

Cambridge University Press
052177070X - The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics
Edited by Robin Gill
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Following the same formula as other *Cambridge Companions*, this book is written by leading international experts in Christian ethics and is aimed at students on upper-level undergraduate courses, at teachers and at graduate students. It will be useful as well to ministers and other professionals within the church. Its eighteen chapters provide a thorough introduction to Christian ethics which is both authoritative and up to date. All contributors have been chosen because they are significant scholars with a proven track record of balanced, comprehensive and comprehensible writing.

The *Companion* examines the scriptural bases of ethics, introduces a variety of approaches to ethics including those informed by considerations such as gender and by other faiths such as Judaism, and then discusses Christian ethics in the context of contemporary issues including war and the arms trade, social justice, ecology, economics, and medicine and genetics. The book offers a superb overview of its subject.

Cambridge University Press
 052177070X - The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics
 Edited by Robin Gill
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE COMPANIONS TO RELIGION

A series of companions to major topics and key figures in theology and religious studies. Each volume contains specially commissioned chapters by international scholars which provide an accessible and stimulating introduction to the subject for new readers and non-specialists.

Other titles in the series

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

edited by Colin Gunton (1997)

ISBN 0 521 47118 4 hardback ISBN 0 521 47695 8 paperback

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

edited by John Barton (1998)

ISBN 0 521 48144 9 hardback ISBN 0 521 48593 2 paperback

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

edited by John de Gruchy (1999)

ISBN 0 521 58258 x hardback ISBN 0 521 58751 6 paperback

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO LIBERATION THEOLOGY

edited by Chris Rowland (1999)

ISBN 0 521 46144 8 hardback ISBN 0 521 46707 1 paperback

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO KARL BARTH

edited by John Webster (2000)

ISBN 0 521 58476 0 hardback ISBN 0 521 58560 0 paperback

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS

edited by Robin Gill (2001)

ISBN 0 521 77070 x hardback ISBN 0 521 77918 9 paperback

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO JESUS

edited by Markus Bockmuehl (2001)

ISBN 0 521 79261 4 hardback ISBN 0 521 79678 4 paperback

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO FEMINIST THEOLOGY

edited by Susan Frank Parsons (2002)

ISBN 0 521 66327 x hardback ISBN 0 521 66380 6 paperback

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO MARTIN LUTHER

edited by Donald K. McKim (2003)

ISBN 0 521 81648 3 hardback ISBN 0 521 01673 8 paperback

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO ST PAUL

edited by James D. G. Dunn (2003)

ISBN 0 521 78155 8 hardback ISBN 0 521 78694 0 paperback

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO POSTMODERN THEOLOGY

edited by Kevin J. Vanhoozer (2003)

ISBN 0 521 79062 x hardback ISBN 0 521 79395 5 paperback

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO MEDIEVAL JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

edited by Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (2003)

ISBN 0 521 65207 3 hardback ISBN 0 521 65574 9 paperback

Cambridge University Press
052177070X - The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics
Edited by Robin Gill
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO JOHN CALVIN

edited by Donald K. McKim (2004)

ISBN 0 521 81647 5 hardback ISBN 0 521 01672 x paperback

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO HANS URS VON BALTHASAR

edited by Edward T. Oakes, S. J. and David Moss (2004)

ISBN 0 521 81467 7 hardback ISBN 0 521 89147 7 paperback

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO REFORMATION THEOLOGY

edited by David Bagchi and David Steinmetz (2004)

ISBN 0 521 77224 9 hardback ISBN 0 521 77662 7 paperback

Forthcoming

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO AMERICAN JUDAISM

edited by Dana Evan Kapton

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO KARL RAHNER

edited by Declan Marmion and Mary E. Hines

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO FREIDRICK SCHLEIERMACHER

edited by Jacqueline Mariña

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO THE GOSPELS

edited by Stephen C. Barton

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO ISLAMIC THEOLOGY

edited by Tim Winter

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO THE QUR'AN

edited by Jane Dammen McAuligge

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

edited by Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier

Cambridge University Press
052177070X - The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics
Edited by Robin Gill
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Edited by Robin Gill
University of Kent at Canterbury



