

Social And Christian Ethics

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ABSTRACT

It is worse than useless for Christians to talk about the importance of Christian morality, unless they are prepared to take their stand upon the fundamentals of Christian theology. Christian doctrine is what sets Christian ethics apart from the ethics of the world around us. It is doctrine that explains why and how Jesus' words and deeds have divine rather than purely human authority. We must never be afraid to be different from the world around us.

INTRODUCTION

The Christian socialism movement is usually thought to have begun in the 19th century. It has often been said that the experiment in Acts 2:44-45 of holding all things in common is the first Christians socialist experiment. The commitment to such themes can be found in the early fathers and in the development of the monastic movement.

Robert Owen's (1771-1858) social experiments at New Lanark marked the first 19th century attempt at a form of socialist organization. There were some clergy who took an interest in it. The Christian social union, founded in 1889, was much more respectable of it. It was less concerned with direct action than with establishing social principles from Christian faith. The Christian socialist movement continues to this day. The Christian socialist group and movement today maintain the belief that the proper contemporary political and social form of the gospel is to be found within socialist thought and practice. All ethics is to do with human conduct.

The special concern of Christian ethics is to relate an understanding of God to the conduct of men and women and, more specifically, to explore the response to God which Jesus Christ requires. This article will focus on the distinctive features of Christian's ethics as seen from the standpoint of biblical theology. (For a broader perspective, see moral Theology). According to A.B. Michael banner (2009). Christian social ethics evaluates moral quality of the relation between social groups. It is also a term which is correct from a philosophy of science point of view and has, by now, become usual to describe the ethical discipline within the range of subjects of protestant and catholic theology which reflect systematically on the question of the justice of institutions of human society. In his famous essay "The will to Believe," psychologist William James makes it clear that there are some choices in life that cannot be avoided. In matter of morality, politics, and religion, we must make conscious choices made.

The one thing I am here to say to you is this; that it is worse than useless for Christians to talk about the importance of Christian morality, unless they are prepared to take their stand upon the fundamentals of Christian theology. Works such as Jeffrey stout's Ethics after Babel destroyed the credibility of the idea of a "universal morality".

To make this point we may consider two highly acclaimed works on the theme of Christian ethics; Oliver O' Donovan's Resurrection and moral order, and John Mahoney's the making of moral theology. Despite differences between the two authors, one theme emerges as of major importance: Ethics rests upon doctrine. The foundations of secular ethics are in serious disarray. The notion of some universal morality valid at all places in space and time has lost credibility. Secular ethics has been fascinated by the notion of moral obligations, based on the Kantian notion of a sense of moral obligation. So there is a need to be able to develop foundations for ethics.

Weber's studies of the role of the prophetism and charisma, his fourfold typology of the relation of religious groups to the world. Social scientific and historical typologies are not able to do full justice to individual traditions or nor do they take adequate account of the denominational and laicized character of contemporary society. From the point of view of biblical social ethics, the two activities of prayer and evangelism must not be under-estimated as strategies for social change. Basic to the Judeo - Christian world-view is the conviction that God participates and intervenes in human history; party, at least, in response to the prayer of his people. Prayer is thus, among other things, a political and social activity of great importance. While social ethics is concerned primarily with corporate and structural good and evil, it is partly by means of individual moral agents that corporate, institutional reality is affected. Evangelism, among things, brings about social change by means of the transformation of social actors, individual moral agents. Intentionally, Christian business, schools, political groups and other associations are other means by which this strategy may be employed. It's a resource not only for discernment but for social action.

Biblical Christian social ethics, in both discernment and implementation, defines easy categorization as deontological (doing what is right without regard to consequences or teleological (the end justifies the means) ethics.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The English words, ethics ethical etc. are derived from the Greek 'ethics' meaning custom, habit or conduct. The science of ethics, which usually treated as a sub-section of philosophy seeks, to evaluate human conduct and the rules and principles used to control it.

The English words, morals, morality etc. have similar meaning, but are derived from the Latin, *Mors*, *mores*, meaning habit, custom, manner of living etc. ethics is concerned

with conscious and purposeful behavior and with the obligations and rules that relate to it. It aims to discover what factors make actions good or bad, right or wrong both for individuals and for social groups. It is concerned with both theory and practice. Ethicist theories about what ought to be done and those, with varying degrees of success, attempt to show how their theories can be worked out in practice.

They focus their attention not just on actual actions but also on what goes on in the minds of those who perform them. Their various emphases are to some degree highlighted by the vocabulary they are.

