CHRISTIAN ETHICS: SOME OBSERVATIONS

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Abstract: Christianity is a theistic religion believing in the reality of only one God who has the Superior powers, Sovereign will, operating everywhere in the world. According to Christianity, the moral and spiritual development of individual is dependent on God. The grace of God is absolutely necessary for men’s redemption. In Christianity, there is promise of Divine grace to make salvation possible to all. The saviour in Christianity is Jesus Christ who died on the cross to redeem for the sins of mankind. The Christian moral prescriptions are commandments which Christians are compelled to follow. Christian moral prescriptions are revealed truth which is contain in holy book known as the ‘Word of God’ and as such must be followed by every Christians as prime commands without any question in order to live a moral and a religious life. In Christianity, the goodness or badness of actions is related to God’s will. Man’s actions are morally good if they agree with God’s will and they are morally bad if they disagree with His will. Men’s reply to God’s will determines the morality of his actions and his entire way of life. Christian ethics therefore is based on God’s will, it is Divine prescriptions. The main theme of Christian ethics is the redemption of suffering as well as the attainment of the kingdom of God and whatever morality achieved are they centre round it. The final destination of every Christians is kingdom of God. Christian ethics is also associated with the concept of grace which transformed a person life and enables one to choose and act righteously.

Keywords: Mercy, Holy, Truth, Redeem, Justice, Blessed, Testament

INTRODUCTION

Christianity is one of the most important religion in the world. The life, death, teaching and resurrection of Jesus are the main source of Christianity. Jesus Christ was born in 4 B. C. in a small town of Bethlehem. Jesus was born out of holy wedlock, but his foster father Joseph came out of the line of kind David who was considered to be the ideal king of the Jews. In Christianity ethics plays a very important role. The whole teachings of Jesus Christ are based on ethical Principles. The Christians take their inspiration from the 39 books comprising the Old Testament, but much more from the 27 books comprising the New Testament. The ‘Bible’ itself means a collection of books. The Christian ethical principles consist of the Ten Commandments of the Bible which are considered to be given by Jehovah given to Moses. The fundamental source of the Christians is the New Testament which consists of Jesus ethical teachings. The Ten Commandments of the Old Testament and the ethical Principles of the New Testament constitute the Christian ethics. The ethical imperatives that God has given to His pupil are in accordance with His own moral attributes such as-Justice, Mercy, Truth, Holy etc. God said “Be holy because I am holy”. Christian ethics is absolute. In Christianity, God is the Supreme moral Being whose moral character dose not change. In other words, Christian morality is binding everyone and everywhere. Christian ethics is Prescriptive in nature. In Christianity, the moral law is believed to be prescribed by a Moral God and as such it is prescriptive. Ethics deals with what ought to do, and not to do. So Christian morality is prescribed by God. Christian ethics is therefore deontological in nature, the moral quality of an action is determined on the basis of its adherence to God’s law. Thus, some of the acts are right and so it is the duty of the Christians to perform them regardless too of the good or bad consequences which may be followed from it.

THE TEN COMAMNENTS

The Ten Commandments are the Christians ethical principles which belong to the Old Testament of the Bible, which was given by Jehovah (The Jewish God) to moses for the guidance to the people. The fundamental sources of ethical guidance of Christians is New Testament which contains the ethical teachings. But the Ten Commandments are equally important source of teachings and ethical guidance for Christians.

The Ten Commandments are divided into two parts. The Commandments dealing with duties to God and Commandments dealing with duties to fellowmen. The first four of the Ten Commandments belong to the first section, where as the remaining six to the second.

1. First Commandment: “You shall have no other gods before Me.” The basis of this Commandment is strict monotheism of Christianity. It proclaims the sovereignty of God. According to Christianity, God alone is true and one and the only living God, the omnipotent creator of the universe and He is the Supreme Lord. He gives eternal life to men. Besides, God can save us from the bondage of sin. Therefore, we should not have any other gods besides the one and only God.

2. The Second Commandment: “You shall not make an idol for yourself or worship it.” This Commandment is against any form of ideology. The Absoluteness of God does not permit us to make idols of any other gods or worshipping. It is the duty of every Christian to love and worship the only one God and not to have faith in any other gods besides Him.

