourishing on the earth? What are the dangers of the “health-and-wealth gospel”? Is work today a blessing or curse? Does God approve of longer vacations? What about retirement? Is More Prosperity a Good Thing? Is poverty more pleasing to God than prosperity? Did God intend human beings to continue inventing and developing new and better products? How can we guard against materialism? Is all monetary inequality morally wrong? How can we best help the poor? How much of our income should we give to the Church’s work? What blessings come to us as a result of generous giving? Is it right to leave an inheritance to our children? How much should we save for the future? How much should we spend on ourselves? Is gambling morally wrong? Why is the ability of human beings to borrow and lend a good gift from God? Does the Bible teach us that it is always wrong to charge interest on a loan? Why are buying and selling morally good activities? Is there a real danger that human use of fossil fuels will create destructive global warming?

“You shall not covet.”:- Why is God concerned with purity in our hearts? How can we attain contentment with what God has given us?

CHAPTER TWO

2. CLASSIFICATION OF ETHICS

2.1 Personal and Social ethics

In this unit we will examine what has ordinarily been termed "individual ethics," or sometimes "personal ethics." Both terms are ambiguous, and have tended to draw too sharp a contrast with "social ethics." Every duty to another person is "social" in the sense that the obligation exists within a society of persons, in which there are greater or less degrees of intimacy of connection. According to different scholars, there are a number of classifications of ethics. Traditionally ethics understood as personal ethics. That is taking some personal issues on the basis of moral behavior. The so-called do's and don'ts or what we ought to do and ought not are the examples of this. It is very much restricted to personal moral behavior. The issues are not connected to the social structures. It is very much limited.

The personal duties and codes found in the professional ethics (eg. The ethical code of a policeman: Nurse: or Doctor) are related to personal ethics. The manner or etiquette (rules) are also personal in nature. Certain rules are given in a particular society to regulate the behavior of the person.

Issues like do not tell lies; promise keeping; do not smoke; do not harm are common rules which are universal and practiced by everyone. It is very much related to persons. This can also be called common laws; general principles. But no ethics is now purely self-regarding. Because, every individual's action may affects the community. Personal ethics deal with issues related to persons. The personal moral behavior is significant in personal ethics. It can be related to bad or good habits. Stealing for example is personal moral problem: as it is related to the behavior of a person.

On the other hand, social ethics is more concerned of structural problems. The issues are greatly related to foundational aspects. The issues are related to justice or questions of social justice. The questions are

accepting the dignity of a person: and challenging of structural evils like social exploitation.

Social ethics is a political ethics. It takes political questions like colonialism and Globalization seriously. All the time political ethics is related to administrative set up: the whole structure of society. For example:- there is a political repercussion (echo) to the gospel in the issue of human rights etc.

Social ethics asserts the right of the people especially the right of the poor. Personal ethics is related to hierarchical orders and certain rules like:- being obedient, or doing duty. But social ethics we protest against evil: fight evil: and we do not hide the facts. In social ethics the issue of human dignity upheld.

Personal ethics is so simplistic: and it does not deal with issues related to human dignity: human rights: or justice. It does not take up political questions.

Some examples of personal Ethics:- ethics of living, eating, drinking, speaking, wearing.... Whereas, examples of social ethics are:- Economic, political, cultural, Bio-ethics\sexual ethics, environmental, professional, medical

2.2 RELIGIOUS and PHILOSOPHICAL ETHICS

Ethics is used in three different but related sense, the first sense of ethics signifies a general pattern or way of life. This can be likened to the Christian conduct or moral code. In another sense, ethics is used to signify a set of rules of conduct or moral code. Here, ethics is relevant to other fields in professional and applied ethics. The third sense of ethics is seen as an inquiry into the measuring of ethical terms and its relation to ways of life and rules of conduct. This sense relates to meta-ethics which is a branch of moral philosophy. The other type of classification of ethics is that discusses about Christians and non-Christians or Religious and philosophical. However, from a theological Christian perspective broadly ethics can classify into two branches: These classes are Religious and philosophical ethics

2.2.1 RELIGIOUS ETHICS

A.GENERAL ETHICS:- As actions are born out of motives, ethics imputes some motive for the action of a person. It could be desire, aspiration or whatever becomes the driving force behind the action a person should governed by general ethics. Thus, general ethics analyses the actions of a person in terms of his/her desire/motive, towards the realization of his/her goal or aim; to the good of the person and to the welfare of others. In short, general ethics thus seems to generalize and relativist activity, such that not only the goals but the norms as well are particularized.

B.BIBLICAL ETHICS:- can be defined as the systematic study of standards of right and wrong in Christian character and conduct. It is an inquiry in to the meaning and purpose of life and has its foundation the sources, principles and practices of forming and using judgments of right and wrong based on biblical principles.

C.CHRISTIAN ETHICS:- As with the biblical ethics, Christian ethics based on the Bible. It emphasizes the dignity and right of persons and is critical of unjust structures and unequal relationships. As ethics exerts influence on all aspects of life, Christian ethics also deals with all issues related to life. It demands an attitudinal change in order to transform the oppressive structure of society and personal moral behavior

When we compare between general and biblical, Christian Ethics we notice that three of them are concerned with needs, ideals and aspirations of persons. When we came to the foundation both Bible ethics and Christian ethics, we find their basis in the Bible and life of Christ his followers, but for general ethics human reason is used as foundation. Biblical ethics is based on faith whereas Christian ethics is based on Christian systems of moral values. In contrast, general ethics is based on moral processes. Biblical and Christian ethics is guided by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Bible and the Church. Whereas General Ethics is guided by the consensus of the community. Both biblical and Christian ethics aim at human kind attaining likeness with God and being in harmony with his will. While in general ethics the goal is virtuous activity.

2.2.2 Characteristics of Christian Ethics

A. Christian Ethics Is Based on God's Will

Christian ethics is a form of the divine-command position. An ethical duty is something we ought to do. It is a divine prescription. Of course, the ethical imperatives that God gives are in accord with his unchangeable moral character. That is, God wills what is right in accordance with his own moral attributes. "Be holy, because I am holy," the Lord commanded Israel (Lev. 11:45). "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect," Jesus said to his disciples (Matt. 5:48). "It is impossible for God to lie" (Heb. 6:18). So we should not lie either. "God is love" (1 John 4:16), and so Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39). In brief, Christian ethics is based on God's will, but God never wills anything contrary to his unchanging moral character.

B. Christian Ethics is Absolute

Since God's moral character does not change (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17), it follows that moral obligations flowing from his nature are absolute. That is, they are always binding everywhere on everyone. Of course, not everything God wills flows necessarily from his unchanging nature. Some things are merely in accord with his nature but flow freely from his will. For example, God chose to test Adam and Eve's moral obedience by forbidding them to eat a specific fruit on a tree (Gen. 2:16-17). Although it was morally wrong for Adam and Eve to disobey that command, we are no longer bound by that command today. That command was based on God's will and did not flow necessarily from his nature.

On the other hand, God's command not to murder (Gen. 9:6) applied before the law was given to Moses, under the Law of Moses (Exod. 20:13), and also since the time of Moses (Rom. 13:9). In brief, murder is wrong at all times and all places and for all people. This is true because humans are created in the "image of God" (Gen. 1:27; 9:6). This includes a moral likeness to God (Col. 3:10; James 3:9). And whatever is traceable to God's unchanging moral character is a moral absolute. This includes such moral obligations as holiness, justice, love, truthfulness, and mercy. Other commands flowing

from God's will, but not necessarily from his nature, are equally binding on a believer, but they are not absolute. That is, they must be obeyed because God prescribed them, but he did not prescribe them for all people, times, and places. Absolute moral duties, on the contrary, are binding on all people at all times and in all places.

