

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY



Volume 88:2-3

April/July 2024

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Chapter 9 is on clinical ethics. This is about the day-to-day experience of health care providers. Topics in this chapter include informed consent, confidentiality, and medical paternalism.

The reader might be tempted to skip the more philosophical chapters at the beginning in order to dive right into the chapters about specific issues. It would be best if one did not do that. It is crucial that Christians and others begin to learn and relearn how to reason, how to make and evaluate moral judgments. This not only gives us tools we need to have discussions with serious people who do not understand or adhere to Christianity, but it also helps us to navigate troubling new questions that do not necessarily fit the bullet points or paradigms of issues we have already considered.

It is insufficient simply to know what we oppose. We also need to be able to explain our moral judgments and justify them with reasons. We need the skills to respond cogently to counterarguments. Without these tools for reasoning, we run a higher risk of caricaturing the views of others, employing logical fallacies in our arguments, and relying on bluster to carry the day.

This book would be a useful textbook for several reasons. In the first place, the chief concepts and issues are examined with a rare economy of words that gets to the point while still providing examples and cases to keep it from being dry. Secondly, it is clearly written, avoiding the convoluted prose sometimes found in college textbooks. The balance beam for every professor is to find proper course texts which are neither too far beyond the abilities of their typical student nor too simplistic to challenge the higher achievers.

But this is not just a book for college students. This is a book for pastors, directors of Christian education, and other church workers. It is a book for medical professionals. And it is a book for anyone seeking to increase one's knowledge or improve one's understanding of this crucial field.

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***Introducing Christian Ethics: Core Convictions for Christians Today.* By David P. Gushee. Canton, Michigan: Front Edge, 2022. 339 pages. Paperback. \$24.99.**

Among a number of recent offerings in the category of introductions to Christian ethics, Gushee's volume stands out for its significant strengths with respect to clarity, structure, and power of writing, a pronounced emphasis on Christian virtue,

and a rare ability to highlight key questions in the various topics of applied ethics. However, the volume also presents notable flaws in interpretive methodology, making it a qualified resource for the discerning reader.

Prominent strengths of the book are Gushee's succinct, engaging prose and the superior structuring of the material, both in the overall movement of the volume and in the presentation of each topic in a chapter. Gushee follows what he calls a "lifecycle approach" to the book's presentation: the laying out of material as one would learn and engage it in his lifetime (93). First, the Christian learns terms, sources, and methods of ethics. These methods are filled in with particular Christian virtues, gifts, or fruits, to begin to structure thoughts, passions, habits, and behavior. Finally, he explains specific issues, such as stewardship of creation, sexual ethics, and political ethics, as a Christian—informed by sources and methods and characterized by Christian thinking and behavior—might think about, approach, and engage them. Gushee carefully lays out the fundamental questions in Christian ethics, clearly addresses and defines important concepts, and models the kind of perception, reflection, and character in his writing that he hopes the Christian will learn and mature in.

Introducing Christian Ethics takes advantage of recent integrative practices in publishing, by making available audio and video presentations of each chapter to those who have the book. At the beginning of each chapter, links and QR codes take the reader to an audio and video recording of the chapter being read by the author. In truth, Gushee is not as engaging a reader as he is a writer, and the primary advantage of these links is that one could listen while driving, exercising, etc. The actual power of the presentation, however, resides in its written clarity and structure.

Gushee excels in summarizing foundational material. He clearly presents all the major methods of moral analysis used in the Christian tradition, such as goals, rules, relationships, character, community, and responsibility. Yet he readily points out that biblical ethics are fundamentally theological, not philosophical. Philosophical theories offer insights and intellectual structures for understanding, yet Scripture integrates their insights without "absolutizing" any of them (25). Scriptural commands and principles inform Christian virtues that should be pursued for life together in the church on the way to Christ's fulfillment of the eschatological kingdom. Gushee embraces a narrative methodology, meaning that the Christian moral system needs to be derived and articulated from the biblical narrative, not just theoretically through reason or even practically through current experience (either individual or communal, 55–58). Gushee's extended treatment of specifically Christian virtues, grounded in the Sermon on the Mount and manifesting as fruits of the Spirit, is unique in its prominence for an introductory text, serving to orient the Christian ethicist around an appropriately Christian spirituality. Of particular

interest is his detailed treatment of truthfulness, sacredness, justice, love, and forgiveness (67–153). His emphases on a humble approach to interpretation and the need to recognize moral conflict are valuable critical tools for students (31–33). Gushee’s treatment of applied ethics also is very good in his ability to recognize and highlight the central points for consideration and action.

