

INTRODUCTION

A Primer on Doing Ethics

Ethics begins with human experience, whether that experience is direct (getting mugged) or indirect (reflection on the morality of an Egyptian citizen committing civil disobedience during a protest). This brief primer begins with a person's experience of moral issues and moves toward more reflective, cognitive perspectives on those experiences. Your professor will likely cover some of the more theoretical aspects of ethics. This primer will name some of those, but its primary purpose is to indicate how ethics is a dimension of your life. So, we begin with our moral experience and move toward the ethical assessment of the reasons we might have for calling something good or bad, right or wrong, virtuous or vicious.

Moral Experience

They say that every generation has a “defining event.” For the Boomers, that event was the Vietnam War. While some enlisted to serve, many more were drafted to take part in it, and others conscientiously opposed what seemed to them like a pointless, immoral war. For the Millennials, it was probably the terrorist attacks of 9/11. For the present generation, it could be what may be dubbed the “Great Recession” that has been ongoing since 2007. It could be the election of the first African American president. Maybe it will be climate change and all it will produce. The “defining event” for the contemporary generation is yet to be determined.

Ethics is certainly about major changes and events. It considers how food gets distributed around the world, who eats well, and who not so well. It examines growing inequality among and within countries today, and it considers the consequences in terms of hunger and health care. Ethics also tries to determine whether specific acts, like tactics involving torture, can legitimately be used in response to terrorism. Ethics may consider broad economic policies and assess

the fairness of the sales tax, or suggest which line items in the federal budget could be reduced. It tackles the moral issues raised by global warming, by exploring the parameters of our responsibilities to future generations, and by considering who should bear the more immediate costs of the greenhouse effect, such as famine and coastal flooding.

Ethics also deals with more personal issues. Should I have this baby or terminate this pregnancy? Should I lie about my volunteer work on my application to medical school or shade the truth about my work experience on this job application? Would it be wrong if I paid someone to write my term papers for me? Do I sext a racy photo of Jane to my friends, since she so unceremoniously dumped me for someone else? Should I turn off the lights in my dorm room or apartment, when the college or landlord is paying that bill?

The personal and social dimensions of our moral life are as inseparable as the way persons are formed by their communities, by the church, and by other institutions (like schools, neighborhoods, nation-states, and so on). A number of issues have gone global and so defy neat categorization. Ever since the bombing of Hiroshima in 1945, it has been true that the welfare of the planet could be threatened by individual and national actors. But in the new millennium, it is increasingly evident that climate change is both a personal and a global issue. The fate of the earth is at stake in our individual purchasing decisions and in our national economic policies.

Questions of Morality

Ethics is a disciplined way of thinking about whether what we do is right or wrong, good or bad. Let us be more formal: ethics reflects on the morality of an act, habit, policy, or condition in the world. Christian ethics considers those things in light of Christian convictions about God.

When you stop to think about whether what you are doing is right or not, you are doing ethics. Often these are moments when you can imagine taking one course of action or quite another. Sometimes there are real quandaries in ethics: should you devote your life to humanitarian work that offers you little pay but great satisfaction or to a position where you will earn good money that will enable you to care well for your dependents but that will do little good for others? There are instances, of course, where a person can make one decision, discover that it is the wrong one for her or him, and then change the course of their life.

At other points, our choices do not rise to the level of really being a “quandary” at all but are more a matter of character. Should I wake up as I intended to and get my homework done? Should I keep that tutoring appointment I made? Should I eat a piece of pie? These are personal questions where not too much seems to ride on the outcome. The immediate consequences of acting one way or the other are not that far-reaching, though in the long run these are just the sort of decisions that determine who we become. They shape our character.

We all make dozens of moral decisions each day; most of those probably fall into the category of meeting the commitments I have made to employers, partners, children, friends, or to others I may not even know (for example, choosing not to text while driving). Some of those decisions—should I tell the truth? Should I betray a friend? Should I just slip that iPod into my

pocket? Do I tell the waiter he forgot to charge me for dessert?—we decide in the same way day after day. They become habits, everyday practices so engrained that after a while we don't even think about them. Like personality traits, they are so much a part of what we do that we are not conscious of them, until someone says to us, "You are always so kind (mean, friendly, rash) that it is a joy (or a pain) to be around you." These small daily choices, like their more global distant cousins, can determine our moral character. Through daily actions, we may unconsciously develop a variety of moral habits, some good, like patience, and others bad, like dishonesty. Some choices, such as keeping confidential a person's undocumented status or enabling an abuser, may influence the trajectory of other people's conduct and become morally significant in that way.