C. Christian Ethics Is Based on God's Revelation

Christian ethics is based on God's commands, the revelation of which is both general (Rom. 1:19-20; 2:12-15) and special (2:18; 3:2). God has revealed himself both in nature (Ps. 19:1-6) and in Scripture (19:7-14). General revelation contains God's commands for all people. Special revelation declares his will for believers. But in either case, the basis of human ethical responsibility is divine revelation. Failure to recognize God as the source of moral duty does not exonerate anyone, even an atheist, from their moral duty. For "when Gentiles, who do not have the law [of Moses], do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts" (Rom. 2:14-15). That is, even if unbelievers do not have the moral law in their minds, they still have it written on their hearts. Even if they do not know it by way of cognition, they show it by way of inclination.

D. Christian Ethics Is Prescriptive

Since moral rightness is prescribed by a moral God, it is prescriptive. For there is no moral law without a moral Lawgiver; there is no moral legislation without a moral Legislator. So Christian ethics by its very nature is prescriptive, not descriptive. Ethics deals with what ought to be, not with what is. Christians do not find their ethical duties in the standard of Christians but in the standard for Christians—the Bible. From a Christian point of view, a purely descriptive ethic is no ethic at all. Describing human behavior is the task of sociology. But prescribing human behavior is the province of morality. The attempt to derive morals from mores is, as we have already noted, the "is-ought" fallacy. What people actually do is not

the basis for what they ought to do. If it were, then people ought to lie, cheat, steal, and murder, since these things are done all the time.

E.Christian Ethics Is Deontological

Ethical systems can be broadly divided into two categories, deontological (dutycentered) and teleological (end-centered). This is sometimes called consequentialism since the value of an act is determined by its consequence. Christian ethics is deontological. Utilitarianism is an example of a teleological ethic. According to one form of teleological ethic, this was not a good act because it did not have good results. Since the results determine the goodness of the act, and the results were not good, then it follows that the attempted rescue was not a good act. Yet a more sophisticated form of teleological (utilitarian) ethic might argue that the attempt was good, even though it failed, because it had a good effect on society. People heard about it and were encouraged to help rescue others in the future. But even here the attempted act of rescue that failed was not good in itself. Rather, it would have been good if and only if it had brought some good results, either for the drowning person or for someone else.

By contrast, the Christian ethic is deontological and insists that even some acts that fail are good. Christians believe, for example, that it is better to have loved and to have lost than not to have loved at all. Christians believe that the cross was not a failure simply because only some will be saved. It was sufficient for all even if it is efficient only for those who believe. The Christian ethic insists that it is good to work against bigotry and racism, even if one fails. This is so because moral actions that reflect God's nature are good whether they are successful or not. Good for the Christian is not determined in a lottery. In life the winner is not always right.

In conclusion, a system of Christian ethics based on the Bible does not fit neatly into any one of these categories alone. Rather, if our ethical system is derived from the Bible, it will be *deontological* (it will define right and wrong based on the rules God gives in Scripture) and also *teleological* (it will seek a good result, namely, doing all for the glory of God), and it will also include a component of *virtue ethics* (it will seek to develop Christ-like character in each person). A Christian approach to ethics will also exercise

caution about adopting conclusions from the secular versions of these ethical systems, because all secular systems assume that ethical principles must be developed by human beings using only human observation, reasoning, and intuition, whereas a Christian approach believes that the Bible's ethical teachings are not merely the result of human thinking but have been revealed by God himself. However, a Christian ethical system will not adopt *moral relativism*, for the Bible does teach that there is absolute right and wrong as defined by God himself.

2.3 PHILOSOPHICAL ETHICS

A.RIGHT BASED ETHICS:- It is a family of moral and political theories that makes use of the idea of a social contract. The social contract notion is rooted in Hobbes and Kant's idea. In Hobbes, opinion people are rational and want to live out their life in peace and security. Kant proposed that the idea of the original contract could be used to determine what policies would be just for a specific society. Only the consent of real people could legitimate and facilitate acceptance of agreements, which would have moral force. The process by which people reach such agreements is moral leveraging.

B.GOAL BASED ETHICS:- It says that we ought to do whatever maximizes good consequences. It does not in itself matter what kind of thing we do, what matters is that we maximize good results.

One popular kind of goal-based-ethics is classical pleasure seeking. This view says that we ought always to do whatever maximizes the balance of pleasure over pain for every one affected by our actions. Another view could be based on the golden rule, which leads us to be concerned about the happiness and misery of others. This could be based on God's will, self-evident truths, or our own personal feelings. One type of goal based ethics is utilitarianism, which tries to directly estimate the likely consequences of different options and then picks out the option with the best consequences or indirectly. Many futilitarians reject exception-less rules. They think that any rule should be broken when it has better consequences to do so. Therefore, they see moral rules only as loose "rules of thumb"

C.HUMAN BASED ETHICS: - According to the human based ethics, all and only, humans count as having value in themselves. Human beings are both the actors and the proper subjects of morality

D.DUTY BASED ETHICS: - In ethics, deontological ethics or deontology: is a theory holding that decisions should be made solely or primarily by considering one's duties and the rights of others. One of the most important implications of deontology is that a person's behavior can be wrong even if it results in the best possible consequences. In contrast to consequentialism, a philosophy famous for its claim that the end justifies the means, deontology insists that how people accomplish their goals is usually or always more important than what people accomplish

2.4 Ethical Principles

In this section we will discuss another aspect of the ethical debate between Christians and non-Christians. This debate also concerns the lordship attributes.

Most people who think about ethics, Christian and non-Christian alike, are impressed by the following principles:

1. The Teleological Principle: A good act maximizes the happiness of living creatures. That is to say, a good act does good. Christians emphasize that it is good for God, bringing him glory. But Scripture tells us that what brings glory to God brings good to his people: "And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day" (Deut. 6:24; compare 10:13). Non-Christian ethical writers like Aristotle have also emphasized that doing good brings happiness, however that may be defined. The ethical life is the good life, the blessed life (Psm. 1, Matt. 5:1-11). And of course to live ethically is also to bring blessing to others. In Christian ethics, this insight is based on God's lordship attribute of control. For it is God, who arranges nature and history, so that good acts have beneficial consequences, to himself, to the ethical agent, and to other persons. We can call this principle the principle of teleology, for it declares that all our behavior should be goal-oriented, that it should seek the glory of God and the happiness of people.

2. The Deontological Principle:A good act is a response to duty, even at the

price of self-sacrifice. We admire people who follow their ethical principles, even at great cost. In the Bible, Abraham obeyed God's word, even though it meant leaving his home country, moving to a place where he was a complete stranger to everybody, even though it meant taking his son Isaac up to a mountain to serve as a human sacrifice (Gen. 22:1-19). To do his Father's will, the Lord Jesus gave his very life. So God defines duties for us, absolute norms that take precedence over any other consideration. Our duty is what we must do, what we ought to do. So they are necessary. And they are universal, for they apply to everyone. If it is wrong for me to steal, then it is wrong for you to steal in the same situation. Ethics is no respecter of persons. This insight is based on God's lordship attribute of authority. For the ultimate source of human duties is God's authoritative word. Some secular thinkers, such as Plato and Kant, also acknowledged the important of duty. But as we shall see, they had a difficult time determining where our duties are to be found, and what our duties actually are. We can call this principle the principle of deontology, from the Greek verb translated "owe, ought, or must." It states that ethics is a matter of duty, of obligation.

