
A Social Ethics Reading List

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It is customary to distinguish between *personal ethics* as the consideration of how individuals should behave and *social ethics* as discussing how communities should behave. This cannot be an absolute distinction as societies are made up of individual and groups change as their leaders change. Whether we are even right to speak about a *Christian social ethic* begs the question of a *Christian society* but that is another story!

Publishing books on Social Ethics has become a growth industry and most of us have difficulty keeping up with the flood. This list is restricted to what has either originated in or is readily available in the UK. A few titles currently out of print (marked OP) have been retained because of their value. The notes are intended to indicate the contents of the book rather than attempting an evangelical evaluation.

Principles of Christian Ethics

CHRISTIAN ETHICS, Norman Geisler, Apollos, 1991, 336 pp, £14.95

A new work from an American evangelical and a genuine advance on his two earlier books, this is now available in the UK in an IVP imprint. Geisler analyses different ethical stances and then shows that the Bible's absolute norms are not all equally applicable to every case but are to be graded hierarchically. These principles are then well applied to nine major contemporary issues, including bio-medicine, civil disobedience and ecology.

PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT, John Murray, 1957, IVP, 272 pp, OP

By using a biblico-theological approach Murray considers aspects of Biblical ethics grounded in the creation ordinances. He is not given to slick answers but always repays careful study. The concluding chapters on The Dynamic of the Biblical Ethic and on The Fear of God are especially valuable in relating ethics to the gospel.

BIBLICAL ETHICS, R E O White, Paternoster, 1989, 256 pp, OP

The former principal of the Baptist Theological College of Scotland provides the substance of his lectures for the degree course on Christian Ethics. He too takes the material in its Biblical order but in contrast to Murray is much fuller on the New Testament than the Old. If some OT critics are quoted too uncritically the closing summary rightly points us to Christ and his Spirit.

RESURRECTION AND THE MORAL ORDER, Oliver O'Donovan, 1986, IVP, 284 pp, £14.95

The author argues that belief in the gospel means that we are committed to certain ethical beliefs and we must therefore denounce the libertarian and legalistic options. Intended for an academic readership the book is very densely argued and engages thoroughly with historical and contemporary thinking. One

review began, 'This is not a book for the faint hearted!'

THE MORAL MAZE, David Cook, SPCK, 192 pp, £6.95

Cook sketches the various traditions of moral thinking before introducing his own method of reaching decisions in a rational and responsible way. This is then applied to the topics of Abortion and Euthanasia. The book has the air of a college textbook and an evangelical reviewer said, 'It is strong on method but shy of conclusions'.

Christian Social Ethics

ISSUES FACING CHRISTIANS TODAY, John Stott, Collins, 2nd Edit 1990, 428 pp, £8.99

Stott discusses the role of Christians in a non-Christian society and goes on to give detailed consideration to a range of Global Issues, Social Issues and then Sexual Issues. The desire to be biblical and up-to-date makes this the most important single book on this area in recent years. This edition contains much fresh material and includes the formerly separate Study Guide

EVANGELICALS AND SOCIAL ETHICS, Klaus Bockmuehl, Paternoster, 1979, 47 pp, OP

This slender monograph is a commentary on Article 5 of the 1974 Lausanne covenant with particular reference to the relationship of evangelism to social responsibility. It provides some correctives to those who suggest that we may actually spread the righteous fruits of the Kingdom by social means.

ESSAYS IN EVANGELICAL SOCIAL ETHICS, ed D F Wright, Paternoster, 1981, 192 pp, £5.50

In 1978 the National Evangelical Conference on Social Ethics met to hear and discuss these seven papers. This was the first major British consideration of the subject and the papers indicate that even then there were wide differences of approach among evangelicals. Only David Lyon's chapter begins to do justice to the full range of Scripture.

GOD'S PEOPLE IN GOD'S WORLD, John Gladwin, IVP, 1979, 191 pp, £4.95

The author was formerly Director of the Shaftesbury Project and wrote this to give biblical justification for evangelical social involvement. His basic approach is Incarnational but he also seeks to show the relevance of Creation, Fall, and Kingdom for the subject. He sees it as inevitable that the church becomes politically involved.

THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE, Roy McCloughry, IVP, 1990, 192 pp, £3.35

Another former Shaftesbury Project Director exposes the idolatry of the self and the tyranny of economics as the two major factors underlying the current changes in our society. It is one of the most perceptive analyses of our western world available from an evangelical writer. For his positive prescriptions, see below.

TAKING ACTION, Roy McCloughry, IVP, 1990, 96 pp, £2.95

One of the brief and colourful Framework series, it is intended to grab those less used to tackling heavier books. The practical advice is on the dangers and

opportunities of social involvement at work, in the community and on green issues.