We also face some quite conscious decisions that we remember well because they appear problematic and complicated to us. For example, when it is difficult to decide how to respond in a given situation, it may be that there are good reasons to act in two opposing ways. Our character pulls us to consider both ways of responding. Sometimes, while both options might be morally acceptable, one is better than the other. In other cases, it appears that both of the options available to us are wrong and our best course is simply to try and identify the lesser of two evils. For example, many believe in some circumstances there could be tragic consequences associated with both a decision to terminate or to continue a problematic pregnancy.

Sometimes we can only choose how we will respond to external events. We may be disappointed by the breakup of a relationship or the dashing of a cherished dream. How we respond to the triumphs of our lives, to our successes and achievements and the praise and adulation they bring, reveals our moral character as well. It says a lot about the kind of person we are. Because most of us are neither saints nor rogues, we often respond to what life throws us in ways both admirable and disreputable. Our responses are based on our personality traits and moral habits, but they can also be based on moral reasoning. It is the promise of ethics that we can learn to respond in morally more constructive ways.

The discipline of ethics fosters reflection about the choices before us. It evaluates various reasons we may have for the decisions we make and the lifestyle(s) we adopt. It can enable those who want to make better choices and become better people to do so. But ethical insight does not automatically result in an improved moral life, because in the end we must be willing to do what we discern is right.

Christianity and Morality

This volume is concerned with how the Christian faith community, and its individual believers, ought to respond to issues of personal and social morality. As with individuals, however, churches also reveal much ambiguity and tension in their corporate life. Faith communities can respond with boldness and integrity, or with timidity and even apathy. The church has sometimes been mistaken in its moral teachings, as it was for centuries with regard to slavery. Sometimes faith communities can be incredibly courageous and prophetic, as were many African American congregations during the early days of the civil rights movement in the United States. Just as

Christians can reveal something of their character by how they respond to the moral challenges of the day, so can the Christian church.

Of course, there are many types of congregations and denominations within Christianity, and they relate to moral issues differently. Nonetheless, there are elements of the Christian heritage—shared beliefs—that most Christians affirm and hold in common. This common heritage embraces certain ideals and values that claim the allegiance of all those who follow Jesus Christ, whatever their particular denominational affiliation. This is what makes ethical disagreements so grievous and potentially divisive among Christians. Disagreements are inescapably tied to questions of faithfulness to these core beliefs. Whatever additional ideological factors separate Christian people into factions labeled “conservative” or “liberal,” “traditional” or “progressive,” this division is most pronounced on social issues.

Christians heatedly disagree over issues such as abortion, the death penalty, and wars of intervention. They also disagree about how best to solve social problems. For example, while most churches repudiate racism, they frequently disagree about how to address problems caused by racial prejudice and ethnic discrimination. Sometimes these disagreements become so heated that they threaten the welfare of particular denominations. Currently the witness of many Protestant denominations is threatened by disagreements about the ordination of gays and lesbians. In the Roman Catholic Church, it is the unwillingness of some bishops to prioritize in practice the welfare of children that threatens to dilute its witness. Official church positions on moral issues are sometimes the object of attacks on the part of offended parishioners who disagree with the perspectives being espoused. Sometimes they are refuted by Christians from other congregations and denominations.

The Church as a Community of Moral Deliberation

The church remains an important locus of moral deliberation, alongside other voluntary associations and agencies. Churches should be safe places where complicated moral questions can be thoroughly explored and where individuals can hammer out their own positions. As a matter of theological belief, the Christian tradition has held that the Spirit speaks in more than one voice and that, even though consensus is ideal, we can learn to live together with heartfelt differences. As a matter of fact, we often hear some portion of the truth from those with whom we disagree. Thus respectful listening and learning is often the best way to discern God’s will.