Cambridge University Press
052177070X - The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics
Edited by Robin Gill
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521770705

© Cambridge University Press 2001

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2001
Fifth printing 2005

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN-13 978-0-521-77070-5 hardback
ISBN-10 0-521-77070-X hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-77918-0 paperback
ISBN-10 0-521-77918-9 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2005

Contents

Notes on contributors ix
Preface xiii

- Part one** *The grounds of Christian ethics* 1
- 1 Making moral decisions 3
ROWAN WILLIAMS
 - 2 The authority of scripture and Christian ethics 16
GARETH JONES
 - 3 The Old Testament and Christian ethics 29
JOHN ROGERSON
 - 4 The gospels and Christian ethics 42
TIMOTHY P. JACKSON
 - 5 The epistles and Christian ethics 63
STEPHEN C. BARTON
- Part two** *Approaches to Christian ethics* 75
- 6 Natural law and Christian ethics 77
STEPHEN J. POPE
 - 7 Virtue ethics 96
JEAN PORTER
 - 8 Gender and Christian ethics 112
LISA SOWLE CAHILL
 - 9 Liberation ethics 125
TIM GORRINGE
 - 10 Christian ethics: a Jewish perspective 138
RONALD M. GREEN
 - 11 Other faiths and Christian ethics 154
GAVIN D' COSTA

viii Contents

Part three	<i>Issues in Christian ethics</i>	169
12	Christianity and war	171
	R. JOHN ELFORD	
13	The arms trade and Christian ethics	183
	ROBIN GILL	
14	Social justice and welfare	195
	DUNCAN B. FORRESTER	
15	Ecology and Christian ethics	209
	MICHAEL S. NORTHCOTT	
16	Business, economics and Christian ethics	228
	MAX L. STACKHOUSE	
17	World family trends	243
	DON BROWNING	
18	Christian ethics, medicine and genetics	261
	JAMES F. CHILDRESS	
	<i>Select bibliography</i>	277
	<i>Index</i>	286

Notes on contributors

Stephen C. Barton is Senior Lecturer in New Testament in the Department of Theology, University of Durham, and a non-stipendiary minister at St John's Church, Neville's Cross. His books include *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994) and *Invitation to the Bible* (London: SPCK, 1997).

Don Browning is Alexander Campbell Professor of Religious Ethics and the Social Sciences at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. Among his recent books are *A Fundamental Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) and, as co-author, *From Culture Wars to Common Ground: Religion and the American Family Debate* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997). He is director of the Religion, Culture, and Family Project, sponsored by a grant from the Lilly Endowment.

Lisa Sowle Cahill is J. Donald Monan, S. J., Professor of Theology at Boston College. Two of her recent works are *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996) and *Family: A Christian Social Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

James F. Childress is Edwin B. Kyle Professor of Religious Studies and Professor of Medical Education at the University of Virginia. He is co-author of *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 4th edn (New York: OUP, 1994) and co-editor of *Christian Ethics: Problems and Prospects* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1996).

Gavin D'Costa is Senior Lecturer in Theology at the University of Bristol. He has recently published *The Trinity and the Meeting of Religions* (Maryknoll/Edinburgh: Orbis Books/T. & T. Clark, 2000) and *The Trinity and Gender* (London: SCM Press, 2000). He is consultant to the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England on other religions.

x Notes on contributors

R. John Elford is Pro-Rector Emeritus of Liverpool Hope University College and Provost of Hope at Everton. Among his recent publications are *The Pastoral Nature of Theology* (London: Cassell, 1999) and *The Ethics of Uncertainty* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000).