The vocabulary of ethical study:

1. Right and wrong: These terms assume that an action or an intended action is compared with some standard of morality outside of the action itself. The standard could be a matter of social or traditional custom or of national or religious law. The idea of a standard showing what is right or wrong has produced much debate and a number of interesting, some which are briefly introduced.
2. Good and bad (evil). To say an action is “good” or bad goes beyond its mere rightness or wrongness and passes a judgment on its quality and often at the same time, on the quality of the person performing it. His inner state of mind, his desires, motives, intensions etc, are either approved or censured. While an action can be right in the sense that it conforms to a tradition or a law, if the motives that produce it are selfish or unworthy, it is not a good action. In the New Testament the Pharisees gave alms to the poor, Jesus called what they did acts of righteousness (Matt. 6:1). He was saying that they were doing what was right but nonetheless their actions were bad, because their motives were not to help the poor but to call public attention to themselves.
3. Motivation: Motives are the desires and the intensions that move a person to action. Desire is an inner awareness of some goal. Which if it were to be achieved

would make the individual concerned happy or bring him satisfaction or a feeling of being righteous. Intention has in view the result we hope to achieve through on action. A good intention can make an action moves valuable than it otherwise would have been but it cannot turn a bad or immoral action into a good one.

4. **Obligation/Duty:** This is what is due by the individual in order to meet some moral necessity. It could be duty in relation to a moral standard imposed by custom or religion or in relation to the inner promptings of what is known as conscience or to both together.

5. **Conscience:** This is the faculty within us that judges our actions or our intended actions and which seek to direct us towards right actions. It is an activity of the mind that depends on knowledge to function properly. (The English word, conscience, combines the Latin cum, meaning “Together with” and scientia, meaning knowledge).

Conscience is thus based on knowledge and needs education if it is to function properly, normally, through the influence of families, peer groups and wider communities, it is educate to socially accepted standards that may or may not have an active or a latent religious content.

From a Christian standpoint, it needs to be said that, while conscience is not of itself the voice of God, it can be and often is the channel through which God, speaks to us. It also needs to be pointed out that as Paul makes clear, conscience can be scared and give misleading judgment it can even be silenced.

Secular approaches to Ethics

In the modern world there is much confusion about the difference between right and wrong and even about whether there is any such difference! Secular ethical study today is approached from several standpoints. For example:

1. Rationalism: This assumes that man's reasoning powers are fully adequate to enable him to make right decisions about his behavior. It was on this assumption that the ancient Greek Philosopher, Socrates, maintained that knowledge is virtue. He argued that gaining knowledge by education is the key to virtuous living. The German Philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is a famous who advanced the idea of a categorical imperative, which said-Act only can that maxim which you can at the same time will to become a universal law. To decide if an action (e.g. stealing) is moral a person should think have what would happen if everyone did it.
2. Existential relation: This is a philosophy that finds truth and reality in the experience of the moment rather than as the product of history or reason, the horrible word "Omnicide" meaning the death of everything living was coined. With such a prospect there seemed no point.

In worrying about moral standards or about tomorrow. Tomorrow might not happen so the best thing would be to make the most of the present. Thus the Epicurean approach to life-Eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die, came back with a vengeance. The individual was seen as a free agent set in a seemingly meaningless universe. He could find meaning only as he made use of the moment of time of which he was assured namely the moment that actually existed as he thought or spoke. That moment alone had real existence (hence the name, existentialism) and in it the individual was regarded as having complete freedom to control his or her own life.

Such a philosophy admits of moral obligation, no goals, no models to be copied, and no ideals to which an individual is obliged to conform. Ethics, it argues, can at most describe or analyze moral concepts but cannot even attempt to define what morality should be, man is to be himself and do his own thing, if other individuals do different

things so be it! Morality is then relative to such person or on a broader can vas to each particular cultural unit.

Many modern philosophers and many individuals believe that each person must create his own moral code and is responsible only to himself. He must not see himself as under obligation to a supreme God or to absolute laws of right or wrong. Morality is thus entirely relative to the interest of the individual or the group in the situation existing for him or for it at the moment.

Western education has been considerably influenced by these ideas and now tends to be value-neutral in matters ethical. As a result children are often left in a moral vacuum! The relativists cannot make to measure or evaluate any action and make concepts like better or worse, higher or lower, progress or regress meaningless.

3. Post Modernism: This is the philosophy that dominates thought in the western world at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This influences education and the media. It questions and undermines traditional values, whatever their sources and it challenges and dismisses Christian teaching and Christian absolutes. It pervades modern society and whether we like it or not it influence our children and our grandchildren and it probably influence each one of us to some degree.

Some postmodernists go as far as to say that there is no such thing as truth. All we have or can have are interpretation, your interpretation. My interpretation and the other person's interpretation. The emphasis is not on reality but on interpretation, on the interpreter rather than on truth. Each person speaks the truth as he sees in his own situation and nothing that anyone says is universally true or valid. There is no belief in divine revelation, no belief that God has set parameters for human behavior. Biblical basis morality has been swept away.

Every belief, every moral obligation is purely a matter of individual choice. One person's interpretation of these things is as valid as that of anyone else. Self-autonomy is at the heart of this philosophy on one no set of laws can tell me what I should not do-I am my own master. What matters for the postmodernist is that the individual is free of all rules and free to make his or her own choices and to find personal happiness and fulfillment as he or she pleases. Each one should therefore seek success and prosperity without the restrictions imposed by any laws or rules, religious, or otherwise. Virtues like humility and self-sacrifice are at a discount. "If you desire something, go for it has become the motto of many.