Because we bring our cultural biases, ethnic perspectives, and our dispositions to the consideration of any given issue, along with deeply held faith and moral convictions, it is also necessary that anyone investigating a moral issue be open to learning from competing arguments. When differences over social issues assume a strong ideological character, truth itself is often the victim, as people close their minds to opposing points of view. We lose a spirit of self-criticism, a spirit that tempers our inclination to claim absolute certitude. It is a necessary ethical discipline to remain open to views that challenge our own. If churches are to be centers of moral deliberation, where those who disagree can do so with safety, then Christians must permit their shared loyalty

to Jesus Christ to enable them to hear others—even non-Christians—as people through whom the Spirit may be speaking.

The Church as a Community of Moral Action

The church is a place not only for study and moral discernment but also for advocacy. The church has a witness in the political arena. Christianity, like other religious communities, does have a role in shaping public policies. Of course, in an increasingly pluralistic society, the proper nature of church-state relations is itself a matter of considerable debate, but our point here is that Christian communities have, on occasion, spoken with considerable political impact. The civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons are often both championed and opposed by religious groups.

The church also speaks through its actions. Consider Hurricane Katrina. In the case of national tragedies, such as Katrina, the quick response of various Christian churches in New Orleans put pressure on other nonprofits, and even governmental agencies, to provide immediate and more effective relief. In this case—as is frequently the case with natural disasters—little moral deliberation was necessary; the provision of relief was literally a matter of life and death.

In other cases, much deliberation is needed. The primary role of the church in the realm of social morality is to interpret the gospel with integrity, tracing its implications for our life together and for the transformation of the world. Sometimes the church is called to take a prophetic, even unpopular, countercultural stance, simply because that is the gospel mandate. Other times, the church may have something distinctive (though not necessarily unique) to say in defense of cherished cultural values and traditional ideals, for example, the importance of liberty and justice for all. But the church also aims to sensitize society to a more acute awareness of the various demands of justice and liberty, norms widely shared by virtually all groups in our society.

How Do Christians Arrive at Moral Judgments?

In many ways, Christians make moral decisions similar to the way everyone does. However, Christians honor particular sources of wisdom that may testify to values that are distinctively, though not uniquely, Christian—like forgiveness. Their moral lives are shaped by the decisions they have made and by the values they choose to embody; and, like many people of good conscience, Christians try to evaluate the reasons for their decisions.

We might begin to answer how Christians arrive at moral judgments by noting that if there is one encapsulation of all of morality for Christians, it is Jesus' response to the lawyer who asks him about the greatest commandment. Jesus says: "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40). This threefold call to love

God, neighbor, and self is an important overarching guide, and in many ways, it sets the stage for moral deliberation among Christians.

What it might mean to love in these ways is often far from self-evident. Such discernment is the task of Christian ethics. This involves the consideration of several important questions. Here are three that have shaped the nature of ethics:

1. What are the relevant factual data?
2. What standards (goals, rules, and virtues) do we use to determine what we ought to do?
3. Is our judgment consistent with our deepest religious convictions?

What Are the Relevant Facts?

Though obvious, it is nevertheless important to note that one must pay careful attention to all the relevant facts before one can reach meaningful moral judgments. For example, factual data are the central issue in arguments that would either justify or challenge proposals about the level of military spending required to maintain a strong national defense. But beyond the difficulty of determining the facts regarding national security, it is important to recognize that arguments about defense-related expenditures are often shaped covertly by far wider political and economic “pork barrel” agendas, which should not be considered relevant to this budget line item.

Consider a different example. Knowing only the comparative facts about population growth may leave the impression that many industrialized nations are doing their fair share to reduce their environmental footprint. However, when one considers the level of consumption per person, it becomes clear that affluent nations, even those with low population-growth rates, may have a greater overall impact on the environment than countries in the developing world. Getting the facts—all the relevant facts—is a daunting but indispensable step in moral decision-making.

It is important to be mindful that in discussions of population growth and environmental impact, as in other issues with high stakes, we tend to pay greater attention to the facts that support our initial impressions and current point of view. This is why dialogue among those on many sides of an issue is often so informative. Investigations into the impact of the death penalty on capital crime rates provide data that often proves decisive in debates about capital punishment. If one believes that the only justification for capital punishment is deterrence, then it is essential that one have access to responsible studies on that question. Because statistical studies sometimes conflict, often moral agents (like you and me!) have to decide where the preponderance of evidence lies in arenas far outside our areas of expertise.