3. The Existential Principle: A good act comes from a good inner character.

A good person is not a hypocrite. He does good works because he loves to do them, because his heart is good. Scripture emphasizes that the only righteousness that is worth anything is a righteousness of the heart. The Pharisees cleansed the outside of their cup, their outward acts, but not the inside, their heart-motives (Matt. 23:25). Non-Christian writers, such as Aristotle, have also frequently emphasized the importance of character, of virtue, of inner righteousness. But as we shall see they have not succeeded in showing what constitutes virtue or how such virtue may be attained. This insight is based on God's lordship attribute of presence, for it is God "who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12). Without inward regeneration and sanctification, our best works are

hypocritical. We can call this the existential principle, for it says that morality is personal, inward, a matter of the heart.

4. Virtue Ethics. Theories of virtue ethics emphasize not whether specific actions are right or wrong, but the moral character of the individual. In virtue ethics, the primary concern is whether you are a virtuous person. In political elections, questions of a candidate's character are often important, and in those cases some emphasis on virtue ethics plays an important role.

A Christian ethical system should emphasize virtue ethics because the Bible teaches that we should seek to develop a Christlike character: Paul says that God predestined us "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29), and he also says, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Peter, in fact, uses the common Greek word for "virtue" (*aretē*, meaning "virtue, moral excellence") when he tells Christians to "make every effort to supplement your faith with *virtue*" (2 Pet. 1:5). For this reason, I include a long list of Christ-like character traits in the discussion of the goal of Christian ethics.

5- Meta Ethics

Meta Ethics or "analytical ethics" deals with the origin of the ethical concepts themselves. It does not consider whether an action is good or bad, right or wrong. Rather, it questions – what goodness or rightness or morality itself is? It is basically a highly abstract way of thinking about ethics. The key theories in meta-ethics include naturalism, non-naturalism, emotivism and prescriptivism.

Naturalists and non-naturalists believe that moral language is cognitive and can be known to be true or false. Emotivists deny that moral utterances are cognitive, holding that they consist of emotional expressions of approval or disapproval and that the nature of moral reasoning and justification must be reinterpreted to take this essential characteristic of moral utterances into account. Prescriptivists take a somewhat similar approach, arguing that moral judgments are prescriptions or prohibitions of action, rather than statements of fact about the world.

6- Applied Ethics

Applied ethics deals with the philosophical examination, from a moral standpoint, of particular issues in private and public life which are matters of moral judgment. This branch of ethics is most important for professionals in different walks of life including doctors, teachers, administrators, rulers and so on. There are six key domains of applied ethics viz. Decision ethics {ethical decision making process}, Professional ethics {for good professionalism}, Clinical Ethics {good clinical practices}, Business Ethics {good business practices}, Organizational ethics {ethics within and among organizations} and social ethics. It deals with the rightness or wrongness of social, economic, cultural, religious issues also. For example, euthanasia, child labour, abortion etc.

2.5The Relationship between Non-Revelatory Ethics and Christian Ethics

As Orthodox Christian Ethics undertakes the task, it confronts immediately the fact that many others have dealt with ethical issues. In the early period of the Church, the confrontation of Christian ideas and the Greek philosophical world served as a catalyst for the development and formulation of the Orthodox Christian teaching. Thus, even though Christianity never felt itself bound by philosophical categories and perspectives, it always dealt with them.

In our time, non-revelatory approaches to the issues which concern us as Orthodox Christians are not only those of the philosophers of antiquity, such as Plato and Aristotle, with whom the great Fathers of the Church dealt. Ethical responses, as well as the formulation of the problems themselves are often the products of more recent ethical schools of thought. Orthodox Christian ethics cannot function as if these teachings, positions & ethical systems did not exist? For often times they provide the rational and argumentation in support of the antithetical non-Orthodox views. Further, however, they often contain insights and truths which are compatible and supportative of the Orthodox Christian ethical teaching.

Thus, while it is conceivable that Orthodox systematic Theology may be written and studied without direct reference to current theological and

secular world-views, it is not possible to adequately deal with ethical issues in isolation from the world and the thinking in and about the world in which Orthodox Christian ethics is to be practiced.

This does not mean that the various systems of non-revelatory ethics ought to be confused with Christian ethics. Yet, non-revelatory ethics addresses many of the same issues and problems which form part of the human experience with which Christian Theology is concerned as well. This is because they reflect in some measure, the divine image in human life. Consequently, the various approaches to basic ethical questions may not be ignored by Orthodox Christian ethics.

It is necessary to proceed from such an understanding and to investigate the relationship of Christian ethics to the totality of reality. We must, therefore, ask what the relationship of Christian ethics is to non-revelatory ethics. It is important, first of all that we be able to relate Christian ethics to general knowledge and especially the views of the world that characterize philosophical and metaphysical theory.

Christian ethics, further, is closely related to non-revelatory ethics and philosophy in general because it, too, is subject to examination for the validity, coherence and consistency of its judgments and conclusions. If Orthodox Christian ethics is true, it must in some way come to terms with acceptable standards of validation, though this in no way means that the ultimate apophatic and transrational character of Orthodox Christian Theology is compromised. In addition, non-revelatory ethics and philosophy in general will be seen as requiring ultimate grounding in order to be acceptable by human beings generally. Further, the relationship of philosophical ethics and Christian ethics is seen in the fact that both provide data for general philosophical reasoning and for knowledge in general.

What we must conclude is, that it is not possible to do Christian ethics in a vacuum. The ethical thinking of non-Christian ethicists and philosophical, scientific, sociological, psychological knowledge are of necessity related to Christian ethics. This is true because Christian ethics is not a sectarian

ethic. It claims to speak to all of mankind and to speak to human beings in the whole world

Differences between Various Views

Of the six basic ethical views, two deny all objectively absolute moral laws. Of them, antinomianism denies all universal and general moral laws. Generalism, on the other hand, denies only universal moral laws but holds to general ones. That is, there are some objective moral laws that are binding most of the time but not necessarily all the time. Four ethical views claim to be forms of absolutism. Of these, situationism believes in only one absolute, while the others believe in two or more absolutes. Of them, unqualified absolutism contends that these absolute moral principles never conflict, while the other two believe that they sometimes do conflict. Of the two that believe these moral principles sometimes conflict, conflicting absolutism contends that we are responsible to do the lesser evil but guilty for whichever one we break. On the other hand, graded absolutism holds that our responsibility is to obey the greater commandment. Consequently, we are not guilty for not following the lesser commandment in conflict with it.

Examples of the Six Major Ethical Views

Corrie ten Boom tells how she lied to save Jews from the Nazi death camps. During U.S. Senate hearings on the Iran-Contra issue, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North testified that, in the process of performing his duties, he had lied to save innocent lives. North said, "I had to weigh lying and lives." In a number of biblical stories, people lied to save lives. The Hebrew midwives lied to save the baby boys Pharaoh had commanded them to kill (Exod. 1:15-19). Rahab lied to save the lives of the Jewish spies in Jericho (Josh. 2). Is it ever right to lie to save a life? This issue will serve to focus the differences among the six basic ethical positions.

1. *Lying is neither right nor wrong: there are no laws.* Antinomianism asserts that lying to save lives is neither right nor wrong. It affirms that there are no objective moral principles by which the issue can be judged right or wrong. The issue must be decided on subjective, personal, or

pragmatic grounds, but not on any objective moral grounds. We are literally without a moral law to decide the issue.

2. *Lying is generally wrong: there are no universal laws.* Generalism claims that lying is generally wrong. As a rule, lying is wrong, but in specific cases this general rule can be broken. Since there are no universal moral laws, whether a given lie is right will depend on the results. If the results are good, then the lie is right. Most generalists believe that lying to save a life is right because in this case the end justifies the means necessary to attain it. However, lying in general is wrong.