Theories about moral standards:

1. Fittingness theories: There say that the righteous or wrongness of an action or a contemplated action depends on how it fits in with some factor or with some set of factors outside of itself. Technically these are known as "deontological theories, a designation that derives from the Greek word, Deon meaning what is needful due or proper.

In general the factor or factors with which actions are compared and by which they are judged are two types. They involve either a set of rules (laws) or the demands of the specific situation in which an action takes places on this view each person is regarded as under a duty to act in a way that harmonizes with a rule or with the needs of a situation.

(i) Fitting rules or laws:

(a). Customary and national laws throughout history people have understood the moral standard, to which they had to conform, to be a collection of written or unwritten laws. One of the earliest written codes of law is that attributed to Hammurabi around 1800BC.

African societies have customary law while religious communities have law which they tend to regard as originating with a deity, Jews find them in the laws of the Old Testament and in the Talmud, while Muslims use the Koran; Christians see them as laws of God and of Christ as revealed in the Bible. Modern states have developed national laws, which require their citizens to behave in particular ways, like paying taxes or driving vehicles on either the right-hand or the left-hand side of the road. What must be recognized by Christians is that obeying such laws is not the same as obeying God's laws. To put it another way what is legal is not always moral.

(b). Natural Laws: Some secular thinkers say laws about behavior are written on the human heart as part of what they call the nature of things. Scripture has of course a doctrine of law (Rom. 2:14-16). Romans Catholics make more of "natural law" than do Protestants. They tend to follow Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who taught that human reason was such that men could work out and prove the existence of God as a "first cause" from observing the created world. This was known as his "natural theology and was soon extended to ethics in the form of natural law".

This law is said to be of universal validity unchanging and unchangeable and readily recognized by men. The law written on the heart and transmitted from generation to generation. Men are therefore regarded as having an innate capacity that enables them to recognize and pursue goodness and reject evil. In Catholic thought natural law acts, then as an authority additional to scripture and church tradition.

Natural law tends, however, to be expressed in rather vague generalizations, which are often difficult to apply specifically to the personal and moral problems ordinary men and women have to face. At the same time it tends to produce an emphasis on rights that can encourage a selfish pursuit of one's own or one's community rights to the neglect of

the duty to uphold the rights of others guidance of absolute laws and of universal principles is needed.

Fitting Specific situations (Situation Ethics). Those who adopt this view regard an action as right or wrong on the basis of how it does or does not fit the situation in which it takes place. What matters ethically is the way we react to the circumstances of that situation. The result is an individualistic “born-of-the-situation ethic that can ignore all other standards of morality, situation ethics ignores all other standards and in the end destroys all the inherited wisdom of the past No.-one can be guided by a custom, a rule, a law or by an example from earlier times. Everyone does what he thinks is right in the situation of the moment.

On the situation ethics the individual is the final judge of what is right and the basis of both social and biblical morality is destroyed. Similarly, society can neither be commended nor condemned because there is no standard by which it can be judged. Some professed Christians have adopted a slightly modified situation ethic position for the Christian love is defined by biblical values and biblical laws. Those values require certain attitudes and actions like giving practical care to neighbor. They rule out actions that could harm others. The idea of love without such definitions being the standard of morality is inadequate and essentially uncertain.

Consequentialist (Utilitarian) Theories these take several forms but in general say that the rightness or goodness of actions is to be judged by their consequence that is by what they achieve. Actual result are more important than intended ones, right actions are those that are useful (have utility, hence the name). Utilitarianism is producing ends thought to be good. Good consequences are thought of in terms of maximizing human

wellbeing but anticipating or measuring this is virtually impossible. On these theories good consequences are thought of in a variety of ways: They can focus on:

- * What is useful for oneself: This is known as Egotistic or Egotistical Utilitarianism, because it is concerned only with personal benefit or personal happiness.
- * What benefits most people: This is Altruistic Utilitarianism and is generally regarded as more attractive than the egotistical variety because it tends to inject something of the idea of “justice for all” into that of utility.
- * Gaining Pleasure: This is called hedonistic Utilitarianism. It can be either egotistical (the only worthwhile consequences is one’s own pleasure) or altruistic (the good consequence is the pleasure of others).
- * Fulfilling High Ideals: this is known as idealistic Utilitarianism. Its advocates concern themselves with ensuring that their actions and those of others are such as express ideals like love, virtue, beauty etc.
- * Maintaining a minimum of Rules: there are some utilitarian’s who try to improve the image of consequentist ethics by using a small number of moral rules that seek to limit self-indulgence and for injustice these are called “rule-utilitarian” from a Christian perspective it has to be said that:-
- * Utilitarianism can negate justice utilitarian (Consequentialist) theories tend to encourage the idea that “the end justifies the means “Thus if an action that in itself would be unjust or otherwise unacceptable, can be useful in producing a desirable end, his thought to be right. What works for an individual or for a social group is regarded as morally right. On utilitarian premises an innocent person for example, could be punished on a false charge in order to deter others and if some deterrence occurred the punishment would be adjusted useful and right, similarly weapons of mass destructions can be used in war and if they produce victory for the using nation, their use is judged to have been right. On other theories such actions would be regarded as a serious denial of

justice and grossly immoral. For the utilitarian what is disliked (justice) can be ignored while what is favored (utility) is encourage!.