3. The Third Commandment: “You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God in vain.” This Commandment is against wrong use of God’s name for any human purpose. To misuse God’s name is to use His name is in incorrect, untruthful way. It refers to someone who falsely uses God’s name to speak his own views. Using God’s name in vain is considered as sin, because it is...
disregarding God. In the Old Testament the punishment of such an act is taken as death. To sum up, the Third Commandment demands absolute respect and honour to God.

(4) The Fourth Commandment: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” The Sabbath day refers to the day of rest dedicated to God. Under this Commandment God’s pupil are required to keep themselves away from any work and remember God. This is based on religious belief that God worked for six days to create all things and took rest on the seventh day. Therefore, the human being also should follow their Father’s footsteps and observe the seventh day as a day of rest which is considered to be holy. During Old Testament times, Saturday was usually considered as a Sabbath day, but during the time of New Testament Sunday became the Sabbath day. This is reversed as holy and it gives importance to the spiritual world apart from the material world. On this particular day man should remembered their Master, the God who is the creator of the universe. On the Sabbath day man should sustain himself from worldly affairs and should fellowship with the Lord through prayer and worship. Prayer and worship to God, going to Church, lighting of candles and sharing of God’s grace to each other through fellowship and faith. This is how the Christian should spend the Sabbath day.

(5) The Fifth Commandment: “Honour your father and mother.” According to Christianity, we should honour father and mother because they take the place of God on earth. Honouring father and mother implies the sacredness or sanctity of family. Our parents are the very root of our existence. Since without them we would not exist. They gave birth to us, raised us, and love us selflessly. For this we should obey the will of our parents and serve them with sincere respect. Honouring God and Honouring our parents goes side by side and one implies the other. Responding the priority to God should come first and then our parents. Honouring God and honouring our parents therefore important in Christianity.

(6) The Six Commandment: “You shall not commit murder.” This Commandment affirms the fundamental right of every person to live and the sacredness of human life. Life is a gift from God, so no one has the right to destroy it. Murder may be of two types- spiritual and physical murder but whatever be the category of murder it is considered as a sin. The root of murder is hatred. At first someone may hate another person in heart but when that hate grows it might be cause of commit murder. Hence God Commanded his children not to commit murder and to cast out the root of hate from their very emerge. Christianity proclaims to love people, even their enemies, which makes the earth the most beautiful place in the world.

(7) The Seven Commandment: “You shall not commit adultery.” This commandment affirms the sacredness and purity of married life. According to Christianity, the sanctity of the family is to be protected, adultery refers to sexual relationship between a man and a woman who are not each other spouse. This Commandment condemns both the act of adultery along with its causes which is lust. Adultery is considered as a serious offence and the punishment for it is death.

(8) The Eight Commandment: “You shall not steal.” This Commandment protects the right of the people of their property. For the prevention of stealing and the protection of property several rules were introduced in the Bible. The Bible forbids stealing and laydown rules what should be done when someone steals. Apart from stealing material possession, there is spiritual stealing where one takes from God without permission that creates obstacles in the way of redemption. Stealing God’s words means making a false statement in the name of God.

(9) The Nine Commandment: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.” This Commandment prohibits people from giving any false testimony against their neighbour. This Commandment is made to safeguard justice, when disputes arise. The very words in the present Commandment ‘false witness’ means taking name about one’s neighbour in a untruthful way. False witness will produce terrible consequences which directly affects the final judgement in the court. It would cause a great misfortune to an innocent person. Therefore, God Commanded the judges to listen to many different witness in order to understand correctly all the different aspects and so that they can make wise judgement.

(10) The Ten Commandment: “You shall not covet.” This Commandment prohibits the desire to possess what our neighbour possesses. This prohibition refers not to desire anything that belong to one’s neighbour. For example—his house, his wife, servants, land, his ox or donkey (Exoduous 20..17). Thus in the tenth Commandment longing for other persons belonging is forbidden. Yearning for others possession is an evil desire which constitutes covetousness. Thus according to Christianity, covetousness is the root of all crimes.

Jesus Christ summarised these Jewish commandments into two great commandment which are behind the moral teachings of Christianity. They are—

(a) You must love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.
(b) You must love your neighbour as yourself.