3. *Lying is sometimes right: there is only one universal law.* Situationism claims that there is only one absolute moral law, and telling the truth is not it. Love is the only absolute, and lying may be the loving thing to do. In fact, lying to save a life is the loving thing to do. Hence, lying is sometimes right. Indeed, any moral rule except love can and should be broken for love's sake. Everything else is relative; only one thing is absolute. Thus the situationist believes that lying to save lives is morally justified.

4. *Lying is always wrong: there are many nonconflicting laws.* Unqualified absolutism believes that there are many absolute moral laws, and none of them should ever be broken. Truth is such a law. Therefore, one must always tell the truth, even if someone dies as a result of it. Truth is absolute, and absolutes cannot be broken. Therefore, there are no exceptions to telling the truth. Results are never used as a rationale to break rules, even if the results are desirable.

5. *Lying is forgivable: there are many conflicting laws.* Conflicting absolutism recognizes that we live in an evil world, where absolute moral laws sometimes run into inevitable conflict. In such cases it is our moral duty to do the lesser evil. We must break the lesser law and plead mercy. For instance, we should lie to save the life and then ask for forgiveness for breaking God's absolute moral law. Our moral dilemmas are sometimes unavoidable, but we are culpable anyway. God cannot change his absolute moral prescriptions because of our moral predicaments.

6. *Lying is sometimes right: there are higher laws.* Graded absolutism holds that there are many moral absolutes, and they sometimes conflict. However, some laws are higher than others, so when there is an unavoidable conflict, it is our duty to follow the higher moral law. God does not blame us for what we could not avoid. Thus he exempts us from responsibility to follow the lower law in view of the overriding obligation to obey the higher law. Many graded absolutists believe that mercy to the innocent is a greater moral duty than telling truth to the guilty. Hence, they are convinced that it is right in such cases to lie in order to save a life.

In summary, antinomianism sets forth its view to the exclusion of all objective moral laws. Generalism claims that there are exceptions to moral laws. Situationism holds one moral absolute to the exclusion of all others. Unqualified absolutism insists that there is always an escape from the apparent conflict in absolute moral laws. Conflicting absolutism contends that when moral laws conflict, doing the lesser evil is excusable. And graded absolutism holds that when moral laws conflict, God grants an exemption to the lower law in view of our duty to obey the higher law.

3. Relativism. Ethical relativism is the belief that there is no absolute right and wrong, and so ethical decisions should be based on what is commonly accepted in each person's culture (*cultural relativism*) or on each individual's personal preferences (*individual relativism*). In the area of sexual ethics, the dominant view in today's popular culture (television, movies, music, literature, higher education) is individual relativism ("What's right for you is right for you, and what's right for me is right for me.") A particular kind of ethical relativism is called *ethical emotivism*. This is the view that there is no such thing as right and wrong, but when people claim that something is morally right or morally wrong, they are merely saying that they like one thing and do not like the other thing. They're just expressing their emotions with ethical language.

Another view that is similar to ethical relativism is called *antinomianism*. The word *antinomian* is based on the Greek prefix *anti-* (meaning "against") and the noun *nomos* (meaning "law").¹³ An antinomian would say that we are not subject to any moral laws. Some of Paul's opponents were

apparently antinomian and were teaching, “Why not do evil that good may come?” (Rom. 3:8).

One particular type of relativism that has gained much influence is called *situation ethics*. This is the view that there are no absolutely right or wrong actions, but a person should always do the most loving thing based on the facts in each new situation. This view was made popular by the 1966 book *Situation Ethics*¹⁴ by Joseph Fletcher, an Episcopal priest (later an atheist) and ethics professor at Harvard Divinity School and the University of Virginia.¹⁵

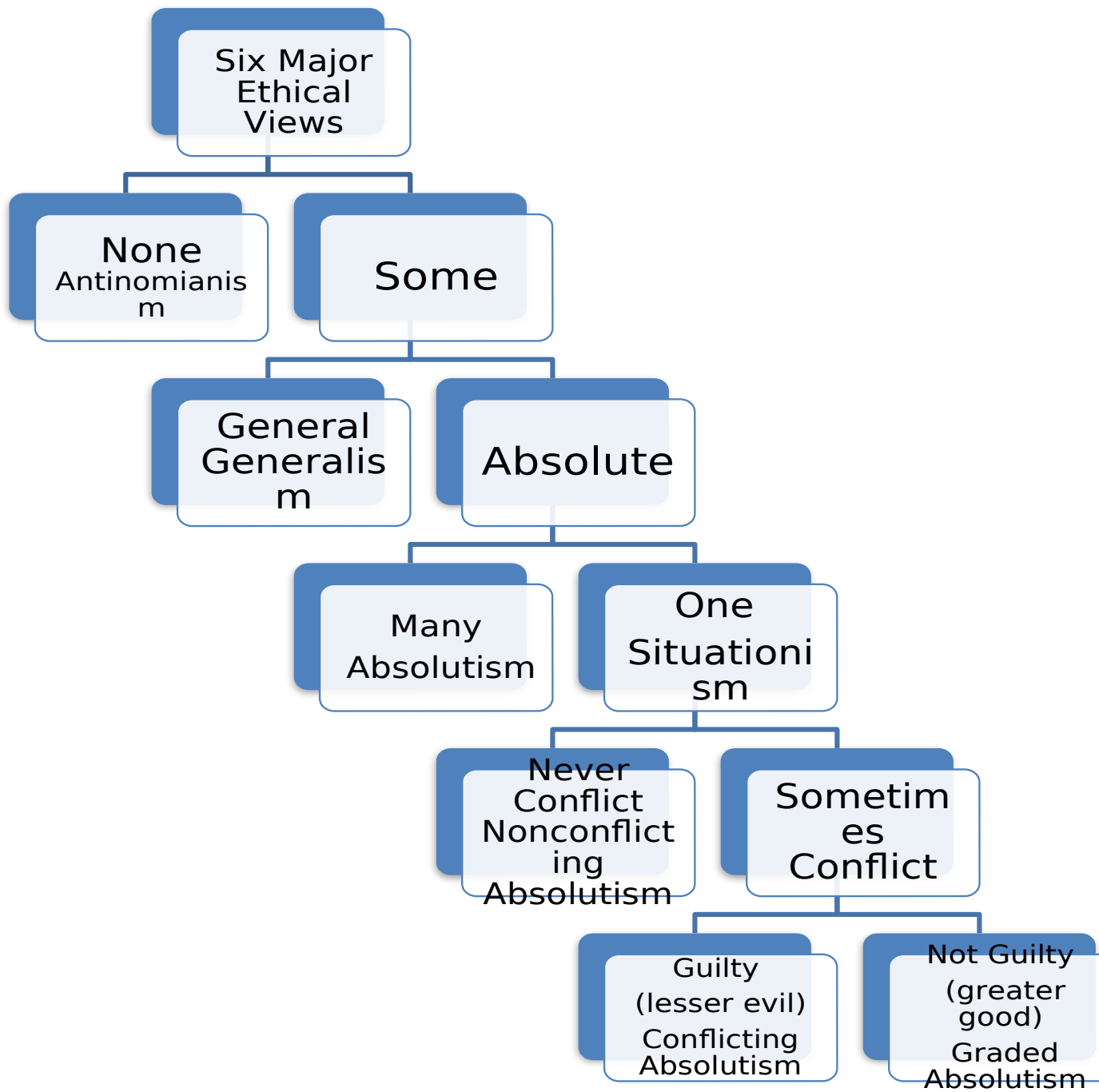
Because the Bible does teach that there is absolute right and wrong, Christian ethics cannot accept ethical relativism. However, as we will see later, careful Christian decision-making will always take into account the factual details about the specific situation under consideration.