* Utilitarianism falls short of the Christian ideal the lack of emphasis on moral absolutes and justice is good reason for regarding consequentialist or utilitarian theories as inadequate and less than Christian.

LIBERATION AND GRATITUDE

Why Christian Ethics?

In our course on ethics (from the Greek work ethos “custom conduct), we deal with the concrete steps of Christian discipleship after having seen what God has done among men to advance his kingdom we try to understand how men should respond by doing the good by ordering their everyday affairs and so become co-workers in the promotion of the kingdom. Our intention on basic ethics is to relate faith to action so that we can test our insight in various situations.

Dogmatic and Ethics:

We want to “apply” the Gospel we know that any description of Christian ethics will vary in given time and circumstances the more we try to “Contextualize” our efforts, that is to apply the message to specific situations. Therefore an ethic in the African context may reveal differences as well as similarities to that in a western setting however, any such differences must not lead to dissension but can be done within a ecumenical fellowship of churches and may actually enliven their dialogue. In our application of the Gospel we enquire about a way leading from theory to practice. This does not leave the Gospel behind, but brings it in as a primary reference for our decisions. In the way we lead our life is revealed how much we have understood of our faith.

In this sense Christian ethics is basically theology and not simply a Christian version of applied general science like psychology, sociology or philosophy. As in all other matter of faith, so also in ethics, we rather depend on God's revelation and on the guidance of his Holy Spirit. Naturally ethics should then are part of dogmatic it in matters of doctrine, we deal with faith and understanding then ethics are concerned with what follows namely faith and doing. Both aspects like justification and sanctification belong together only for outward reasons of order do we treat ethics in a separate course.

Autonomous Ethics?

Ethics is part of theology. But here we already hesitate. Is not ethical behaviour a general human accomplishment? Has not every man his moral code and at least source remnants of a moral conscience? Is not a decent life pretty much a matter of tradition and upbringing combined with the application of common sense? Why is theology needed for ethics if everyone knows with more or less clarity what is good or bad? As a matter of fact in all religions the various duties were regarded as the guardians of moral. In Africa for instance, the ancestors control the use of property the relations of the sexes and the attitude of the children to their parents. The community which depended on the favour of the spirits and the living-dead assigned to each member his role and way of behavior. In fact all over the world morality and religion support one another and there are laws and orders enhanced by divine sanction. Even where man have tried to get rid of these religious sanctions and affirmed their autonomy they still knew about right or wrong. The stoics for instance relied for their ethical conduct on experiences on common sense (they greatly valued the so-called "Golden Rule") and on Lagos-reason by which natural laws could be found and followed. Religion become something which adult responsible men did not need any more for ordering their life. Likewise the philosophical trend of idealism tried to separate ideas of the good from traditional

religious support and build up a system of independent, self-evident values thereby following the famous Greek philosopher Plato. Since the age of enlightenment (Rousseau's Kant) Idealism has progressed even further on its way of establishing an autonomous ethic (this is described in details by N.H.S. on Christian ethics in Ch. 6).

How can the good be recognized?

When we say that ethics is theology then we admit against the above mentioned voices that (a) faith and action cannot be separated and (b) that we do not really know by ourselves what is the good. Rather, God must come to us and make his will known to us. In the same way as we cannot understand the Gospel without human reason so, we cannot recognize the demands which it contains.

Whatever men claim a natural knowledge of the good we point to the revelation in Christ. Wherever men claim the information of their reason or at their conscience we have to rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But were not communities, guided by traditional religious, well ordered by the laws of the time? Indeed passages like Rom. 1:18ff and 17:24ff, suggest that there is natural knowledge of good and bad among non-Christian so that they are to be held responsible. However, some theologians have used these verses to allow the philosophies of stoics or idealists to enter into theology.

Consequently, they speak of the image of God in man not being affected by sin not faith building upon the foundation of reason and natural law, or they distinguish between general and special revelation. Only an optimistic view of man which disregards the extent of sin and a minimized view of what Christ did to save man, can agree to such a compromise between theology and philosophy between general human ethic and Christian ethics.

In fact in Roman, I we read that the knowledge of God actually did not lead to obedience and salvation but rather to disobedience and judgment, a possibility did not

become a reality and even then it is the gospel that reveals the hopeless conditions of Jews and gentiles: Romans 1:18ff cannot be separated from 1:17 what others may know by custom to be good may appear in a totally new light once it is exposed to the demands of the gospel.