So far as these two Commandment are concerned it seems to us that ‘love’ is the common element in both of them. So Jesus Commandment firstly to love God from the very core of our heart and secondly to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. In fact Christianity Values love at the top, it is the highest moral virtue. No other virtue is capable of making a man morally good unless it is the expression of love.
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The Sermon on the Mount of Jesus Christ (Matt.-5-7) forms a very important part of Christian ethics. The Sermon on the mount is classified into many different sections and ethics of beatitude contained in 5.3-10 is the most important part of Christian ethics. **Ethics of Beatitude:** Jesus Sermon on the mount is a list of nine blessings for right behaviour known as the ‘Beatitudes’. They contain qualities or characters which the disciples of Jesus should possess in order to have an eternal life in heaven. These qualities represent the fundamental Christian Virtues of humanity, purity of heart, mercy, peace making, simplicity, desire for righteousness and will to suffer for righteousness. The Beatitudes of chapter 5 of Matt. are the followings---

1. **“Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit, for Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”** (Matthew 3:5). The expression “poor in spirit” does not mean weak or lacking in courage nor does it mean suppression of one’s personality, rather it means remoulding of one’s personality. Generally the spirit of everyone is full of pride, self-confident and self-centred. But in the sermon on the mount, God has contrasted the philosophy of life. The first character of a Christians is to realize that he can do so far as his spiritual life is concerned. It is an honest confession that we are sinful and utterly without moral values needed to please God.

2. **“Blessed Are Those Who Mourn, for They Will be Comforted.”** (Matthew 5:4). According to Christianity, we must mourn over our sins. It is only after mourning over our sinful life that we become able to experience heavenly comfort. We also should mourn over the sins of others and also sinfulness.

3. **“Blessed Are the Meek, for They Will Inherit the Earth.”** (Matthew 5:5). According to Jesus, one who is meek and gentle will be blessed. Here the word ‘meekness’ does not refer to any weakness, cowardice, quietness, etc. the meek person always satisfied and content and therefore shall they inherit the earth. Jesus described himself as “meek and lowly” (Matt. 11:28-29, KJV), which was consistent in his vigorous action in cleansing the temple (Matt. 21:12-13).

4. **“Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness.”** The righteous are those who maintain right relationship--with God and the people around them. On the basis of right relationships, those who commit infractions are acquired of guilt.

5. **“Blessed Are the Merciful, for They Will Receive Mercy.”** The term mercy is used by Jesus in order to refer to the feeling of sympathy. The mercy of Jesus is seeing and feeling as another person does. Forgiveness is a type of mercy. All these senses, mercy is the main driving force of Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection. According to Jesus, the merciful blessed because they shall obtain mercy from God.

6. **“Blessed Are the Pure in Heart, for They Will See God.”** Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully. According to Jesus, the kingdom of God within man’s heart. For Jesus Christ, one who has a pure heart is able to see God.

7. **“Blessed Are the Peacemakers, for They Will Be Called Children of God.”** (Matthew 5:9). In this beatitude Jesus confers the blessings upon the peace makers. Jesus maintains that the true Christian must not indulge in violence, hatred and conflicts. They should only concerned with peace. Before being peace maker a Christian must have peace in his heart. According to Jesus, the peace makers are the blessed because they are the children of God.

8. **“Blessed Are Those Who Are Persecuted for Righteousness.”** According to Jesus, if somebody insults, persecutes us or falsely say evil because of God we will be rewarded in heaven. Suffering for righteousness is identical with suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ.

9. **“Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely my account.”** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward. According to Jesus Christ, blessed are those who have pure thought, pure mind and pure personality. Purity is essential for a true Christian. Men should rectify all evil behaviour.

CONCLUSION
I would like to conclude that the approach outlined above does justice to the various sources essential for the ethical decision of the Christian believer. It has endeavoured to be true to the Spiritual evidence and the way it has been accepted within the Christian community. In Christianity, major ethical issues include such matters as marriage and divorce, homosexuality, abortion, and stewardship of money. By contrast’s one’s views on cremation, vegetarianism, and how parents speak to their children about Santa Claus seem to be minor issues. Of course, individual issues will fall along a spectrum from major to minor, and Christian Churches and other organization often have to make wise judgement calls about which issues they will count important enough to be used as a basis for membership or leadership roles.

Christianity is against murder, adultery and gives importance to all those who follow the law of God. The fundamental law of Christianity is love and especially doing good to those who hate us. God shares kindness to all men and gives his gifts, sunshine and rain to both the just and the unjust. The Golden Rule of Christianity is “whatever you want to do to you, do also them.” This is the summary of the whole Christian ethics. We should treat others in the same manner with love and kindness as we wish others to do to us. Atlast it can be said that, Christian ethics is important in every sphere of human life.
REFERENCES