Ethical Options

Various Views on Ethics

There are only six major ethical systems, each designated by its answer to the question

Are there any objective ethical laws? That is, are any moral laws not purely subjective but actually binding on humans in general? In answer, *antinomianism* says there are no moral laws. *Situationism* affirms there is one absolute law. *Generalism* claims there are some general laws but no absolute ones. *Unqualified absolutism* believes in many absolute laws that never conflict. *Conflicting absolutism* contends there are many absolute norms that sometimes conflict, and we are obligated to do the lesser evil. *Graded absolutism* holds that many absolute laws sometimes conflict, and we are responsible for obeying the higher law.



CHAPTER THREE

3. Christian Ethical life and Disciplines

3.1 The importance of Ethical life

Orthodox Christian Ethics deals with the living of the Christian life, attempting to interpret in an orderly fashion the basic principles which underlie it and the specific application of the Orthodox Christian ethical teachings in the human situation. In the most general of ways, it can be affirmed that the Christian life flows out of faith in Christ and participation in the life of the Church: Baptism, Eucharist, and Sacramental life in general, prayer and Christian love.

Yet in the concrete and specific circumstances of the Christian life, that is, the experience of the Church neither is the Christian way of life lived and realized automatically, nor is it unambiguously clear precisely what is appropriate to the Christian ethos. Thus, in addition to basic calls to faith in God and to belief in the saving and redeeming work of Christ and to incorporation of the believer into the body of Christ which is the Church, the earliest Christian teaching also included directives and exhortation on issues specifically related to the living of the Christian life. An example is St. Paul's reaction to the case of a Christian who was cohabitating with his step-mother as described in the fifth chapter of St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Such behavior was not to be tolerated, since it was perceived as totally incompatible with being a follower of Christ as well as with the existence of the Church of Christ itself.

Christianity has always had an ethical character and an ethical teaching. (Let us learn how to live according to Christ) Ignatius of Antioch. The New Testament passage Matthew 19:16-22 which describes the quest of the rich young man for salvation prefaces the discussion with the request "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" Jesus' response is "If you would like to have eternal life, keep the commandments." It is significant that a number of ten commandments are then described as necessary for obtaining eternal life.

Another New Testament passage which indicates the importance of ethical behavior for Christianity is the passage describing the Last Judgment [Matthew 25: 31-46]. In this passage, the final judgment of mankind is described as taking place not on the basis of Faith, nor of worship, nor of sacramental participation, but rather, on the basis of loving acts for the welfare of the neighbor. "In as much as ye have done these things unto these the least of my brethren, you have done unto me." Feeding the hungry, taking in the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, cannot be classified other than as ethical acts. One cannot deprecate this dimension of the Christian life as "mere moralizing," without having weight of both Holy Scripture and Holy tradition to contend with.

Thus from the beginning, Christianity has had clear-cut ethical dimensions. There seems to be, however, a constant struggle with in Christianity as to the importance of those ethical dimensions for the Christian life. There is need for a proper understanding of the ethical life in Christianity. It is a task of Orthodox Christian ethics to provide this understanding.

3.2. The importance of Studying ETHICS

Why should Christians study Christian ethics? That is, why should we engage in the process of collecting and summarizing the teachings of many individual Bible passages on particular ethical questions? Why is it not sufficient simply to continue reading the Bible regularly every day of our lives?

1. The Basic Reason. The basic reason that we should study ethics is to better know God's will for us. The New Testament tells us in several places that we should live in obedience to God's will. For example, Jesus taught that his followers should keep his commandments:

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name
of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe
all that I have commanded you. (Matt. 28:19-20)*

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. (John 14:15)

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept

my Father's commandments and abide in his love. (John 15:10; see also Rom.

13:9; 1 Cor. 7:19; 1 John 2:3-4; 3:22, 24; 5:2-3; Rev. 12:17; 14:12)

But in order to keep Jesus's commandments, we have to know what they are and understand how they apply to us today, including their Old Testament background and their further explanation in the New Testament Epistles. That is the study of Christian ethics. The New Testament Epistles also give instructions to readers that sound very much like calls to study ethics:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:2)

Try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. (Eph. 5:10)

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:9-11)

We have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Col. 1:9-10)

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge. (2 Pet. 1:5)

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. (1 John 5:3)

2. The Benefits That Come from Studying Christian Ethics. Someone might object at this point that, yes, Jesus and the New Testament writers tell us to learn and keep God's commandments, but why does that have to be done in this way, by collecting and studying groups of Bible texts that

bear on particular topics? Why (someone might object) can I not learn what God's will is, and learn about obeying Jesus's commandments, simply by reading through the Bible over and over? Why read a book on ethics or take a specific class in Christian ethics? In reply, I agree that there is great benefit in regular Bible reading, especially in reading completely through the entire Bible again and again. By doing this, many Christians throughout history have led wonderful lives that truly brought glory to God, showed love to other people, demonstrated high standards of personal integrity, and resulted in a spiritual harvest of much fruit for the kingdom of God.

However, there are significant benefits that come from studying ethical topics in a focused way *in addition to* reading the Bible straight through or just studying individual passages or books.

a. Gaining a More Accurate Understanding of Ethics: Every Christian reading this book already has a set of ethical convictions, opinions, and ideas about what is morally right and wrong. These ethical beliefs have come from various sources—from an internal moral instinct (which God gives to every human being: Rom. 1:32; 2:14–16), family training, schools, traditions, and cultural beliefs. Christians also have formed ethical beliefs from their own Bible reading, from listening to sermons, and from conversations with friends. But my hope is that this book will help Christians gain more accuracy in their ethical views, in three ways:

(1) Changing from Instinctive to Informed Ethical Convictions: I hope that Christians who already have ethical views that are consistent with Scripture will move from having *instinctive convictions* to having *well-informed convictions*. For example, a person reading chapter 21 might move from an instinctive conviction that abortion is morally wrong to a well-informed conviction, including knowledge of how various Bible passages and medical facts support that conviction. Such a reader would also gain a better understanding of some broader matters, such as how to apply different Scripture passages to various medical situations, and whether there are any situations to which the passages might not apply.

(2) Changing from Imprecise to Accurate Ethical Convictions: I hope that Christians who have a somewhat vague and *imprecise understanding* of

an issue (for example, divorce and remarriage, covered in chap. 32) will come to a more *accurate* and well-defined understanding of how the teachings of the Bible apply to that issue (for example, to various specific marriage, divorce, and remarriage situations).

