

Christian Moral Principles: The Bible and Ethics overview

Key Idea: This topic is about...	
How important is the Bible when Christians are faced with moral decisions?	
Background Knowledge	
<p>The Bible – The Bible is a collection of 66 documents divided into the Old and New Testament.</p> <p>Contents – The Old Testament contains narrative (stories) History, Laws, poetry and prophecy. The New Testament contains 4 gospels (accounts of Jesus), letters to churches and a prophetic book.</p> <p>Composed – The Old Testament documents were written between 1200-300 BCE and are sacred for Jews. The New Testament documents were written between 50-100 CE. They were endorsed as scripture in 325 CE.</p> <p>Considerations When reading the Bible Christians have to consider Genre, situation, translation</p> <p>Catholic vs Protestant (the Reformation) In the 16th century reformers wanted significant changes in the Catholic church: the Bible in people’s own language, reduced authority for the Pope, allowing priests to marry, the end of indulgences. These ‘Protest-ants’ eventually broke away from the Catholic church. Their motto was ‘Sola Scriptura’ – the scriptures alone (Bible alone)</p>	
<p>View 1 : (AO1) The Bible is the ONLY source of ethics</p> <p>Evangelical Protestant Position</p> <p>‘All scripture is God breathed..’ (2 Timothy 3:16)</p> <p>This does not necessarily mean that the Bible is a rule book (like a car manual) – although some evangelical Christians approach it this way</p> <p>May involve idea of progressive revelation – earlier sections (laws) being gradually replaced as God’s relationship to Humanity develops. ‘You heard it said but I say...’ (Jesus)</p> <p>Some Christians draw distinction between moral and ceremonial OT laws</p>	<p>AO2 – to some extent you can use other positions to assess this one</p> <p>Claiming that we should believe scripture because of scripture is circular.</p> <p>Problem of contradictions in the Bible</p> <p>Difficult to interpret different sections of the Bible (situation, genre)</p>
<p>View 2: (AO1) The Bible is ONE OF SEVERAL sources of ethics (Bible, Church and Reason)</p> <p>Roman Catholic position</p> <p>Scripture was ultimately approved by church – church is accurate interpreter of Scripture (Idea of the true traditions being passed on through History and Pope as ultimate authority.)</p> <p>Catholicism also values Reasoning – specifically the ability of Natural Law to work out what is right and wrong. This is helpful on issues where scripture is silent</p>	<p>AO2 to some extent you can use other positions to assess this one</p> <p>Bible is now subject to human decisions and interpretations (this may be a good or bad thing)</p> <p>Church Tradition is patriarchal (all men!)</p> <p>Discuss – limits of reasoning (Augustine)</p> <p>What to do if the Bible and Reason disagree?</p> <p>S/W of natural law</p>
<p>View 3: (AO1) Love is the only source of Ethics</p> <p>Liberal Protestant Position</p> <p>The Bible ought not to be seen as a rule book – it is a human document. The key ethical teaching from Jesus is ‘Love.’ Love God and Love your neighbour sum up the whole law. Paul also says the greatest thing is love (1 Corinthians 13). Fletcher’s Situation Ethics develops this approach. Bonhoeffer’s also has this approach.</p> <p>The Bible is not ignored but this position argues that the key part is the reference to love</p>	<p>AO2 to some extent you can use other positions to assess this one</p> <p>Selective approach – Bible says many things not just love.</p> <p>Love may be vague – how is it to be applied</p> <p>s/w of situation ethics</p>

