

## What Makes Us Human: Values and Morals and Their Origin

Debates on morality are increasingly dominated by people with an atheist worldview and secular humanist ethics who value human beings on the basis of their level of intellectual functioning and capacity for relationship. Within this scheme unborn babies, elderly people with dementia, and those with intellectual disability are seen as less valuable and those who seek to argue their special status as 'speciesist'. By contrast the Bible teaches that human beings are created in the image of God and that God himself ennobled humanity through Jesus' incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. This worldview provides a profoundly different basis for morality.

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### I. What is happening in Europe?

'Men of Issachar' (1 Chronicles 12:32) and 'double listening'

- A. Abortion
- B. Artificial Reproduction
- C. Prenatal Selection and Genetics
- D. Stem Cells, Cloning and animal hybrids
- E. Euthanasia
- F. Same sex marriage
- G. The deconstruction of gender, marriage and reproduction

### II. The Medical and Philosophical background

- A. Medical Background
  - 1. Technological Advance

2. Media influence and consumerism
3. Financial constraints
4. Moral vacuum

## B. Philosophical Background

1. Darwinism and Higher Criticism
2. Secular Atheism replaces Christian Theism
3. Worldview shift reflected in changes in ethical codes
4. Secular Bioethics emerges as a new specialty
5. Singerism and Speciesism – sanctity of life vs quality of life
6. The politicisation of Darwinism
7. ‘Cost effectiveness’ takes precedence

## III. **Secular Ethical Frameworks**

- A. Popular – conscience, feelings, consensus
- B. Deontological – ‘rule based’ (Mill)
- C. Consequentialist – ‘consequence based’ (Bentham)
- D. Virtue Ethics – ‘character based’ (Plato)

E. Practical - Autonomy, personal peace, technology, moral relativism

#### **IV. Developing a Christian Ethical Framework**

A. Thomas Sydenham

The English Hippocrates and his worldview

B. Sharing the mind of Christ

1. A Christian worldview – *creation, fall, redemption, consummation*

2. Christian Ethical Principles – *stewardship, sanctity of life, chastity, veracity, justice, compassion, grace and mercy*

C. Keeping the commands of Christ

The 'law of Christ' (Jn 13:34-35; 1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2; Mt 22:37-40)

D. Showing the character of Christ

Gal 5:22-23; 1 Cor 13:4-6

E. Carrying the cross of Christ

Mt 10:38; 2 Tim 3:12; Gal 6:2; 2 Tim 2:3,10

#### **V. Pitfalls for evangelicals**

A. Situation Ethics - 'All that matters is love'

- B. Cheap grace - ‘We are not under law but grace ’
- C. Diversity - ‘Ethics is a secondary issue over which Christians may disagree’
- D. Personal pietism - ‘The world is not our problem and we should not impose our morality’

## VI. References

### A. Books on Christian Bioethics

- John Wyatt, *Matters of Life and Death* (IVP, 2009)
- John Stott, *Issues facing Christians Today* (Zondervan, 2006)
- Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics* (Baker Academic, 2010)
- Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A primer for Christians* (Eerdmans, 2004)
- John Kilner, *Why the Church needs Bioethics* (Zondervan, 2011)

### B. Christian Bioethics Websites

- [www.cmf.org.uk](http://www.cmf.org.uk) – Christian Medical Fellowship
- <http://www.cmf.org.uk/publications/cmf-files/> - CMF Files
- [www.carenotkilling.org.uk](http://www.carenotkilling.org.uk) – Care Not Killing Alliance (Secular language)
- [pjsaunders.blogspot.co.uk/](http://pjsaunders.blogspot.co.uk/) - Christian Medical Comment
- <http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/secondhandsmoke/> - Wesley Smith
- [http://www.mercatornet.com/issues/bioethical\\_topics](http://www.mercatornet.com/issues/bioethical_topics) - MercatorNet

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