Human ethics and Christian ethics

We have made a fairly distinction between humans ethics and Christian ethics. We knew that this NT concept of man is not very popular. There are those what at this point do not follow the reformers, but lean more to the catholic tradition which holds a more positive view about man's faculties. Others may object with a view to African religious and philosophy. Coming from these such distinctions between nature and grace do not seem to be in line with a unified world- view. An ethics of decision between the old man and the new man looks "foreign" to people who are guided by standards which a whole community follows. Thirdly there are those who see the churches in Africa living in fatal isolation. Must Christians not show greater solidarity with the non-believers? Why then such theological distinctions between Christian and non- Christian ethics? For us there is no other way but to recognize the good from what God's word tell us. We believe that not by simple adaptation and compromise by preserving the distinctly Christian character of our faith can we make a helpful contribution to ethical problems in Africa A dialogue profits by stating the differences, not why observing them. This does not means retreat into a ghetto. Also we plead for involvement and solidarity with man of other faiths. On this way there will also be agreements. Wherever non-Christian have been able to build up a decent system of morals which comes close to the demands of the gospel there we shall gladly honour their achievements. The Christians faith does not destroy human nature but confirms all that is good and decent.

Even in the age of sin God did not want to leave his creation in total chaos, human ethics do help to preserve some order and justice. In fact, we have to learn a lot from traditional morals. In some instances Christians have been able to show signs of their new life; in other the followers of traditional religion were examples to them. We Christian do not add something to what plain human reason also may know. Rather we aim to human reason being transformed and enlightened by God's will.

So there is a "yes" and a "No" to human ethics.

Liberation:

To be a servant of Christ means liberation this we regard as a basic sentence for Christian ethics liberated men when presenting their bodies as a living sacrifice carry with them the hope of liberation for the World. They know that this world is in the end not made free by human planning but by the power of the spirit (see & Rom. 8:26), consequently their sacrifice is spiritual worship. Ethics of liberation is the ethics of the cross. In the name of the cross we do not submit to suffering but we point to the way out onwards towards resurrection.

Gratitude:

Looking at this from a different angle the ethics of liberation can also be described as an ethics of gratitude being grateful is a response of joy which wants to gladden a partner. Gratitude not only presupposes a gift as much but much more the whole attitude of love on the side of the giver who means to accept the other as a person. An attitude of "I give that you may give in turn" is not gratitude although it is deeply rooted in man's ideas of a balance of power. Gratitude is possible where the partner gives himself in his gift. Gratitude looks beyond a gift in as much as one's own gratitude is caused by the other. My gratitude accepts the giver of a gift within my life.

It is clear from here that gratitude is no mere feeling or sentiment, but shows itself in actions faith as gratitude is the free action of man and not of God. Gratitude is allowed to man and God does not need any balance of payment. True, what man does is merely a sign. God remains a sovereign in his grace. Burt man's freedom is the joy in which he as a child and covenant partner reenacts God's election. We are grateful for being deemed worthy to act as co-workers. Our answer of gratitude finds its expression work and worship in praise and in deed.

Gratitude is the restitution of an analogy between God and man (the image of God) man's action henceforth corresponds to what has happened to him. This is in fact so much that he is induced to present his 'body' that is all of himself. This is his doing as well as it is proof of what is the will of God.

Marriage:

Marriage is not a specifically Christian Institution. It is God's gift to mankind and for the Christian has its basis in the fact that at creation God ordained that a man and a woman come together and become one flesh. (Gen. 2:24).

An institution for all peoples throughout the world marriages unite men and women and bring about the creation of new family units just as the creation ordained prescribed and envisaged (Gen. 1:"27-28, 2:24). A man leaves his parents to be joined to a wife and a woman has to do the same to be joined to a husband (cf 45:10). A number of steps arise in the process of establishing a marriage but of course vary from one community to another. In some cases they lack some of the essential demanded by scripture but nonetheless real marriages take place and have to be recognized as such in many parts of the world marriage are arranged by the parents of the couple. In societies where this is the norm such marriages often develop very successfully and the couple become happy with and dependent on each other. In order circles what is called "romance" is the

dominant factor as boy and girl find themselves attracted to each other as kindred spirits. In that case factors like social class age compatibility, intelligence, education and religion play a part as each become delighted with the other decides that they went to share life together.

Every society has customs or rituals through which they recognize a couple as married, some involve the family of the husband-to-be- in paying an agreed bride-price which would probably have to be refunded if the marriage should happen to break up, others require the bride's family to provide a dowry which she takes with her into the marriage. In western societies these customs have largely been dropped but it is customary for substantial presents to be given by relatives and friends of both spouses. The actual formalizing of the marriage usually involves a feast or a series of feasts. In which the families of both parties and their friends take part to affirm their new relationship as in-law.

In addition there is a formal ceremony of some kind at which the couple are declared "man and wife" and are authorized by their families and/or by the law in their land to live together as man and wife. This gives them a new status as married persons. It provides a stable environment in which they can carry on the business of living and working and of providing such an environment for any children their union might produce. That status is different from what would obtain if they simply lived together on an informal basis in which case they would be neither single nor married but rather in a state of uncertainty.

