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Ethics and Religion

Ethics and Religion explores philosophical issues that link the two areas. Many people question whether God is the source of morality. Divine command theory says that God's will creates the moral order, therefore ethical truths are true because of God's will. Natural law, in contrast, accepts ethical truths that do not depend on God's will but perhaps depend on his reason or creation. The book develops strong and defensible versions of both views and provides strong new versions of the divine command theory and the natural law theory. It also deals with ethics and atheism: how atheists object on ethical grounds to belief in God and how they view ethics. Gensler defends belief in God from their objections. *Ethics and Religion* further analyzes related concepts, such as practical reason, the golden rule, ethics and evolution, the problem of evil, and the fine-tuning argument.

Harry J. Gensler, S.J., is Professor of Philosophy at Loyola University Chicago. His thirteen books include *Ethics and the Golden Rule* (2013), *Ethics: A Contemporary Introduction* (2011), *Introduction to Logic* (2010), and *Anthology of Catholic Philosophy* (2005). A fanatical outdoorsperson, he has bicycled from Los Angeles to New York and has hiked from Georgia to Maine and from Mexico to Canada. His website, www.harryhiker.com, has more information on him.

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Preface

Ethics and Religion explores some of the major philosophical issues that link these two important areas of life. For many people, the burning issue is whether God is the source of morality and whether ethics is possible without religion. There are two traditional views here, with many variations. *Divine command theory* says that God's will creates the moral order (so ethical truths are true because of God's will), whereas *natural law* accepts ethical truths that don't depend on God's will (but perhaps depend on his reason or on his creation). Although I favor natural law, I try to develop strong and defensible versions of both views. With both views, I'll try to show how belief in God can deepen ethics – as it can deepen every area of life.

I also deal with ethics and atheism: how atheists object on ethical grounds to belief in God and how they view ethics; I'll also respond to their objections.

I hit many related topics, such as how to develop divine command theory (e.g., through semantic definitions or property identity); how we can know God's will; how to understand God's wisdom, love, and goodness; how to develop natural law (including practical reason and the golden rule); how evolution and science relate to ethics and religion; what difference belief in God makes to ethics; what duties we have toward those of other perspectives on faith; whether militant atheists make a good case against religion; atheistic religion; the problem of evil; and the fine-tuning argument.

Is there anything new to say about *ethics and religion*? I think so. There's been much activity on this during the last few years, and my book argues for some innovative ideas.

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This book is part of the Cambridge Studies in Religion, Philosophy, and Society series, so the book is simply written, assumes little previous knowledge, and should be accessible to advanced undergraduates. But the book is also deep enough for graduate students, seminarians, other ministry students, teachers, and experts in the area. It could be used in various courses, including ones in philosophy of religion, moral philosophy, and moral theology. The clear style should make it accessible to sophisticated general readers. There's much interest in ethics and religion these days, and I hope that this book will fill a need.

I thank Marquette University (where I held the Wade Chair in Spring 2014, which gave me much time to write), Kyle Whitaker (my teaching assistant there, who read early chapters and made suggestions), and Tom Carson (my colleague in the Loyola Chicago philosophy department, who read the whole manuscript and made suggestions).