Duncan B. Forrester was Professor of Christian Ethics and Practical Theology at the University of Edinburgh 1978–2000. He at present holds a personal chair in Theology and Public Issues. Among his recent publications are *The True Church and Morality* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1997) and *Christian Justice and Public Policy* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997).

Robin Gill is Michael Ramsey Professor of Modern Theology at the University of Kent at Canterbury. Amongst his recent books are *Churchgoing and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999) and *A Textbook of Christian Ethics*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995). He is also the series editor for CUP's New Studies in Christian Ethics.

Tim Gorringe is Professor of Theological Studies at the University of Exeter. He has just finished *Till We Have Built Jerusalem: A Theology of the Built Environment*. Among his recent publications are *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony* (Oxford: OUP, 1999) and *God's Just Vengeance: Crime, Violence and the Rhetoric of Salvation* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).

Ronald M. Green is the Eunice and Julian Cohen Professor for the Study of Ethics and Human Values at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. He is also Director of Dartmouth's Ethics Institute. His books on philosophy of religion include *Religion and Moral Reason* (Oxford: OUP, 1988) and *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

Timothy P. Jackson is Associate Professor of Christian Ethics in the Candler School of Theology at Emory University. He is the author of *Love Disconsoled: Meditations on Christian Charity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999) and a member of the Board of Directors of the Society of Christian Ethics.

Gareth Jones is Professor of Christian Theology at Canterbury Christ Church University College. Amongst his recent books are *Christian Theology: A Brief Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999) and *Critical Theology: Questions of Truth and Method* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

Notes on contributors xi

He is also co-editor of the Blackwell Publishers series Challenges in Contemporary Theology.

Michael S. Northcott is Senior Lecturer in Christian Ethics at the University of Edinburgh. Recent publications include *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), *Urban Theology: A Reader* (London: Cassell, 1998) and *Life after Debt: Christianity and Global Justice* (London: SPCK, 1999).

Stephen J. Pope is an associate professor in the theology department of Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. He has written *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1994) and edited *Essays on the Ethics of St Thomas Aquinas* (Georgetown, forthcoming), and is currently working on a project entitled *Human Evolution and Christian Ethics*.

Jean Porter is Professor of Moral Theology and Christian Ethics at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. Her most recent books are *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Ottawa: Novalis Press and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Press, 1999) and *Moral Action and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995).

John Rogerson is Emeritus Professor of Biblical Studies at the University of Sheffield. His most recent books are *An Introduction to the Bible* (London: Penguin Books, 1999) and *Chronicle of the Old Testament Kings* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999). He is currently working on a theology of the Old Testament.

Max L. Stackhouse is Professor of Christian Ethics at Princeton Theological Seminary. He is the primary editor of *On Moral Business: Classical and Contemporary Resources for Ethics and Economic Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) and author, amongst other books, of *Covenant and Commitment: Faith, Family and Economic Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997).

Rowan Williams is Archbishop of Wales and a former Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford. His recent publications include *Sergii Bulgakov: Towards a Russian Political Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) and *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000).

Preface

Over the last twenty-five years the study of Christian ethics has seen a considerable revival in both Britain and the United States. After a period of relative neglect in the 1950s and 60s, most theology departments, seminaries and theological colleges now teach the subject and have a Christian ethicist on the staff. In a number of secular universities Christian ethics also acts as a bridge with other disciplines. The success of the Cambridge University Press series *New Studies in Christian Ethics* over the last decade also provides evidence of the strength of the subject today. The *Cambridge Companions* would not be complete without a volume on Christian ethics.

Following the same formula as other *Cambridge Companions*, this collection of eighteen chapters has been written by leading British and American experts in the subject and is aimed at students in upper-level undergraduate courses, graduate students, teachers and other interested parties within the church or in adjacent academic disciplines. It should provide a fairly comprehensive introduction to Christian ethics that is both authoritative and up to date. All of the contributors have also been chosen because they have a proven track record of balanced, comprehensive and comprehensible writing.