Marriage does, of course require the couple to live together in the same home and in a sharing of their economic resources. Such cohabitation will also involve sexual union

which is in fact socially authorized by virtue of the marriage having been formally initiated. In most societies sexual intercourse is supposed to be restricted to the couple but there are some that allow some element of sexual freedom to the husband or to both spouse marriage to move that one spouse (polygamy) is often allowed but is mostly a privilege given to men. It is known technically as polygamy. Under Islamic law, for example, a Muslim man can have up to four wives at the same time. In a small number of people groups in which men work in a way that demands long absence from home, women are allowed to have more than one husband. This is known as polyandry, customary or civil law are real marriages but from a Christian stand point they are likely to fall short of or even to run counter to what scripture requires. It is to scripture and its presentation of God's requirements for marriage that we now turn our attention.

CHRISTIANS AND POLITICS:

A few years after independence, people who have been brought together in one of the new African states still feel that the state is something recent. Previous loyalties go deep, the task of bringing citizens together for one political purposes is as urgent as it was decades or two ago. Christians need to help in nation building some of the more conservative believes would like to keep faith and politics apart although Christ's kingdom is finally not of this world, we believe that Christian responsibility extends from the personal to the realm of politics. We want to view to the African situation and Christian contribution to peace and towards political liberation. Politics is the science of concentration on economics which dwells on the efforts of harnessing an equitable appropriation of care human and material resources politics is a inevitable part of life. All aspects of human life the individual the family the local community the state and nation are governed by politics and political leadership. Democracy is based on a division of power and on a wide recognition of individual rights. Parties are initiated by

the people they usually formulate a programme and try to put it into practice for welfare. The clearer of their programmes the better the citizens can distinguish the alternative the better can government and opposition do their work. Democracy lives on a dialogue and on discussion. It was the party organizations and their devoted leaders who set in motion the strife for independence who today are putting forward the national objective for development parties continue to be vital. For the training leaders as well as for the masses to gain political maturity. Unfortunately there are also ugly sides of party politics like rigged elections corruption we spoke of this in connection with the nature of work nepotism and tribalism this has disillusioned many who today regard politics as dirty business. We do not support their view although the church as a whole should not form a Christian party and endorse only one party she should nevertheless encourage members to become active. Democratic principles were well known in African political systems of the past. The power of chiefs was often balanced by the council of elders a chief ruling by consent and by being the representative of all the people. What politics is after God created the world we read in Genesis 1:26-28 that he commanded mankind to govern or rule over it in the sense of maintaining and taking care of it as we read in Genesis 2:15 from this we can say that for the Holy Bible, politics is that art of leading people in such a way that the person who governs and the governed are not burdened or worn out in the process. It is the art of lifting off the burden of the governed or the led without putting much strain on them and the leader and it is the art of freeing the led from any form of manmade frustration be it intentional or unintentional.

The constant quest to satisfy the yearnings of the people is the pre occupation of the leadership rather than anything else. This is not farfetched from what we read from the great ancient Greek politicians, Aristotle concerning politics is the “science of man’s

welfare or happiness as a whole” and the working out of how this happiness should be secured for the good of a given people through whatever form of government and social institutions deemed appropriate (Aristotle, *Politics* P. XVIII Yamsat, 2Vo1, P.8). In other words, politics is the ability to manage public or governmental affairs for the common good or for the enhancement of the lives of all in a given state or nation and not the ability to mass the wealth and power to oneself to the detriment of the majority of the people, as Nigerian politicians are known to do. The negative understanding of politics we therefore see today is contrary to what politics is meant to be. It is because of the secular and oppressive nature of politics in modern times politics has simply defined as “the science and art of governmental affairs” in which “factional scheming for power and status” after using crafty or unprincipled methods “(New world dictionary of the American Language). It is the sinful nature of humankind that has turned what God mean for the good of all to be manipulated by a few for the good of all to be manipulated by a few for the said of a few powerful among us and male it into a norm. The church therefore, has a moral duty to take us back to what God instituted political leadership for the orderliness and securing of his creation.

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ETHICS

The aim of social ethics is to clarify the underlying values and principles which should inform practical understanding of and responses to social matters. Christians will approach the task by seeking help in identifying such perspectives from Christian faith and through.

Public policy, politics, economics war, poverty education racism, ecology and crime. These are example of the subject matter of social ethics. The task social ethics can best be understood in contrast to other related fields. In contrast to social history studies,

what was the situation in the past and social science, what is the situation social ethics is concerned with what ought to be with the values and nouns against which the past and present are to be judged, while social ethics has a task distinctive from these of social history and social science, it cannot be successful in this endeavour without an ongoing interaction with these related fields. Social ethics includes reflection both on the problem of analysis and discernment of the social good and on the problem of strategy and implementation of the social good. Just as dogmatic theology exists to serve the church in its proclamation and worship, social ethics exists to serve the world by means of social reforms that will bring it into closer conformity to what is just, good and right no individual behavior is without social implication, no social situation or problem is without individual repercussions.