When a church decides to develop a position statement on a particular moral issue, an important first step in that process should be to assemble persons whose knowledge of the subject guarantees that it will be given in-depth consideration from many disciplines and moral viewpoints. Experts from various fields should be summoned to inform the group more fully and to bring balance to its deliberations. The reality is that the “facts” are always interpretations of what is the case and can never be completely objective, though particular interpretations may be both

more plausible and probable than others. Individuals who seek to study a moral issue should gather similarly diverse resources to study.

What Standards Do We Use to Determine What We Ought to Do?

When we speak of what we ought to do, we are getting at the distinctive moral dimension of our choices. This sense of concern about what we ought or ought not do suggests that there are norms, or standards, for human activity by which we can judge actions as morally right or morally wrong. Whenever we speak normatively, that is, when we say things like “I ought to pay my debts,” or “I ought not to destroy this painting,” our language reveals certain values implicit in our sense of morality. Whenever we speak of rules or duties, of ideals toward which we strive as worthy goals, and of our moral character and its virtues, we are speaking the language of ethics, which seeks to analyze and make sense of our moral experience.

In the history of ethical thought, there have been three clearly distinguishable approaches to the question, what should I/we do? We may think in terms of three sets of lenses through which to approach ethical decision making: rules, goals, or virtues. Ethicists have theories about how these standards interrelate; some privilege one of the three ways, but all three usually come into play. It may help to think of them as frames through which we see different aspects of an issue. Usually all three are somehow helpful in discovering the facets of an issue.

The first lens of reasoning focuses on what we commonly label rules or duties. It maintains that an objective moral order exists that is “built into” the structures of life lived in community. Some people have maintained that we can perceive this order through the right use of reason, whereas others have maintained that it can be discerned only through moral intuition or via divine revelation. Regardless of how one becomes aware of these obligations, within this framework, the rules and commandments by which we should live express our duties to God, each other, and ourselves. This *deontological* approach to ethical analysis, from the Greek word *deon*, meaning “duty,” tends to be more prohibitive (“Thou shalt not . . .”) than prescriptive, and usually establishes only minimal moral standards. Some adherents of this perspective hold certain of these duties to be absolutely binding, regardless of the circumstances. Others consider such obligations to be *prima facie* (that is, at first appearance) binding but potentially capable of being overridden by another duty or duties.

The second lens focuses on the good ends to which one’s actions may lead and the goals one aims to serve in life. Goals give direction to our choices by identifying the personal qualities and skills we need to develop in order to achieve our goals. This system of thought is based on a *telos*, Greek for “end” or “goal,” and is labeled *teleological*. Thus the primary standard of judgment is whether a given course of action will in fact serve one’s goal(s). We may pursue the just and sustainable provision to all of basic goods—like food and freedom—and have other goals as well. While the deontological view recognizes duties or rules and often maintains that one must observe them regardless of consequences, the teleological view places the moral value of the act precisely on its outcome, and whether certain ends are achieved by that way of acting. One

prominent expression of this viewpoint is utilitarianism, which seeks to promote the greatest good for the greatest number.

Both frameworks are useful in our moral decision making. At times we feel obliged to another person, and we know that it is our duty—plain and simple—to keep that promise or pay back that loan. The deontological perspective illumines such aspects of our moral life. At other times, however, while keeping a particular promise may be morally ideal, it may lead to unacceptable consequences. Although promise keeping may be the best course of action ideally, sometimes keeping that promise will be harmful to the other person. For example, the consequences of our actions (keeping a promise) may put a great number of people in harm's way. Staying married may mean that a spouse may abuse one's children. Real life can be messy. The nature of our responsibility may be blurred, and we find ourselves balancing rules and duties over against consequences.

The third lens through which to view the moral life that may be less conspicuous: this is character ethics, or judging on the basis of virtue. A virtue is a pattern of behavior learned through practice that finds the middle point between an excessive and a deficient response, according to Aristotle. Our characters are formed by habitually acting in ways that exhibit certain patterns, such as courage, patience, honesty, or justice. Virtues and vices are socially constructed in that we may practice them without making conscious decisions. There are some conventional Christian virtues, such as forgiveness or compassion, that Christian communities hold to be important. There are many virtues that are shared with the culture at large—for example, being a law-abiding citizen or exhibiting courage and fairness in one's dealings with others. For the Christian, virtues are both gracious gifts and habits to be cultivated.