The *Companion* is in three parts. The first of these considers the crucial relationship of Christian ethics both to the Bible itself and to modern biblical studies. Rowan Williams' opening chapter sets the broad theological and ecclesiastical contexts for this relationship. An earlier version of this chapter was given at a key plenary session of the Anglican Lambeth Conference of Bishops in the summer of 1998 at Canterbury, England. Underlying many of the debates at this vexed international conference was the question of the authority of scripture. The second chapter, by Gareth Jones, a colleague of mine at Canterbury, turns to this very question. John Rogerson then examines the challenges facing Christian ethics in its use of the Old Testament. Timothy Jackson next offers a strikingly original chapter comparing the four canonical gospels with Gnostic gospels, arguing that there are moral

xiv Preface

grounds for preferring the former. Finally in this part Stephen Barton looks critically at the epistles and Christian ethics.

The second part of the *Companion* examines different, and sometimes competing, approaches to Christian ethics. Stephen Pope provides a wide-ranging survey of natural-law approaches to the discipline. This is followed by a similar critical survey by Jean Porter of different forms of virtue ethics. Lisa Sowle Cahill then examines the contentious questions of gender and Christian ethics and, in the process, makes extensive use of Susan Parsons' well-received threefold typology of feminist ethics. Tim Gorringer next examines the concept of liberation in Christian ethics, a concept which has been highly influential within both political and gender issues. Ronald Green and Gavin D'Costa then provide contrasting chapters on the relationship of Christian ethics to other forms of religious ethics. Ronald Green writes as a Jew who also has extensive knowledge on Christian ethics. Indeed, an earlier version of this essay was first given as his Presidential Address to the Society of Christian Ethics meeting at San Francisco in January 1998. Gavin D'Costa writes as a Roman Catholic who has a high reputation as a mediator between Christians and Jews.

The third part of the *Companion* examines a number of crucial issues in modern Christian ethics. It would be impossible to cover adequately all of the issues that currently concern Christian ethicists, so inevitably I have been selective. As the cover of this book hints, Christian ethics has been influential in a number of political and social contexts around the world over the last few decades. The statue of the African Madonna in Cape Town Cathedral, South Africa, continues to make a powerful theological statement against apartheid. The crowd scene from the window of the Crucifixion in Birmingham Cathedral, England, represents the Christian story set amidst the challenges of modern urban industrial society. Despite evidence of growing pluralism and secularity in many countries, a number of theologians and church leaders have been instrumental in effecting crucial changes. Pope John Paul II, Mother Teresa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Robin Eames and Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, all proved to be surprisingly influential in deeply troubled political and social contexts in the second, supposedly godless, half of the twentieth century.

The first two chapters in this third part, by John Elford and myself, analyse an area of Christian influence in social ethics which has been more abiding than almost any other, namely just war discussion. John Elford's chapter sets the broad frame of this discussion, whereas my own locates it specifically in the debate about the arms trade in a context of recent wars and conflicts in the Gulf, Iraq and the Balkans. Duncan Forrester's chapter

Cambridge University Press
052177070X - The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics
Edited by Robin Gill
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Preface xv

then examines rival accounts of social justice and locates them specifically in the context of welfare provision. Michael Northcott next provides a forceful theological case for deeper ecological involvement by Christian ethicists. Max Stackhouse's chapter presents a broad critical survey of different Christian ethical approaches to business and economics. Don Browning's chapter offers a powerful Christian critique of family trends around the world. And finally James Childress provides a wide-ranging chapter in the area which he has made so effectively his own, namely medicine and genetics as they relate to Christian ethics.

Of course, this *Companion* is only a taster. However, I hope that these chapters and the notes attached to them will inspire readers to delve more deeply into Christian ethics in the future. For thoughtful Christians who are concerned about the modern world there surely cannot be a more important discipline.

Robin Gill
University of Kent at Canterbury