(3) Changing from Unbiblical to Biblical Ethical Convictions: I hope that Christians who have an *incorrect understanding* of the Bible's moral standards (as I will argue many

Christians do with respect to lying and telling the truth, discussed in chap. 12) will be persuaded to change their views and come to a moral conviction that is more faithful to Scripture. Because of the large number of topics covered in a study of ethics and because of the great detail with which these topics are analyzed, it is inevitable that someone studying an ethics text or taking a course in ethics for the first time will have many personal beliefs challenged or modified, refined or enriched. It is of utmost importance, therefore, that each person beginning such a course firmly resolves in his or her mind to abandon as false any idea that is found to be clearly contradicted by the teaching of Scripture. But it is also important for each person to resolve not to believe any ethical position simply because this book or some other book or teacher says that it is true, unless the book or the instructor can convince the student from the text of Scripture itself. It is Scripture alone, not "conservative evangelical tradition" or the views of respected theologians or any other human authorities that must function as the normative authority for our understanding of what God approves.

b. Using Our Time Wisely: Because we have limited lifetimes here on earth, we simply do not have enough time to carry out a detailed study of an important ethical topic every time a question arises. For example, if someone wonders what the whole Bible teaches about marriage and divorce, I could tell him, "Just keep reading your Bible and you'll find out." But if this questioner begins reading at Genesis 1:1, it will be a long time before he finds the passages that address divorce in Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7, and by that time he will have many questions about other topics: animal sacrifices, capital punishment, wealth and poverty, and so forth. Because of these time limitations, if we are to learn what the whole

Bible teaches about ethical topics, we need to make use of the work of others who have searched through Scripture and proposed summaries on these various topics. Armed with such a study, I could send the person who asked me about divorce and remarriage to a list of about five key passages and one or two chapters in books that discuss that topic, and I could briefly summarize the common arguments for the two or three major positions. A basic overview and summary of that question can be read in an evening.

c. Preparing to Face Real-Life Temptations: Training in sound principles of biblical ethics is best done before we are suddenly faced with a temptation and have to make a decision quickly (for example, a temptation to accept a bribe or tell a lie). In the Bible,

Joseph had received some prior training in God's moral standards that gave him the resolve to flee immediately out of the house when Potiphar's wife grabbed his garment and said, "Lie with me" (Gen. 39:12). Jesus himself had "increased in wisdom" (Luke 2:52) throughout his childhood and had "learned obedience" (Heb. 5:8) during his first 30 years before he faced the temptations of Satan in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13).

Studying ethics in advance equips us to make wise ethical decisions when new situations suddenly confront us.

d. Gaining a Better Ability to Make Wise Ethical Decisions about New Matters Later:

Studying Christian ethics helps us to *make better decisions later* on new questions of ethics that arise. We cannot know what new ethical controversies will develop in the churches in which we will live and minister 10, 20, or 30 years from now, if the Lord does not return before then. These new ethical controversies will sometimes include questions that no one has examined very extensively before. Christians will be asking,

"What does the whole Bible say about this subject?"

Such new ethical questions seem to occur in every generation. For example, previous generations did not have to face questions about human cloning, embryonic stem cell research, surrogate motherhood, in vitro fertilization, methods of birth control, Internet privacy rights, and global warming. And questions about the roles of husbands and wives in marriage, and the roles

of men and women in the church, have been far more controversial since the 1960s than at any previous time in history.

Whatever new ethical controversies arise in future years, those who have learned

Christian ethics well (and also have learned systematic theology) will be much better able to address them. The reason for this is that everything that the Bible says is somehow related to everything else the Bible says (for it all fits together in a consistent way, at least within God's own understanding of reality, and in the nature of God and creation as they really are). Thus, the new questions will be related to much that has already been learned from Scripture. The more thoroughly we have learned that earlier material, the better able we will be to deal with new questions. A helpful analogy at this point is that of a jigsaw puzzle.¹⁸ If the puzzle represents what the whole Bible teaches us about every ethical question, then a course in Christian ethics represents filling in the border and several large sections of the puzzle. But we will never know everything that the Bible teaches about everything, so our jigsaw puzzle will have many gaps, many pieces that remain to be put in. Solving a new real-life problem is analogous to filling in another section of the jigsaw puzzle: the more pieces one has in place correctly to begin with, the easier it is to fit new pieces in, and the less apt one is to make mistakes. In this book the goal is to enable Christians to put into their "ethical jigsaw puzzle" as many pieces with as much accuracy as possible, and then to encourage them to go on putting in more and more correct pieces for the rest of their lives. The teachings found in this book will act as guidelines to help in the future as Christians continue to fill in other areas that pertain to all aspects of obedience to God in all aspects of life.

e. Growing toward Christian Maturity and Personal Holiness: There is no doubt in the minds of the New Testament authors that growing in our knowledge of biblical ethics, coupled with heartfelt obedience to what we are learning, is a major part of growing to maturity in our Christian faith. The author of Hebrews explains that mature Christians are those who have many years of practice in learning and obeying sound ethical teachings:

“But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (Heb. 5:14).

Paul tells believers that he wants them to grow in their ethical discernment and in their obedience:

As you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. . . . For this is the will of God, your sanctification. (1 Thess. 4:1-3)

A major part of growing in Christian maturity is growing in personal holiness of life, a New Testament emphasis that is too seldom heard in many churches today. The author of Hebrews tells Christians to

“strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).

Other passages also emphasize the need for Christians to grow in holiness of life:

Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (2 Cor. 7:1)

Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph. 4:24)

He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. (Heb. 12:10)

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness. (2 Pet. 3:11)

The more we know about God and what he asks of his children, the better we will pray for his help and wisdom, and the more readily we will obey him. Studying Christian ethics rightly will make us more mature Christians and will result in greater personal holiness in our lives. If it does not do this, we are not studying it in the way God intends.

f. Evangelism: When Christians live in the midst of secular cultures that excuse and even glorify all kinds of sin, it is easy for them to feel embarrassed about mentioning Christian ethical standards to unbelievers and to feel reluctant to preach about biblical moral standards in church, lest

non-Christians who are visiting become offended. But that is not the perspective of the Bible. God's moral standards are regularly told the people of Israel that the nations around them would hear of God's wise laws and would be amazed:

See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? (Deut. 4:5-8)

In the New Testament, the apostles often included a call to repent of sins in their evangelistic messages, as Paul did in his presentation to Greek philosophers in Athens:

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31)19

Peter knew that his hearers were often surrounded by hostile unbelievers who mocked and persecuted them, but he reminded them that their good conduct was a testimony that God would use to bring some of them to salvation (that is the most likely sense of "glorify God on the day of visitation"):

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (1 Pet. 2:11-12)

Proclamation of God's moral standards to unbelievers is an essential component of evangelism for two reasons: (1) Unless they know God's moral standards, unbelievers will not be convicted that they have sinned against those standards, and therefore they will not repent of their sins and will not be saved. Preaching about God's moral standards leads unbelievers to be convicted of their sins, repent of their sins, and call out to Christ for forgiveness (see John 16:8 on the Holy Spirit's role in this). (2) Unbelievers still have a conscience that, by God's common grace, often bears witness that the moral standards that they are mocking and violating are, in fact, *good and true moral standards* to which they will be held accountable (see Rom. 1:32; 2:14-15).

Therefore, Christians should not be embarrassed about the Bible but should joyfully teach and graciously advocate its moral teachings as good—in fact, *wonderful*—standards that come from God himself.

3.3 THE NEED FOR THE DISCIPLINE OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

For the Christian ethical life, there is need for reflection, Theological study and explication of the ethical dimensions of the Orthodox Christian faith. However, today, a study of the major resources in Orthodox Christian teaching as they apply both to the foundational principles of ethics as well as to their practical application in the life of the Church, is not merely an academic exercise. It is, as well, an imperative.

This imperative is not particularly in places and in times when the social milieu in which the church lives is stable, imbued with Christian spirit and based on a Christian world view. However, it is quite clear that the Orthodox Church does not enjoy such a status anywhere in the world today. In the communist dominated lands the church suffers a sometimes veiled, sometimes open persecution, coupled with sever and consistent propaganda attacks. In the western capitalist nations the secularistic spirit flies in the face of the Christian ethos, a confrontation perhaps even more insidious than the open opposition of the communistic ideology.