As in the case of personal ethics, social ethics address two general sets of questions (each of which has discernment and an implementation aspect. This first has do with being (character) and the second with doing (specific decision and action). For social ethics and evil are not located merely in individual moral agents or in specific decision and actions. For Christian social ethics, however, it is essential to recognize that the subject matter of social ethics has received great attention throughout the bible from genesis to revelation. So too, most leaders and teachers of the Christian church over the past two millennia have given attention to social ethics, even if the label itself has not been employed. A contemporary Christian ethics should be rooted in and governed by Holy Scriptures as the word of God. The first task of Christian social ethics is the analysis of structures and situations and the discernment of good and evil in relation to these.

Revelation and observation, Christian social ethical analysis proceeds in dialectic between revelation, the word of God “from above” and observation and experience from below”. A sociological realism must probe beneath surface problems to a correct discernment of the fundamental forces and problem of our society. At the same time, analysis and discernment are informed by biblical revelation, by the word of God. From the Genesis account to God’s questioning Adam, Eve and Cain, through Jesus Christ’s questioning of Peter and the disciples, social ethics is rooted in the word of God. God not only illuminates, corrects and deepens our observations of social reality; he also raises new issues and problem often underacted by even the most realistic sociological analysis. Thus Christian Social ethics has a distinctive role to play in the broader society by giving expression to God’s revealed perspective on human affairs. Creation much of traditional theological social ethics has been shaped by appeals to orders of creation (or sphered or mandates). The orders of the family and marriage, politics and the state, work and economics and sometimes others have been understood not only by reference to biblical revelation but also by common sense, reason and natural law. Each order or sphere has its own distinctive purpose and corresponding ethical framework. Whether or not social ethics is founded primarily on orders of creation, certain elements of the biblical revelation on creation have ongoing importance for Christian social ethics (cf. Genesis 1:2). The ethical good is defined by the will word and work of God. Humanity is intended to be co-humanity; a social, joyful partnership of human beings before God (it is not good for the man to be alone).

The kingdom of God even the most intransigent orders-of-creation social ethics acknowledge that a new order of redemption takes its place in society with the coming of Jesus Christ and the founding of the church. In Augustine terms, the most important constitutive factors in social history are the city of God and the city. For Martin Luther,

the two kingdoms are distinctive in that God's kingdom is a matter of interior faith, while the civil kingdom concerns external affairs. For Augustine, Luther and others of course, the picture is considerably more complex than these summaries.

It is in Jesus Christ that the word of God is most clearly and fully revealed-for social ethics as for everything else. The social teaching of Jesus is given in his "platform". Statement (Luke 4:18-21), in the temptation (Mathew 4), in his parables and discourses, in the Sermon on the Mount (5-7), in his farewell discouragement (John 13:17), and in the events of the crucifixion and resurrection. The great command to love God and love one's neighbors, the call to unqualified servant-hood and sacrifice, the golden rule, the call to simplicity and away from worship of material things and so on give the essential dimensions of Jesus social ethics. Christian social ethics must reflect not only on the traditional maintain interpretation of the meaning of Jesus Christ. These differences are important. Nevertheless they are also all are examples of the attempt of Christian thought to make sense of our social vocation in the light of our belief in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, they all seek to help church from specific judgment on the basic-order matters, of the day and thus to the meaning of Christ's reign in our social history as well as in our personal experience. It is the problem of strategy and implementation. Contemporary reflection on how Christian (or religious) conviction relates to society has been influenced a great deal by social historians and social scientists. While Karl Marx (Emile) Durkheim, and others have also had considerable influence, this reflection is most often indebted to pioneering studies done by max, Ernst Troeltsch, had H. Richard Niebuhr. Weber's studies of the role of prophetism and charism, his fourfold typology of the relation of religious groups to the world (inner-worldly and other worldly asceticism; inner worldly and other worldly mysticism) and his classic study protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism continue to be an important point of

departure for reflection of problems of strategy and implementation of Christian social ethical concern.

Ernst Troeltsch's social teaching of the Christian churches. Proposed and gave voluminous historical illustration to a threefold typology of church, sect, and mystical association Neibubr elaborated and modified Troeltesch's typology into five categories, which remain influenced in many current discussions. "Christ against culture" is represented by the sectarian Anabaptist Approach. "The Christ of culture" is represented by Ritschl and the accommodations approach "Christ above culture" is represent by Thomas Aquinas and a synthetic approach. "Christ and culture in paradox" is represented by Luther and the dualist approach. "Christ the transformer of culture" is represented by Augustine and the conversions approach. Social scientific and historical typologies such as the above are not able to do full justice to individual traditions. Nor do they take adequate account of the "denominational" and laicized" character of contemporary society.

Prayer and evangelism: From the above of view of biblical social ethics, the two activities of prayer and evangelism not under estimated as strategies for social change. Means and Endji, Biblical Christian social ethics, in both discernment and implementation, defies easy categorization as deontological (doing what is right without regard to consequences) or teleological (the end justified the mans) ethics in particular, however, a teleological approach violates the biblical message, under no circumstances are evil means justified or permissible (Romans 6). The Christian is called to "overcome evil with good" (12:21). Since the means chosen affect the character of the end, a good end can be achieved only by the use of good means. Justice will be achieved only with just means peace with peaceful means. Freedom or equality with means that are

characterized by freedom and equality. Christian reflection on strategy and implementation of the good that is discerned will always stress this in dissolved relationship between means and ends.