LIVING AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD, C J H Wright, IVP, 1983, 224 pp, £6.95
Sub-titled 'The relevance of Old Testament Ethics', this book attempts to provide a framework within which OT ethics can be both understood and then applied to social issues today. His principle of regarding Israel as a social paradigm for nations today has influenced many evangelicals, some of whom have gone beyond the author in the direction of a social gospel.

A CHRISTIAN SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE, Alan Storkey, IVP, 1979, 416 pp, OP
This big book by an evangelical sociologist argues for a distinctively Christian view of knowledge, authority and the social realities of our community, not least those of economics and the state. His approach owes something to Dooyeweerd and is concerned about corporate morality.

CHRISTIANS IN SOCIETY, ed B G Webb, Lancer, 1988, 144 pp, £2
This is Issue 3 of a series called Explorations, publishing papers presented at Moore Theological College, Sydney. Its significance lies in the critique of the modern pre-occupation with social involvement at the expense of evangelism and in its engagement with the views of Ron Sider, John Stott and Chris Wright. UK enquiries to Proclamation Trust, St Peters upon Cornhill, London EC3V 3PD.

Particular Issues

NOT BY BREAD ALONE, D B Knox, Banner of Truth, 1989, 143 pp, £2.50
The humanist mind set affects the whole of life. Knox, formerly in Sydney, now in South Africa, examines how a variety of issues have been distorted by this perspective. The chapters are necessarily brief but ten topics are covered including Race, Censorship, Sunday, War, and Women's Lib.

SOCIAL ISSUES AND THE LOCAL CHURCH, ed Ian Shaw, Evangelical Press of Wales, 1988, 178 pp, £4.95

Ten essays from well respected evangelical authors cover matters such as Work, The Inner City, Education and Social Welfare. Each focuses especially on our collective responsibilities as members of a local church. There are suggestions for further reading and questions for discussion at the end of each chapter.

EVANGELICAL ETHICS, John J Davis, Presbyterian & Reformed, 1985, 299 pp, £10.95

The American background of this good Reformed treatment of nine current issues means that although it is well documented the civil context is different from our own. The topics chosen are medical, sexual, family and law and order issues. It is more of a text book than a popular treatment.

RENDER UNTO CAESAR, Herbert Carson, Monarch, 1989, 122 pp, £4.99

This is an expansion of Carson's earlier booklet, *The Christian and the State*, and is enriched by his experience of living in Northern Ireland. As one chapter is entitled, *Downhill from Constantine*, his free church perspective is clear. There is a positive emphasis on responsible citizenship as he handles issues like The

Government, Party Politics, Censorship, and War.

PASTORAL ETHICS IN PRACTICE, David Atkinson, Monarch, 1989, 256 pp, £7.95

After an opening chapter on The Place of the Bible in Christian Ethics, the book goes on to discuss pastoral ethics under three broad categories: Personal Relationships, Social Issues and Questions of Life and Death. He is concerned to develop a Christian mind on these contemporary issues.

ISSUES OF LIFE AND DEATH, Norman Anderson, Norfolk, 1976, 130 pp, £6.95

These are the 1975 London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity. Starting with a discussion of the sanctity of life they cover Genetic Engineering, Birth Control, Abortion, Euthanasia, Capital Punishment and Revolution. Such issues have, however, become even more technically complex in the last 16 years.

PACIFISM AND WAR, ed Oliver Barclay, IVP, 1984, 256 pp, £7.50

One of a series of books entitled, *When Christian Disagree*, this represents a debate in print between 8 prominent Christians adopting contrasting positions on a very relevant issue. The format is especially helpful in showing how evangelicals committed to the same authority do reach different conclusions. Other social topics in the same series are The Role of Women and a forthcoming title on Politics.

GROVE ETHICAL STUDIES, various authors, Grove Books, 24 pp, £1.95

The (Anglican) St John's College, Nottingham is where this series of monographs originated in the 1970's and now they cover a wide range of social ethics topics. Recent issues include Economic Sanctions, The Green Heritag, Toleration in Islam, Brain Grafts, and Sport. Write for catalogue to Grove Books Ltd, BRAMCOTE NG9 3DS

JUBILEE CENTRE BOOKLETS, various authors, different prices.

The Centre researches contemporary economic and social issues in the light of biblical norms and proposes alternative policies to decision makers. Booklets include The Extended Family (70 pp), Family Roots or Mobility (18 pp), Families in Debt (160 pp), and From Generation to Generation (150 pp). They show the Centre has wider interests than the Keep Sunday Special Campaign for which it is deservedly better known. Write for details to Jubilee House, 3 Hooper St, CAMBRIDGE CB1 2NZ.

CHRISTIAN IMPACT STUDY PACKS, Christian Impact, various authors, different prices. CI is the merged name of the former Shaftesbury Project and the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. These Packs are intended for group discussion use and include tapes, booklets, information and work sheets. The topics covered so far are Aids, Debt, TV, New Age and Mental Handicap. Write for details to Christian Impact, St Peter's Church, Vere St, LONDON W1M 9HP

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