Other forces contribute as well to the lack of clarity and sureness about the content of Christian ethics. Among these are pluralism and rapid scientific advance. The isolate closed community is rapidly becoming a thing

of the past. Pluralism of culture, religions, and lifestyles is a fact of life in many nations, particularly as they become more and more urbanized. As Orthodox Christians join in this process, and contribute to it by their very presence, questions and problems arise which they have never had to face before. In such instances, proximity to others who hold to differing opinions and teachings previously considered “obvious” or “natural,” and consequently, unexamined.

Further, rapid scientific advances in our time have given totally new dimensions to some old issues and, in addition, raised problems for the behavior of Orthodox Christians which have never existed before. An example of the former is the influence of the awesome destructiveness of nuclear weapons on all Christian thinking regarding war. Example of the latter are the many advances in the sphere of medicine, including procedures such as artificial insemination, organ transplants, conception control methods, sex-change operations and genetic manipulation.

All of these factors and others as well, call for a careful examination of the fundamental principles as well as the specific guidelines for the living of the Orthodox Christian life. In other words, the need for Orthodox Christian ethical study and the development of the discipline is a spiritual imperative and a demand on the part of the church. Those who take seriously their Orthodox Christian commitment will, then, of necessity seek answer to a multitude of unresolved questions. But the answer may not be expressed in mere pronouncements. They must be theologically solid at their foundation, firm yet compassionate in their formulation, capable of application, and explicable either by identity or contrast in the terms of the societies, and value systems in which Orthodox Christians live. In short, there is a great need for an organized study of Orthodox Christian ethics.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Historical development of Orthodox Christian Ethics

Philosophy in its written and systematic form is attributed to the Greeks and hence ethical philosophy traces its origin to the Greeks too. Ethics is said to have started in the fifth century B.C and it was given its philosophical texture by Socrates who jostled men of his time into a living consciousness of their duty to live a life guided by rational criticism of their beliefs and practices. In his life and teachings, Socrates showed exemplary character. He displayed an uncompromising stand for what is upright and moral. It was for the cause of making good men out of ordinary men that he incurred the envy of people who subsequently plotted his death. He lived a strictly moral life. The same can be said of men in every culture who became great examples and inspirations for a viable moral life in the midst of a corrupt and misguided society. The teachings of Buddha Confucius and other great moral teachers readily come to mind.

The origin of morality may be difficult to trace. Right from creation, according to Biblical accounts, man was given a code of conduct comprised of dos and don'ts which were believed would guide him to attain peace and eternal bliss. However, with the fall of man from grace, he also lost his grip

on peace. Hence one can conclude that morality is as old as creation. The major Christian Ethics history is traditionally divided into two different periods:- these are the Old Testament era and the New testament era.

4.1. In the Old Testament period

In the Old Testament the history of Ethics is presented into four periods: These are the:-

(1) Edenic Era:- in the Old Testament primarily ethics is connected with the category of God's command. Such commands come already in the first chapter of Genesis. God created by command. for example 'Let there be light' (Gen. 1:3). Then, after the creation of animals, God gives the command, 'Be fruitful and multiply', and repeats the command to the humans he creates in the divine image (Gen. 1:22). In the second chapter God tells Adam that he is free to eat from any tree in the garden, but he must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When Eve and Adam disobey and eat of that fruit, they are expelled from the garden. God is setting up a kind of covenant by which humans will be blessed if they obey the commands God gives them. Human disobedience is started during the serpent says to Eve that they will not die if they eat the fruit, but will be like God, knowing good and evil, and Eve sees the fruit as good for food and pleasing to the eye and desirable for gaining wisdom. After they eat, Adam and Eve know that they are naked, and are ashamed, and hide from God. There is a turning away from God and from obedience to God that characterizes this as a 'fall into sin'. As the story goes on, and Cain kills Abel, evil spreads to all the people of the earth, and Genesis describes the basic state as a corruption of the heart (6:9). This idea of a basic orientation away from or towards God and God's commands becomes in the Patristic period of early Christianity the idea of a will.

(2) Noahic Era:- the covenant that God makes with Noah after the flood is applicable to the whole human race, and universal scope is explicit in the Wisdom books, which make a continual connection between how we should live and how we were created as human beings. For example, in Proverbs 8 Wisdom raises her voice to all humankind, and says that she detests wickedness, which she goes on to describe in considerable detail.

She says that she was the artisan at God's side when God created the world and its inhabitants. Judaism distinguishes seven 'Noahide' laws given to Noah before the covenant with Abraham.

(3) Patriarchal Era:- In the Pentateuch, the story continues with Abraham, and God's command to leave his ancestral land and go to the land God promised to give him and his offspring (Gen. 12:1-9). Then there is the command to Abraham to kill his son, a deed prevented at the last minute by the provision of a ram instead (Gen. 22:1-14). Abraham's great grandchildren end up in Egypt, because of famine, and the people of Israel suffer for generations under Pharaoh's yoke.

(4) Mosaic Era:- Under Moses the people are finally liberated, and during their wanderings in the desert, Moses receives from God the Ten Commandments, in two tables or tablets (Exod. 20:1-17, 31:18). The first table concerns our obligations to God directly, to worship God alone and keep God's name holy, and keep the Sabbath. The second table concerns our obligations to other human beings, and all of the commands are negative (do not kill, commit adultery, steal, lie, or covet) except for the first, which tells us to honor our fathers and mothers. God's commands taken together give us the law (on some lists there are 613 mitzvot, Hebrew for 'commands'.) The Ten Commandments are given in the context of a covenant with the people of Israel, though there are references to God's intention to bless the whole world through this covenant. The surrounding laws in the Pentateuch include prescriptions and proscriptions about ritual purity and sacrifice and the use of the land that seem to apply to this particular people in this particular place.

4.2 During New Testament Era

The history of Christian Ethics is usually divided into several parts; for this chapter we try to study it by dividing the periods as follows:-

(1) The Gospel /Jesus/The New Testament is unlike the Old Testament, however, in presenting a narrative about a man who is the perfect exemplification of obedience and who has a life without sin. New Testament; in any case the Christian doctrine is that we can see which Jesus did in his life the clearest possible revelation in human terms both of what

God is like and at the same time of what our lives ought to be like. In the 'Sermon on the Mount' (Matthew 5-7) Jesus issues a number of radical injunctions. He takes the commandments inside the heart; for example, we are required not merely not to murder, but not to be angry, and not merely not to commit adultery, but not to lust (see Ezekiel 11:19, 'I will give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes.') We are told, if someone strikes us on the right cheek, to turn to him also the left. Jesus tells us to love our enemies and those who hate and persecute us, and in this way he makes it clear that the love commandment is not based on reciprocity (Matt 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-36). Finally, when he is asked 'Who is my neighbor?', he tells the story (Luke 10) of a Samaritan (traditional enemies of the Jews) who met a wounded Jew he did not know by the side of the road, was moved with compassion, and went out of his way to meet his needs; Jesus commends the Samaritan for being 'neighbor' to the wounded traveler. The theme of self-sacrifice is clearest in the part of the narrative that deals with Jesus' death. This event is understood in many different ways in the New Testament, but one central theme is that Jesus died on our behalf, an innocent man on behalf of the guilty. Jesus describes the paradigm of loving our neighbors as the willingness to die for them. This theme is connected with our relationship to God, which we violate by disobedience, but which is restored by God's forgiveness through redemption.

(2) Acts & Epistles (Apostles) In Paul's letters especially we are given a three-fold temporal location for the relation of morality to God's work on our behalf. We are forgiven for our past failures on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice (Rom. 3:21-26). We are reconciled now with God through God's adoption of us in Christ (Rom. 8:14-19). And we are given the hope of future progress in holiness by the work of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:3-5). All of this theology requires more detailed analysis, but this is not the place for it.