Sometimes our conscience will let us know that we are acting out of character, violating the virtues we consider important. We will feel guilty about concealing information or having twinges of prejudice. We sometimes act in ways that do not exhibit the virtues that we imagine ourselves to have or hope that we are forming. At such times, we may have a “bad” conscience.

How do these different lenses through which to approach moral life relate to the issues addressed in the book? Here we will use one particular topic for the sake of illustration. Consider immigration policy and whether the United States should close or restrict further immigration. How should we respond to the presence in our communities of undocumented persons? Several deontological arguments can be made both for and against tightening the enforcement of immigration laws. One argument in favor of tightening immigration asserts that our first obligation is to those who are already legal residents of the United States. However, another argument, also deontological, suggests that we have an obligation to the many immigrants who built this country as a refuge for the “tired and poor.” Both perspectives could be applied on the basis of Christian values. Similarly, teleological arguments could come down on both sides of the immigration debate. For example, if we allow whoever wants to immigrate to the United States to do so, our educational and other services may be severely strained, and several negative consequences may result: further unemployment and increased taxes for all. Teleological arguments are also made on the other side: if we restrict immigration, we may jeopardize the conditions that have

fostered the creativity necessary for technological advances. Usually moral arguments appeal to both deontological and teleological bases—acting both on the basis of duty and in light of possible results of our action. There are also ways in which features of character ethics come into play; for example, does our stance exhibit a deficiency of compassion? Insufficient respect for civil law?

Some other elements of character ethics are worth considering: intentions and integrity. Many times, intentions do not receive the notice they deserve, because they are hard to discern. However, the moral quality of many acts rests in part on the intentions of the agent. Notice how much more rapidly we are inclined to forgive someone who says, “I didn’t intend to hurt them.” Nevertheless, it is evident that engaging in immoral behavior, even without malevolent intent, is problematic.

Another element is that of the consistency and integrity of our moral lives. We sometimes say things like: “She is not herself today. She is acting out of character.” We use the word *integrity* to describe the moral dimension of this orientation. Our personal belief system is expressed in our character, because our character actually expresses who we really are and to what and whom we are committed as moral beings. Put another way, my character is the “real me,” which is never disclosed simply by my IQ, race, gender, or economic status. The kind of morality that characterizes my life reveals what I ultimately believe concerning the world in which I live and the meaning of my own life, even if this credo may not be fully articulated.

Our actions are morally formative whether we give deontological or teleological reasons for our choices. Our character, that is, the way our moral life has been formed, is probably as influential in shaping how we act as the reasons we give. Thus our moral decisions are shaped by the values that are important to us, as well as our understanding of the facts.

Is Our Judgment Consistent with Our Deepest Religious Convictions?

Not long ago, following the terrible mass murder of a group of Amish school children, the parents of those children and the surrounding Amish faith community offered the murderer forgiveness and consolation to his family. In like manner, many of the Christian leaders of post-apartheid South Africa called for the granting of amnesty to many via participation in the Truth and Reconciliation hearings. Whether one considers these morally wise or dangerous practices, they shed light on the roles of faith as the backdrop for the moral life.

Resting beneath our decisions is a perspective, or outlook on life—what we might call a life orientation or faith. This brings us back to the realm of religion. What we believe enters into how we live. It even shapes what we see as the “facts.” No wonder, then, that our deepest convictions (and these are religious, whether the religion is consumerism or Islam or Christianity) shape how we act morally and the moral ideals we hold.

Religious belief gives meaning to life, so that we live with a sense of purpose and direction. It addresses that most fundamental question: *Why* should I be concerned with being moral? Religious belief provides a basis for our moral convictions and has a bearing on our moral character. For the Christian, this framework of meaning involves the conviction that we are creatures of

God, not randomly “thrown” into a meaningless universe, but created with a purpose: to praise God by befriending all God’s creatures, great and small. This orientation appears to be foolishness to some in this world, but it reflects the wisdom of Jesus, who noted that in losing oneself for others, one finds oneself (Matt. 10:39). Jesus’ own life has always been the Christian’s supreme model for what it means to live with integrity as a son or daughter of God.