Recognizing these strengths, the discerning reader will be disappointed in Gushee’s treatment of sources for Christian ethics. Key is his use of the New Testament. Initially he warns the reader of human fallibility in biblical interpretation, but rather than addressing this fallibility by advocating humility and repentance, he resigns himself to the apparent inevitability that a Christian ethicist will prioritize certain themes and parts of Scripture over others. Repeated moral failure and conflict in his own experience and in the history of the church have convinced him that neither reading Scripture, nor following a particular tradition within Christianity, nor submitting to ecclesiastical institutions or authorities, nor even being led by the Spirit will resolve this conflict and failure. The only way forward is for ethicists and interpreters to be conscious of their biases and the scriptural themes that they favor over others (31–38). Gushee himself admits that he prefers a “prophetic” over a “cultic/legalist” reading of the Scriptures. The latter he finds in the Johannine and Pauline writings, which “elevate . . . the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus but not his teachings or his version of kingdom theology” (34). On the contrary, he favors an ethic of social salvation that he finds in the Synoptics and that he asserts is discontinuous with the Johannine and Pauline traditions. Gushee asserts that such prioritizing of scriptural themes is inevitable for interpreters due to the diversity of Scripture and that ethicists simply need to be aware of this diversity and conscious of the interpretative direction they will follow (35).

But such a method begs the question of the New Testament as an authority for Christian ethics: only those elements that match one’s moral stance are *de facto* authoritative; other passages and themes are set aside (see examples in the following paragraph). Gushee has moved from acknowledging the fallibility of human interpretation and trying to address this challenge to advocating for the prioritization of certain portions of Scripture over others. Rather than offering a solution, he is offering an alternative source to Scripture: one’s interpretive tradition or preferences. Gushee certainly recognizes that an ethicist should humbly study Christian sources, be directed and corrected by them, grow in understanding, and mature in his guidance. But rather than finding this study, correction, and maturity in the study of all the Scriptures, he finds it in the preference for certain scriptural themes and interpretive traditions.

Because interpretive traditions, and not, strictly speaking, Scripture, are authoritative for Gushee, his guidance with respect to some areas of applied ethics also

falters. For example, African American literature depicts white Christianity as destructive of virtue, spiritually impotent, and blind to racism and injustice. Rather than seeing that this literature offers cases or narratives to challenge white Christians to self-examination, Gushee asserts that this literature demonstrates that white Christianity simply is racist (183–196). Or, when describing disagreements over the question of male headship, Gushee sees inconsistencies in biblical interpretation as evidence of the impossibility of finding a biblical resolution, and, instead, turns to men’s abuses of power against women as justification for a feminist position (172–179). Or, when addressing marriage, he can simultaneously call for marriage to be a lifelong covenant commitment, while also arguing that couples of the same sex can enter into such marriages, because, in a fallen world, the gospel calls for the fullest participation possible of all people in structured, loving relationships (233–237).

In spite of these flaws, *Introducing Christian Ethics* offers some qualified benefits to discerning readers. First, Gushee is highly skilled at highlighting key introductory themes and topics in ethics, both methodological and applied. While readers may not agree with his rationale or conclusions, he does not get sidetracked by more advanced philosophical concepts or by detailed minutiae of a few topics in applied ethics. Furthermore, Gushee’s treatment of virtue, which extends over several chapters and explains a specifically Christian understanding of virtue, offers a comprehensive picture of the character of Christian life. Finally, Gushee is an extremely clear and straightforward writer. As a result, readers will come away from this volume with an excellent overview of ethical concepts and methods, as well as familiarity with the foundational issues in contemporary ethics. So long as a reader persists in the humble study of Scripture, he will be able to glean a number of benefits from Gushee, while reaching conclusions more faithful to the whole counsel of Scripture.

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***Ethics beyond Rules: How Christ’s Call to Love Informs our Moral Choices.* By Keith D. Stanglin. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2021. 256 pages. Hardcover. \$26.99.**

Ethics beyond Rules is a delight to read and ponder, thanks to Stanglin’s well-researched, creative, and faithful treatments of ethical issues with concise yet engaging prose. And whatever you do, do not let the title fool you.