Christian ethics and poverty: the poor are mentioned in various forms than three hundred times throughout the Bible. While the references can include someone who is spiritual poor (Mathew 5:3), the vast majority deal with material poverty. Poverty seems an inescapable part of the human condition, though there should not have been any poor among the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 15:4), there would always be poor in the land (15:11). Jesus indicated that there would always be poor people for us to help (Mathew 26:11; Mark 14:7, John 12:8). In biblical terms there are several causes of poverty. The first is God himself, who gives both poverty and wealth (1Samuel 2:6-8). He may do so out of judgment impoverish them if they turned from his ways in the promised-land (Deuteronomy 28:17). Above all, wherever we encounter the poor we must declare to the Goodness of Jesus death and resurrection and invite them to enter into a living relationship with the one who is ultimately most concerned with the plights. Theological task is not complete, however, if it is limited textual comparisons. Christian social ethics must go on to reflect on the basic themes of biblical faith and their implications for Christian values. Here theology is continually trying to hold in balance the beliefs.

1. That the word and its history are created by God
2. That nevertheless the world and human life within it have been spoils and corrupted by human sin.
3. That in God's purpose in Jesus Christ there is salvation and restoration and
4. That the future is to be one of hope of the transformation of our life and our world and of the unity of all this reconciled to God and to one another in Jesus Christ. This

theological task is assisted by a careful consideration of how the church has dealt with social questions through its history.

CONCLUSION:

Religion and ethics meets again in Christ gospel of the kingdom of God his version of the messianic hope and of the prophets' vision of God as Lord of history. Illustration of the earliest Christian moral life is been seen in Luke's impressive gallery (in Acts) of essentially good, happy, socially useful, courageous and transformed people, closely corresponding to his picture of Jesus in his gospel. James, too, probably presents an early picture of the church's moral stance, in a series of meditations on great words of Jesus in the manner of Jewish wisdom literature. Paul's ethical concern was to counter the legalism that had failed in his own life, and that threatened to confine the church to a Jewish sect, by insisting on the sufficiency of faith to save Jew and Gentile alike, and on the freedom of the Christian to follow the leading of the spirit (so Galatians). This transformation of people by the inner dynamic of the Christ-spirit is one of the central motifs of Christianity.

If there is no love for the needy, there is no love for Christ who identifies with the needy, if there is no love for Christ, there is no faith in Christ, since without love is spurious; and if there is no faith in Christ, there is no salvation. John R. W. Stoll, in contrast with philosophical systems, the enduring marks of biblical ethics are its foundation in relationship with God, its objective imposed obligation to obedience, and its appeal to the deepest needs in people, its down-to-earth social relevance and its capacity for continual adaptation and development. The final biblical formation of the ideal as Christ-likeness is related directly to love and gratitude kindled by the experience of redemption, it is rooted in objective history (as the obvious ethical

implicate of the incarnation), it appeals strongly to one's finest moral intuitions it calls to Christ-likeness ministry among the needy of the world and to the fulfillment of God's kingdom on earth; and through the Christian centuries its many forms and interpretations, have proved its flexible adaptability to changing conditions. The early biblical command "be ye holy for I am holy" finds clear echo in the latest biblical promise, "we shall be like him". (Reginald E. O. White), only in the last century how social ethics come into its own as an academic specialization in philosophy, theology, and religious studies departments.

The final aspect of social ethical works is the forming of the Christian mind and judgment on the issues. The Christian church has produced a wide range of different approaches to this work. These have included a number of views which do not accept that it is possible to relate gospel directly to the social order. There are certain inbuilt natural principles to which society must conform, if it is to live within the boundaries of the purposes of God. These differences are important. Furthermore, they all seek to help the church form specific judgments on the basic socio-order matters of the day and thus to witness to the meaning of Christ's reign in our social history is often identified with theological liberalism, and with some justice. At the same time, however, themes of social service associated with the social gospel were also prominent among evangelical bodies such as the Salvation Army or individual evangelical leaders like A. J. Gordon (1836-1895) IN Boston. This draws on theology of law and psychology of moral judgment developed by Thomas Aquinas on the canon law and on the common theological understanding of man's orientation to God as the summon beyond which derived from Augustine. Protestant thinkers turned increasingly to philosophical sources for their moral guidance and from the end of the 18th century were under the influence of the ethics of Kant. The resulting tradition of Christian ethics has been marked by a

persistent anxiety about how the Kantian doctrine of ethical autonomy can be made at home in a theological context.

The poor deserve impartial judgment, they are neither to be favored nor oppressed simply because of their poverty (Exd. 23:3-11; 30:15; Leviticus 19:5). We are to ensure that they are not denied justice (EAXD. 23:6) and are not be watched over by God, but those who oppress the poor are evil; they deserve to die (Ezekiel 18:10-13 and will be judged by God (Isaiah 3:13-15) since they show contempt not just for their victims but for their maker (Proverbs 14:31).

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