Not only does our Christian faith give an answer to the question of *why* we are concerned about morality, but it also enters into the *content* of morality. Our religious convictions direct us to act in particular ways. We have already alluded to the great commandments of Jesus concerning love of God and love of neighbor as the self. We also discussed a bit about what it might mean to love God, neighbor, and self by considering rules, goals, and virtues.

Christians understand God’s purposes to be expressed in Scripture and church tradition and the dynamic activity of the Holy Spirit. How those purposes get lived out is a matter for human discernment, with God’s ongoing help. While the motivation behind Christian action is distinctive and particular, the specific action may look exactly the same as that performed by the Zen Buddhist for his or her own particular reasons. Though distinctive, Christian norms and values may overlap with those of others; many different people may be committed to the worth and dignity of human and animal life and to loving our neighbors as ourselves.

What about our faith gives foundation to Christian moral teachings? Christ taught us by word and example to “go the extra mile” in our personal and social relationships. He set a standard by which to live. Blessedly, Christians know they are saved by faith through grace. Nonetheless, the ideal provided by Christ is a prod to rise above our disinclination to act with love.

As with the individual Christian, the church is challenged to live in commitment and discipleship so that its witness in the realm of social morality has the ring of authenticity and truth. Although the church cannot solve the world’s problems, its message and reason for being make it impossible to divorce itself from social problems. Its mission in every age is not only to proclaim the Good News but also to embody it, bringing a measure of compassion and a quest for justice and peace that inspire and challenge the larger society. If the church is to fulfill its social responsibility, it will have to become increasingly “a community of moral discourse.” Particularly at the grassroots level—that is, the local congregation—the church needs to address the issues of the day through both study and action. Especially in an era when moral decisions seem totally relative and choices impossible to justify, it is important that the church call Christians and other citizens to serious moral deliberation about the issues that affect our life in this world. Christians assert that there are better and worse moral directions, ones that are more or less pleasing to God, and that these choices and policy directions deserve rigorous debate and careful discernment. Involving itself in public life in this way constitutes one important answer to the church’s role in the current era.

Ethics is the critical study of the moral dimensions of life. Its task is not in most cases to give definitive, universally applicable answers to life’s moral questions but rather to raise often neglected aspects of those questions for further consideration. Ethics aims to illumine for both individuals and the wider community what is entailed in the process of moral discernment.

The ethicist does not simply catalog moral behaviors but investigates the principles and norms by which people live in order to shed light on the values they serve. When ethical reflection is Christian, the concern is also to spell out the meaning of Christian faith for the moral life and to determine the distinctive nature of that life in view of the underlying convictions about God and the world that Christians hold.

This volume addresses a variety of moral issues, and we hope it will prove helpful in informing the reader about the nature of these particular concerns. However, to fulfill its purpose, it must also provide readers with the opportunity to do some ethical reflection of their own. The issues themselves certainly merit considerable attention; but beyond that, we hope reflection on these issues will generate both discussion of the ways in which we make moral decisions and assessment of the fundamental assumptions that undergird that process.

Another factor that has entered into our selection of material is the conviction that we live in a pluralistic society and that dialogue with others outside of the Christian community is imperative. It is in recognition of our pluralism that Christian writers now often describe the ethical norm in “human” categories rather than in simply “Christian” ones. The overlapping moral concerns of those who are Christian and those who are not are indicated by the use of phrases like those frequently occurring in Roman Catholic documents from the Second Vatican Council, which stress the human dignity of all persons and the importance of building more truly humane conditions for all life. A few of the articles in this volume are not written from an explicitly Christian perspective, but they are included to assist the reader in understanding the issue being addressed and to offer perspectives with which one may agree or disagree. That is also part of the learning experience.

Opposing viewpoints are found in each chapter; this may be confusing and even distressing to some. Our intention, of course, in placing opposing views in juxtaposition is to encourage the reader to clarify the issue in his or her own mind. The risk of confusing the reader seems worth taking, given the complexity of moral issues today; it is unlikely that any one perspective will be able to capture all the morally significant dimensions of an issue. It is also important to recognize that the complexity of many of these concerns will invite differing responses among Christians of good faith. The challenge is not to dismiss the insights of those with whom we disagree but rather to take seriously our responsibility to understand the issues and address them consistently in light of our personal faith convictions.

Finally, we hope you enjoy thinking about moral issues and various Christian responses to them. We trust it will help you think about how you live and who you want to become. Peace to you!