(3) Early Christian era (1st Century-A.D. 590),

The Ancient or Patristic period history of Christian ethics may be from the end of the apostolic period. We find that these ethical discussions during the first three centuries take place in large contexts with special reference to dogmatic issues. In spite of that fact, there were serious

concerns with ethical questions by the early Fathers of the Church. These concerns arose from various causes. The criticisms directed against the Christians by both Jews and pagans gave opportunity to Christian apologists to respond. Some of these charges were of an ethical character and the responses which they elicited from the defenders of the faith argued for the ethical purity of the members of the church, their high idealism and the example of their teaching.

Another cause for the writing of ethical works during the fourth and fifth centuries was the weakening of Christian enthusiasm and life. The influx of new converts from paganism meant that the new converts brought their non-Christian life styles with them which had to be reformed and corrected. This became the cause for some writings on Christian ethics. Also, the specific ethical failures of Christians caused some legislation by the church. We have a number of canons by the church throughout the centuries of this period which deal with primarily ethical questions. In addition, we have seen the rise of the confessional on a personal basis, which required Father confessors to have some idea of moral questions and how to treat them.

Thus, in addition to the ethical teaching of the New Testament, which as we know was “occasional” that is, it dealt with specific situations as they arose and was not systematic – we have early Fathers (the Apostolic Fathers) dealing with ethical questions, such as Ignatius, in his epistle, Hermas and the Didache, the author of the Epistle to Diognetos. After the apologists reference should be made to Clement of Alexandria (Stromata, paidagogos, Who is the saved Man?). Origen made a contribution to ethics in his on prayer and his Logos ProtrepitikeisMartyrion. Also, of great importance for some parts of Christian ethics are the writings of Justin, the philosopher, Tertullian and Cyprian

The Eastern and Western parts of the Christian church split during the period, and the Eastern church remained more comfortable than the Western with language about humans being deified (in Greek theosis). In the Western church, Augustine (354–430) emphasized the gap between the world we are in as resident aliens and our citizenship in the heavenly

Jerusalem, and even in our next life the distance between ourselves and God. He describes in the Confessions the route by which his heart or will, together with his understanding, moved from paganism through Neo-Platonism to Christianity. The Neo-Platonists (such as Plotinus, 205-270) taught a world-system of emanation, whereby the One (like Plato's Form of the Good) flowed into Intellect (the realm of the Forms) and from there into the World-Soul and individual souls, where it encountered the realm of bodies, from where it returned to itself ('the flight of the alone to the alone'). Augustine accepted that the Platonists taught, like the beginning of the prologue of John, that the Word (in Greek, *logos*) is with God and is God, since the Intellect is the mediating principle between the One and the Many (John 1:1-5). Augustine held that Plato had asserted that the supreme good, possession of which alone gives us blessedness, is God, 'and therefore (Plato) thought that to be a philosopher is to be a lover of God.' (*De Civ. Dei* VIII.8). But the Platonists did not teach, like the end of John's prologue, that the Word is made flesh in Jesus Christ, and so they did not have access to the way to salvation revealed in Christ or God's grace to us through Christ's death. Nonetheless, it is surprising how far Augustine can go in rapprochement. The Forms, he says, are in the mind of God and God uses them in the creation of the world. Human beings were created for union with God, but they have the freedom to turn towards themselves instead of God. If they turn to God, they can receive divine illumination through a personal intuition of the eternal standards (the Forms). If they turn towards themselves, they will lose the sense of the order of creation, which the order of their own loves should reflect. Augustine gives primacy to the virtue of loving what ought to be loved, especially God. In his homily on I John 4:8, he says, 'Love and do what you will.' But this is not a denial of the moral law. He held that humans who truly love God will also act in accord with the other precepts of divine and moral law; though love not merely fulfills the cardinal virtues (wisdom, justice, courage and temperance) but transforms them by supernatural grace.

The influence of Augustine in the subsequent history of ethics resulted from the fact that it was his synthesis of Christianity (the official religion of

the Roman Empire after 325) and Greek philosophy that survived the destruction of the Western Roman Empire, especially in the monasteries where the texts were still read.

(4) Medieval Era (A.D. 590-1517),

Thomas Aquinas (c. 1224–74) undertook the project of synthesis between Aristotle and Christianity, though his version of Christianity was already deeply influenced by Augustine, and so by Neo-Platonism. Aquinas, like Aristotle, emphasized the ends (vegetative, animal and typically human) given to humans in the natural order. He described both the cardinal virtues and the theological virtues of faith, hope and love, but he did not feel the tension that current virtue ethicists sometimes feel between virtue and the following of rules or principles. The rules governing how we ought to live are known, some of them by revelation, some of them by ordinary natural experience and rational reflection. But Aquinas thought these rules consistent in the determination of our good, since God only requires us to do what is consistent with our own good. Aquinas's theory is eudaimonist; 'And so the will naturally tends towards its own last end, for every man naturally wills beatitude. And from this natural willing are caused all other willings, since whatever a man wills, he wills on account of the end.' (Summa Theologiae I, q.60. a.2) God's will is not exercised by arbitrary fiat; but what is good for some human being can be understood as fitting for this kind of agent, in relation to the purpose this agent intends to accomplish, in the real environment of the action, including other persons individually and collectively. The principles of natural moral law are the universal judgments made by right reasoning about the kinds of actions that are morally appropriate and inappropriate for human agents. They are thus, at least in principle and at a highly general level, deducible from human nature. Aquinas held that reason, in knowing these principles, is participating in the eternal law, which is in the mind of God (Summa Theologiae I, q.91. a.2). Aquinas was not initially successful in persuading the church to embrace Aristotle. In 1277 the Bishop of Paris condemned 219 propositions (not all Thomist), including the thesis that a person virtuous in Aristotle's terms 'is sufficiently disposed for eternal happiness.' But in the Counter-Reformation,

the synthesis which Aquinas achieved became authoritative in Roman Catholic education.

(5) After Reformation Theology (from 1517 to post modern era),

Many of the central figures in the Reformation were humanists in the Renaissance sense (where there is no implication of atheism). But there is also a fundamental similarity in the way the relation between morality and religion is conceived between Scotus and the two Reformers Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-64), though neither of them make the distinctions about natural law that Scotus (the 'subtle doctor') does. Luther says 'What God wills is not right because he ought or was bound so to will; on the contrary, what takes place must be right, because he so wills.' (Bondage of the Will, Works, pp. 195-6). Calvin says 'God's will is so much the highest rule of righteousness that whatever he wills, by the very fact that he wills it, must be considered righteous' (Institutes 3. 23. 2).

The next centuries in the West philosophy can be described in terms of two lines of development, rationalism and empiricism, both of which led, in different ways, to the possibility of a greater detachment of ethics from theology. The history of rationalism from René Descartes (1596-1650) to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) is a history of re-establishing human knowledge on the foundation of rational principles that could not be doubted, after modern science started to shake the traditional foundations supported by the authority of Greek philosophy and the church. Descartes was not primarily an ethicist, but he located the source of moral law (surprisingly for a rationalist) in God's will.

The most important rationalist in ethics was Benedict de Spinoza (1623-77). The rationalists were not denying the centrality of God in human moral life, but their emphasis was on the access we have through the light of reason rather than through sacred text or ecclesiastical authority. Few of them are:- Thomas Hobbes (1588-1649) , John Locke (1632-1704) , William Wollaston, (1659-1724) , Frances Hutcheson (1694-1746) Joseph Butler (1692-1752, Bishop of Bristol and then of Durham) David Hume (1711-76) e.t.c.